



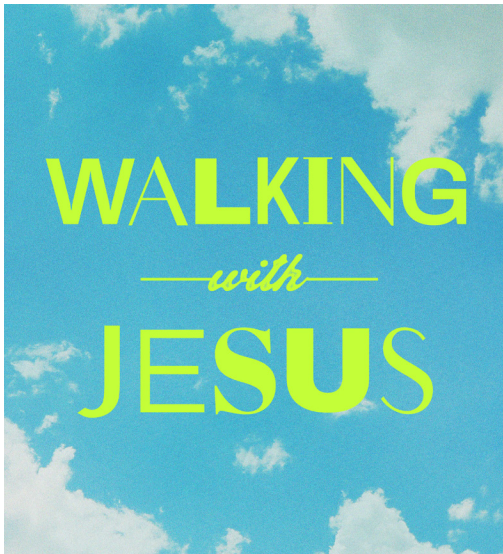
**WALKING**  
*—with—*  
**JESUS**

# Sermon Growth Guide

**June 18, 2023**

**Make It New**





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**June 18, 2023**

**Walking With Jesus – Make It New**

**Matthew 9:14-17**

**Key Verse:** Matthew 9:17 “Neither do people pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.”

**Big Idea:** God is continually doing something new.

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## Foundations

This is the third of five stories of Jesus in Matthew 9 that help shape our understanding of *Walking with Jesus*. Like the previous two accounts, we find Jesus challenged. This week’s challenge had to do with the behavior of His disciples. It created an opportunity for Jesus to essentially declare that He’s not come to maintain the status quo, but to provide more freeing and life-giving ways than we often settle for.

Our instinct when we read stories like this is to cheer Jesus on in His initiative of bringing something better to the older ways. However, experiencing God’s new initiatives in our own lives presents more of a challenge. We’re often tempted to want to hold onto what’s familiar and comfortable, rather than embracing the new that God wants to do. Or, on the other end, we may find it hard to believe God really can change us at this point in life—that who we are has become fairly hardened.

This week’s passage encourages us to remain aware of where God’s new initiatives may be intersecting with our lives. And as we are, to embrace and even invite our Creator’s life-giving change, as He seeks to reclaim us from the damage of the Fall and all that we’ve become comfortable living with.

## Understanding God’s Word

Together, read Matthew 9:14-17.

How would you paraphrase Jesus’ response to John’s disciples, in your own words?

What are some common examples we might use today that would make the same point as Jesus’ examples of clothing and wineskins?

## Applying God’s Word

What’s something new in your life you can point to that you’re currently adapting to? How do you tend to feel about things that are new?

We all love watching the growth of little children, but tend to give our own spiritual growth less thought. Can you identify places where it feels your heavenly Father is doing something new in your life right now?

What’s one practical way you’d like to live out the message of this sermon this week?

## Witnessing God’s Word

Is there someone around you within whom you sense God doing something new? If so, consider offering your observation in a way that might encourage them that God is working in their life.

I invite you to turn to the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 9, as we continue our five-week sermon series on ***Walking with Jesus***. As we work through this chapter, we're seeking to learn what it means to walk with Jesus throughout life. Today's theme is **Make it New**. It's an acknowledgment that walking with Jesus has a way of inviting newness into our lives. We want to understand what this looks like, and how we can be receptive to what God is doing. Before we turn to God's Word, let's ask Him to guide our understanding.

"Then John's disciples came and asked him, "How is it that we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples do not fast?" Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast. No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment, making the tear worse. Neither do people pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved" (Matthew 9:14-17)

Last month, my only granddaughter, Iona, turned 1. It's a weak sermon today, so I thought I'd spend the next 10 minutes showing you some pictures of her! Seriously, it's been fascinating to follow Iona's steep learning curve the last six months or so. Each day becomes a new opportunity for self-discovery, and learning new things. It's not something she's waking up each morning deciding to do. This is a natural process that she and other children experience and live out as they grow.

Seeing Iona's development causes me to think of our growth trajectory as God's children: that our Lord longs for us to grow and develop through the Holy Spirit's transforming influence no less than what we see children naturally experiencing in their early years. I would hope each of us could identify ways He's shaped us over the years: rough edges softened, values formed, character shaped, our capacity to love deepened. Hopefully, each of us walking with Jesus could say

we're not the same person we were when we started.

But what about the new that God still desires to do in our lives today? Can you identify places where it feels like the Lord is doing something new in you right now? Or is it hard to sense where He may be actively at work? Every one of us would be concerned for a child whose growth and development has become stunted. Yet are we as concerned about our own growth and development as God's children? Or have we become willing to settle for less than what God wants to do in our lives?

***Walking with Jesus*** invites an openness to the new things He wants to do. We see this theme in today's passage. As we explore it, I invite you to do so against a backdrop of new initiatives God may be desiring to do in you.

This is the third of five stories in Matthew 9. In each of the first three, Jesus was challenged by someone. In the first story, it was by "teachers of the law" and last week it was the Pharisees who challenged Him. This week's challenge hits closer to home: "Then John's disciples came and asked him, 'How is it that we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples do not fast?'" (Matthew 9:14).

We would have thought John's disciples were on the same side as Jesus; yet He was doing something new that bothered them. John's disciples had joined the other religious leaders in fasting as a way of honoring God, demonstrating to Him and to others how serious they were about their discipleship. In contrast, Jesus and His disciples neglected this practice, making them appear less committed.

