

## Essential Truths III: Working With God

# 20

## New Wine

In the next module, we will be exploring the biblical tapestry of “types and shadows” – the symbols and pictures that are woven throughout Scripture. But in this lesson, we will focus on just one picture – the picture of new wine – that resonates strongly in the New Testament. In **Mark 2:22**, Jesus said:

“And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, he pours new wine into new wineskins.”

Wine was a part of daily life in the times of Jesus. The Lord himself drank wine (**John 2:1-10**). Paul even recommended that Timothy avoid drinking water (which rarely met today’s standards of hygiene) and “use a little wine” because of his frequent stomach ailments (**1 Timothy 5:23**),\* yet he advised Christians not to drink wine if it caused a brother to stumble (**Romans 14:21**).

To the Jews, wine represented one of the greatest joys of life (**Psalms 104:15**). It was present at all wedding and harvest celebrations, and was a staple at meal times. Jesus even used wine as a symbol of his shed blood and of the New Covenant he was about to initiate (**Matthew 26:27-29**).

Throughout Scripture, wine is rich in allusion (both positive and negative). Yet in

\* The alcohol content of wine in New Testament times was much lower than today’s wine list, and wine was often mixed with water. The alcohol content of today’s lite beer was a closer equivalent to that of most first century wine.

**The Birthright**

**Taking the Baton**

**The Great Commission**

**The Body of Christ**

**The Ministry of Every Believer**

**Joining the Work of God**

**The Tree of Life**

**The Ministry of Reconciliation**

**Filled with the Spirit**

**Ministry to the Body**

**Sent into the Harvest**

**Speaking the Word of God**

**A Lifestyle Gospel**

**Salt and Light**

**Enforcing the Victory**

**Signs and Wonders**

**A New Kind of Leadership**

**Establishing a Daily Church**

**Making Disciples**

**The New Wine**

**The Goal of Ministry**

**Mark 2:22**, Jesus uses new wine to picture the life of God poured into a person. Let's take a look at how the picture of new wine so beautifully illustrates the nature of the Christian life – and sheds light on the nature of your ministry as a Christian.

## New Wine

New wine is wine that is undergoing the early stages of the fermenting process. Because of this, new wine is effervescent, pushing constantly outward on the wine-skin that bottles it. In the same way, the Christian is going through a daily transformation process. There is a bubbling, effervescent nature to the work of the Holy Spirit in your life.

### Read Ephesians 5:18

In this verse, Paul gives a negative-positive instruction – a “don't-do-this-but-rather-do-this” command. The *Amplified Bible* translates Paul's words this way:

“And *do not* get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; *but ever be* filled and stimulated with the (Holy) Spirit.”

As we saw in **ES106-09**, Paul is principally urging the Christian to avoid being drunk on wine, replacing that drunken lifestyle with a lifestyle filled with the Holy Spirit. As with all things in the Christian life, God never commands us to avoid something without providing an alternative course on which to walk. To every negative command, there is a positive equivalent.

Although Paul is making a negative comparison between drunkenness and the infilling of the Holy Spirit, the positive comparisons between wine and the Holy Spirit are informative.

Being filled with the Holy Spirit involves:

- A lowering of inhibitions in praise and worship
- A supernatural boldness to witness
- An “intoxication” of joy
- A coming “under the influence”\* (or control) of the Holy Spirit

As a Christian is “filled with the Spirit,” there is an overflow effect that, just like fermenting wine, constantly pushes outward, refusing to be contained by the wine-skin of life. This overflow effect of being filled with the Spirit is seen in **Ephesians 5:19**, where Paul expects Spirit-filled Christians to “[s]peak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs” and “[s]ing and make music in [their] heart[s] to the Lord.”

But the principal effect of being filled with the Spirit is not outward joy or boldness (these are the “side-effects” of being filled with the Spirit). The principal effect is *transformation*. In **2 Corinthians 3:18**, Paul describes the main impact

\* Drunken driving is often referred to as DUI or “driving under the influence” (of alcohol). Well, God's plan is for you to LUI – “living under the influence” (of the Holy Spirit)!

of being filled with the Spirit:

“And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness *with ever-increasing glory*, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”

The Holy Spirit is God’s agent of change in the Christian life. He is the one who is transforming us into the image of Christ, but this transformation involves an “ever-increasing glory.” Like the ever-expanding new wine, this “ever-increasing glory” cannot be contained by anything other than a lifestyle suited to that transformation process

In a very real sense, the Holy Spirit himself is the new wine that is being poured into our lives, for he is the one that we are filled with! Thus the fermenting of new wine, which constantly threatens to break out, is a picture of two things in the Christian life:

- The irrepressible exuberance of a life filled with the Spirit
- The uncontainable vitality of a life being transformed by the Spirit

New wine was wine freshly pressed, direct from the grape harvest (**Psalm 4:7; Joel 2:24**). It wasn’t as mellow as old wine (which many people preferred). In the same way, many people don’t like the process of spiritual fermentation. Change makes them uncomfortable, insecure. They prefer the old wine – religion that makes no demand of change on their lives (**Luke 5:39**). But God is after new wine in our lives.

