



## #10 Jesus Breaks the Mold | Pastor Brad Williams | August 16, 2009

### A. Fellowship Time (10-15 minutes)

1. Chitchat. Perhaps offer coffee, tea, or a cold drink with some snacks.
2. Pray (or invite someone to pray) to open the discussion.

### B. Review Time (Read the summary below to the group: 5-10 minutes)

If something sounds too good to be true, it probably is. We're all a little skeptical when someone makes big promises about something that's going to revolutionize the way we do life. And along comes this whole God, Jesus, church thing with all the promises of a brand new you: a new and improved life. We bought in, we took the bait, we said, "I'm going to do this." We have been trying, coming to church, reading our Bibles, and even raising our hands in worship, but it's not working the way we thought it would. Sometimes we find what we thought we were to receive, and what we actually have, are completely different. At these times we have to ask: Is the problem Jesus, is the problem with the promise, or is the problem with the recipient? Is the problem with us? As we follow Jesus as our leader, we come to find that He broke the mold. His ways are new and His promises are amazing.

The writers of the Gospels use a fascinating Greek word to describe the effect that Jesus routinely has on His religious audience: **Skandalon**. It means a stumbling block, an offense, or a scandal. Why would Jesus behave this way? Let's examine these questions through the three short stories and the parable contained in **Mark 2:18-3:5** (Read together).

- Notice that in **Mark 2:18-22** that Jesus and His disciples do not observe the fast. It was a regular habit of the day for religious people to fast. It showed a serious commitment to God. But Jesus' disciples weren't participating. This raised questions with all those "serious" religious people. Jesus was trying to show them that the answer was right in front of them. *He* was the answer—they had cause to celebrate. So to get the point across, He told a parable you saw in **Mark 2:21-22** about patches of cloth and wineskins. Standing alone, the parable was somewhat confusing then and even today, but it makes perfect sense in the context of what's happening around Jesus.
- Notice that Jesus and His disciples picked grain on the Sabbath in **Mark 2:23-24**. The Pharisees were trying to tell Jesus, "There are rules! You and your followers are not following the *rules!*" But Jesus didn't apologize. In fact, He used an example from David's life to justify His actions (**Mark 2:25-27**).
- Then to add fuel to the fire, Jesus heals the man with the shriveled hand on the Sabbath (**Mark 3:1-3**). Jesus is essentially saying, "I know your rules and the fact that you have a problem with me. But your rules, your system, is choking the life out of life! Your attempt to find life is actually taking life." He's trying to wake them up because as you read, "*He looked around at them in anger and [was] deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts...*" (**Mark 3:5**).

Why was Jesus so purposely confrontational? Let's look back to the parable (**v. 22**): "*No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If he does, the new piece will pull away from the old, making the tear worse. 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.*" Jesus is saying that His message of love—a radically accepting love—is too great to be contained by the old ways of religious tradition. He wanted to tear down religion as the foundation for people's connection with God and replace it with Himself.

Jesus is saying, "I've got something better, but it's different." And the people say, "We want something better, but we can't handle different." Are you a new wineskin kind of person? Or are you an old wineskin type of person? New wineskin people don't care if Jesus turns their world upside down, but old wineskin people, say, "No, you're not messing with my world." Our

systems might be different from the Pharisees, but the premise really isn't. Your expectations are where your disappointments and skepticism come from. Your old wineskin, your old way of viewing and ordering your world, can't hold Jesus. Maybe your system is:

- **Religion**—I obey; therefore, I'm accepted. I obey in order to get things from God.
- **Hedonism**—Pleasure in life is what matters. I evaluate my life on whether or not it's going to be "fun." I invite Jesus into the party because He might spice things up.
- **Materialism or Consumerism**—Happiness is equal to how much I can own or consume. If I follow Jesus I can get more, have more or be blessed monetarily.
- **Liberalism**—My freedom or my rights are the most important thing in life. Jesus says cool things about the Truth setting me free, and if the Son sets me free, I am free indeed. Nobody is telling me what to do.

We have our life system, and we have a tendency to add Jesus into our little world. We "accessorize" our lives with Jesus. But we are trying to put Jesus into an old wineskin, and it can't contain Him. Jesus defies the old systems because He cares, because He knows you will never find what you are looking for until you place your life in Him. He is the new wineskin. He is not part of the system, He *is* the system.

Becoming a Christ follower is about putting all of our trust, all of our life in Him and His work on the cross. It's about letting Him define our lives, letting Him define what matters, not the systems we used to trust. Just Him.

### **C. Life Group Questions** (select, revise, and add as desired: 20-40 minutes)

1. Do you ever feel your faith experience isn't living up to what you expected? Or that you've yet to experience all that God has promised? Have you become skeptical? Share some of the expectations that you have that are fueling your disappointments.
2. As we saw in Mark 2:18-3:16, Jesus confounded the religious leaders of His time, the Pharisees, by His actions and words. Jesus message was too radical to fit into the accepted forms of religiosity. Can you understand why the Pharisees were so bothered? If we assume for a moment that the Pharisees were sincere, what can we learn from their response? Are you ever in danger of responding to Jesus like they did? Explain.
3. What are the "systems" in your life that you have a hard time parting with? (Religion? Hedonism or pleasures? Materialism & consumption? Liberalism or absolute freedom? Others?) Have you "accessorized" your life with Jesus? Or, have you been truly transformed into a "new wineskin Christian"?
4. Have you let Jesus redefine your way of ordering your world, your priorities and what really matters? What are some areas of your life that you have not transferred into the "new wineskin"? What are some things in your life that you continue to hold onto, that you are have difficulty giving to Jesus?

### **D. Personal Application** (1-3 Minutes)

- Write down some of the things or "systems" around you that can detract from being open to God's plans for your life. Make a conscious decision to quit trusting in all of the systems, and begin fully trusting in the Savior.
- Write down some of the things that God has put in your heart over the weeks, months or years, since you decided to follow Jesus...that you've yet to see fulfilled or completed.

### **E. Prayer Time** (As a whole group or subgroups of 3-4: 10-15 Minutes)

- Ask God to help you deal with the "systems" or "things" you listed above, and tell Him you're ready for Him to fulfill His promises for you.
- Ask God to help you make Jesus the center of your life and not just an "accessory."
- Thank God for sending His Son so that we "may have life, and life to the full." Ask Him to help you trust Him with your whole life.
- Offer any other praises or requests that arose during your discussion.