

**Film:** *Spilt Milk*  
**Parable:** **New Wine in Old Wineskins**  
**Scripture:** **Matthew 9:17, Mark 2:22**  
**Luke 5:37-38**

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## Interpreting *Spilt Milk*

The child in this film knows that milk goes into cereal. He looks in the fridge and sees the gallon that he usually pours into the cereal. He overlooks the new nonfat milk.



The gallon is rotten. It's past its prime... and he pays a price for drinking it. Then he figures, "I can still use the gallon container because that's what I'm used to."

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## Cultural Background

Wine and wineskins were to people of the 1<sup>st</sup> century much like QuickTrip cups and Diet Dr. Pepper are to us today. We all know that you can refill an old QT cup cheaper than buying a new one. The problem is – after a while a re-used paper cup gets nasty...it leaks! So we throw it out and start all over again. The same was true for wine & wineskins. When you get a new batch of wine – it was no big deal to fill up your old wineskin, that is, until it sprung a leak (as old wineskins are prone to do). You don't hang on to the old nasty thing and say – I don't care if the wine spills or not – I'm KEEPING MY VINTAGE WINESKIN! That would be foolishness...and yet that's exactly what religious people have done, over and over again, throughout church history. Jesus saw it happening in his own day, as the Pharisees tried to hold on to the "synagogue" wineskins of their day.

He wasn't telling them that their traditions and structures were bad, simply that, like an old paper cup, or a worn out wineskin – they no longer served their purpose: TO CARRY THE WINE! So it is with us today. We hang onto the hymns of John Wesley saying – "we like the old wineskins" – but Wesley wrote them in his day as a way of putting the ever-new wine of the Gospel into contemporary wineskins. The skin isn't the issue – the wine is!

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### Discussion Questions

- 1) What wineskins do we hang onto in church today - that no longer hold the wine effectively?
  - 2) Can you think of a time in church where we've said: "We've never done it that way before"?
  - 3) What way of knowing God – do I hang onto because I like my old cup?
  - 4) What pioneers in history were once "new wineskins" but are now old hat?
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## Application

Jesus did religion differently than the Jewish leaders were used to. He "ate with sinners." He taught on hillsides, and from the bow of a boat. He didn't follow the "old wineskin" habits of hand-washing, and Sabbath-keeping. The result was, he was despised by the religious authorities. They said: "we've never done it that way before." In this simple parable he both unnerves them and reassures them at the same time. He wants them to know that the old "traditions" are being tossed out like a nasty old cup, or a leaky wineskin – because they no longer serve the job of holding the new wine of the Gospel.

Any wine connoisseur knows that wine is alive – it breathes, it expands. Jesus taught that God's word is also alive. It cannot be contained by any –



– "once and for all" wineskin. It crosses cultures and ethnicities, and in each situation the wineskin looks different, but it's still the same old (new) wine! The skin WILL change – but the wine remains the same.

We struggle with this today. When we find a way of doing church that works – we hang on for dear life...sometimes years after it starts leaking. The Gospel cannot be contained by any wineskin, it will always burst out of it.

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### Discussion Questions

- 1) What traditions do you hang on to, even when you see them not working with the next generation?
  - 2) What things need to remain the same- if the wine's going to remain intact?
  - 3) How do we distinguish wine from wineskin?
  - 4) Where do you see leaks in our current way of operating?
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