## Making New Wine

The process of making new wine involves three main steps:

### ***The harvest of the grape***

Even from Old Testament times, God likened his people to a vineyard (**Isaiah 5:1-7; 27:2-6**) and this picture carries over into the New Testament (**Luke 20:9-16,19**). We are designed by God to bear good fruit – grapes that can be made into new wine. In **Luke 6:43-44**, Jesus said:

“No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briars.”

Jesus was absolutely clear on *how* we are to produce the fruit that God desires. In **John 15:4**, he declares:

“...No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.”

Grapes, explained Jesus, aren’t picked from briars but from a vine. In the same way, a Christian will produce fruit as long as he or she “abide[s] in the vine” (KJV).

**Philippians 1:11** tells us that we are to be “filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ...” The Lord Jesus himself is the vine, and God is looking to harvest grapes from the branches of that vine.

### Read John 15:1-4

In order for the grapes produced by the vine to be of the highest quality, the Father prunes the vine of any dead wood (that which is not receiving life from the vine). While not a pleasant experience, this pruning process is vital to the making of the new wine of God’s Spirit.

### Read Hebrews 12:5-11

#### ***The pressing of the grape***

Wine is made out of crushed grapes. In the same way, it is only as Christians are “crushed” together in the winepress of open and accountable fellowship that the new wine is poured out. This new wine is made out of the fruit of God’s Spirit displayed in each believer’s life. Various aspects of spiritual fruit are listed throughout the Old and New Testaments:

- **Galatians 5:22-23**: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control...”
- **Ephesians 5:9**: “...for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth...”
- **Isaiah 32:17**: “The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever.”
- **Colossians 3:12**: “Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.”
- **Romans 14:17**: “For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”
- **2 Peter 1:5-8**: “...make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”
- **James 3:17-18**: “But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.”

### Read Colossians 1:10

From ancient times, the juice of the grape was extracted using a winepress. Ac-

according to *Unger's Bible Dictionary*:

“Each vineyard had its own wine press, the practice being to extract the juice from the grape in the field...[T]he wine presses of the Jews consisted of two receptacles or vats placed at different elevations, in the upper one of which the grapes were trodden, while the lower one received the expressed juice.”<sup>1</sup>

**Joel 3:13** describes how “the winepress is full and the vats overflow” – a depiction of this two-level winepress. This overflowing of the juice of the grape is a description also of the life of the Christian. As **Romans 15:13** declares:

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

As someone once commented, Christians are called to be grapes, not marbles. When crushed, marbles fracture and splinter into glass shards. But grapes, when crushed, produce a sweet wine. One refuses to give way, resulting in breakage, while the other blends and mixes together. In the same way, it is only when Christians blend and mix that the juice of the fruit of the Spirit begins to flow.

### ***The fermenting of the wine***

Once the juice has been extracted from the grape, yeast is added to ferment the juice. Yeast in Scripture is used to picture something that permeates a person's life. Yeast is symbolic of sin (**1 Corinthians 5:6-8**) and false teaching (**Matthew 16:6,12; Mark 8:15**), because they permeate quickly and thoroughly, yet yeast is also used by Jesus to depict how the kingdom of God penetrates and permeates the darkness of this world “until it is worked all through the dough” (**Matthew 13:33**).

The same yeast that leavens bread was also used to ferment wine. This fermentation process symbolizes the permeation of God's holiness into every part of a Christian's life. Just as yeast causes dough to rise, so the fermentation process produces heat and a build up of pressure, forcing the new wine to expand.

## **The Need for a Wineskin**

### **Read Matthew 9:16-17**

In Bible times, people used wineskins, or leather bottles, to hold wine. *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary* explains:

“A whole goatskin, for example, would be used with the apertures bound up, and when filled, tied at the neck. They were tanned with acacia bark and left hairy on the outside. New wine, by fermenting, would rend old skins.”<sup>2</sup>

The wineskin was a container with sole purpose of bottling wine so that it could later be poured out. In the same way, God has created your life to be a container of his presence. The new wine of the Holy Spirit is poured into your life, and then from your life into the world.

**Read Acts 2:17-18**

Jesus describes two kinds of wineskins that may be used to try to hold this new wine of God's Spirit:

***An Old Wineskin***

Let's take a quick look at the context of Jesus' statement concerning the old and new wineskins.

**Read Matthew 9:14-15**

The disciples of John had approached Jesus with a question that must have plagued them for some time:

“How is it that we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?”

For them, fasting was a measure of righteousness and it was a slight against Jesus and his disciples that they were not measuring up to this outward standard.

In reply to their question, Jesus used two illustrations:

- Putting a new patch on an old garment (**verse 16**)
- Storing new wine in an old wineskin (**verse 17**)

When Jesus spoke of an old garment being sown up with a new patch, and an old wineskin being used to store new wine, he was referring to the fasting of John's disciples and of the Pharisees – which was based on the outward observance of a legalistic righteousness. The Pharisees in particular had ordered their lives with man-made traditions that had the outward appearance of holiness (**Mark 7:9**), but according to Jesus' own indictment, “inside they [were] full of greed and self-indulgence...hypocrisy and wickedness” (**Matthew 23:25,28**).

The old wineskin of legalistic traditions and outward observance of the law, said Jesus, could never hold the new wine of God's Spirit, otherwise “the skins will burst, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined.”

The bursting of a wineskin due to the expansion of fermenting wine was well known (note **Job 32:19**) and Jesus drew a parallel between this and the nature of God's action in a person's life.

An old wineskin is hardened and inflexible, suited only to old wine. With old wine, there is no pressure for change. The wine is aged and stable. In the same way, a legalistic lifestyle is suited only to the “old wine” of mere outward observance and a historic Christianity, where as long as you maintain the status quo, everyone is content.

Even in the Church, it is easy for Christians to fall into a status quo observance of outward conventions, rules and regulations, the “written code” of self-effort, and the religious trappings of Christianity. But this is an old wineskin. It can never contain the new wine of God's Spirit.

**Note again Romans 7:6**



## ***A New Wineskin***

In contrast to an old wineskin, a new wineskin is supple and flexible, suited to the expanding pressures of the new wine.

While old wineskin Christianity focuses on external things, new wineskin Christianity is all about the internal condition of the human heart – your love for God, your daily relationship with him, your hearing his voice, your being led by the Spirit. It is about a lifestyle of obedience to God, not just to a list of rules.

### **Read Psalm 51:6**

The old wineskin can be equated to a religious old self, fixated on external holiness but inside “full of greed and self-indulgence...hypocrisy and wickedness” (**Matthew 23:25,28**). The new wineskin, however, can be equated with the Spirit-filled new self, “which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator” (**Colossians 3:10**). Only the new wineskin of the new self can contain that which God has planned for your life.

## **Containing the Glory**

### **Read 2 Corinthians 2:6**

No building can ever house the fullness of God’s presence (**Acts 7:48-50**). But God’s plan never was for a physical building to house his glory. From the beginning of time (**Ephesians 1:4**), he planned for a Body of people that would contain his presence.

### **Read Ephesians 2:21-22**

God designed you to be a container of his glory – not just you individually, but you as part of the Body of Christ. The Church itself was designed by God to be a new wineskin – a supple, flexible container that would store and pour out the wine of God’s Spirit.

Do you remember the familiar passage from **Ephesians 1:22-23**?

“And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, *the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.*”

We’ve already seen how this is God’s definition for the Church, and as part of the Church, this is also God’s plan for your life. You too are to be filled with “the fullness of him who fills everything in every way” (note **Ephesians 3:19**).

You cannot be filled with the fullness of God without that universe-filling God breaking out on every side, pushing out the boundaries of your life, pressing you into uncharted territory. This is the nature of the new wine experience.

### **Read Habakkuk 2:14**

God’s plan is for his Church to be a wineskin that will pour out new wine – the

revelation of the presence of his glory – into every corner of the world. Your ministry is defined by this objective. When you minister to people, you minister on two levels:

- **You minister the new wine to people.** Through your ministry, people can experience the new wine of God’s Spirit in their lives.
- **You minister the new wineskin to people.** Through your ministry, people can experience a lifestyle of grace that will not only be able to contain the new wine, but will also enable them to pour that new wine out into other people’s lives.

There is new wine and there is also a new wineskin for the new wine. Without the wine, the wineskin is just an empty shell. And without the wineskin, the wine is spilt and lost. You need both the new wineskin and the new wine.

<sup>1</sup> Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Bible Dictionary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1977), p.1169.

<sup>2</sup> W. E. Vine, *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996), p.580.

Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations from the Bible are from the New International Version, copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers.

The Online Bible College can be accessed at [www.online-bible-college.com](http://www.online-bible-college.com)