When questioned, Jesus responded by comparing His time on earth to a bridegroom with guests. Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast" (Matthew 9:15).

Jesus understood that His arrival, promised and awaited for centuries, should be a cause for rejoicing. When

a bride and groom gathered with their wedding party, it was a tremendous time of celebration for days. Eating and drinking were part of the celebration; biblical scholar Dale Bruner noted that this was as close to a vacation as people enjoyed in those days. To fast during this time together would not only have been unnatural, it would also have been a sign of rudeness to the host. Anticipating His death, Jesus declared that there would be another time to fast, when He was gone.

Jesus also understood that the new way of experiencing relationship with God that He was ushering in was on a collision course with the old ways that others sought to preserve. That people needed to understand He wasn't there to reinforce what was currently in place, but to bring something new.

Let me pause and ask, when you hear the word "new," how does it make you feel? How do you react within? If you're part of a younger generation, constantly enjoying the latest tech advances, new may equal better. Then again, there may already be so much new in your life, you're not sure you want much more. If you're older, like me, new can feel threatening, especially in the area of technology. Every new development makes us feel a little more behind, and we can find it hard to keep up. It can be easy for us, and those in Jesus' day, to hang onto what's familiar and comfortable, and to resist change.

So, Jesus offered two practical examples. Both are a bit unfamiliar to us, but they were well understood by His audience. It would be like if I said today, "Don't put metal in the microwave," you'd nod knowingly.

"No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment, making the tear worse. Neither do people pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved" (Matthew 9:16-17).

The first example pointed to the foolishness of mending an older, washed

and shrunk garment with an unshrunk new patch. The new patch would shrink when washed, causing it to tear away from the old cloth, and both would end up ruined. The second example involved wineskins, which over time stretched to the limit and became brittle. New wine, still fermenting, would expand and then cause old skins to burst. And again, both would be lost.

Both examples illustrated the incompatibility of God's Kingdom change Jesus was ushering in with the old, familiar ways people were comfortable with and holding onto. Jesus wanted to make it clear: He didn't come to maintain the status quo. He came to do something more freeing and life giving than what they were settling for, or that we may settle for today.

As we hear Jesus' response, I invite you to consider two points of application. First, God is continually doing something new. It's who He is. It's what He does. God creates, and this creative activity has continued since the start of our world. God restores; He's actively at work reclaiming our lives from sin's deadly influence. God declares in the Old Testament: "See, I am doing a new thing" (Isaiah 43:19).

Nowadays, various TV shows revolve around fixing up old homes, transforming them into something far more beautiful and functional than when the show begins. That's an image of what God wants to do in you and in me, reclaiming us from the damage we've experienced from the Fall, and from what we're often willing to live with.

Until our final breath, God is shaping each of us more into the person He had in mind at creation, carving out within each of us new places of beauty, through His transforming power. As the Apostle Paul reminds us, "he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6). Are you able to believe this? Can you accept that God isn't done lovingly growing and shaping you?

God's transforming change is a wonderful thing; yet, two things can hold us back from embracing it. Perhaps we don't believe we still can change at this point in

life. It's not uncommon to believe that who we are feels fairly hardened, and that we're pretty well set in our ways. We echo the words of the cartoon character Popeye, who said, "I yam what I yam." Even if we want to experience God's transforming touch, we may not be sure it will make much of a difference.

Or, if we're honest, maybe we don't want to change. After all, change can feel uncomfortable. New patterns of growth can be inconvenient. As Mark Twain shrewdly observed: "The only person who likes change is a baby with a wet diaper." So, perhaps we'd prefer comfortable and familiar over God's promise of better.

This leads to a second point of application from this text: We have a role in God's new initiatives. Our God is actively engaged in a reclamation project to bring about life-giving change; to make us new. Regardless of how far along we are in life, or how much we've already experienced change from the Lord, He's continually at work to restore in us the beauty He knows we're capable of, shaping us in His image.

So let me ask: How receptive are you to God's new work in your life? You see, when God touches our lives with new initiatives, we have a choice. Like those in today's text, we can insist on keeping things the way they are. Or we can walk with Jesus into the new, embracing what He desires to bring about. It's up to us whether we'll work with Him in the new things He's doing, or if we'll push against Him. If I could make an observation: working against what God wants to do doesn't tend to be a winning strategy.

Jen Hatmaker observes, "God is doing a new thing, as He has done in every generation. We stand in that tiny spot in history in which it is our turn to experience God's fresh redemption in a new way." (Jen Hatmaker) Our Lord knows that familiar and comfortable often come at the cost of better. He continues to work in our lives, chipping away at places of hardness, forming us more into His image.

As we reflect on today's message, let me offer a couple of questions to ponder. First, where do you sense God currently

stirring up something new in your life? Perhaps you've been sensing an attitude or behavior that needs some work, that's not where you want to be. Or perhaps you have a feeling of restlessness or dissatisfaction, a longing to experience more than you've been settling for. Perhaps you sense God nudging you to consider some new activity or pursuit in your life. Where do you see signs of God inviting you to join Him in something new that He wants to do?

Then let me ask this perhaps a different way: Where do you currently need God's ability to make things new? Perhaps there's some part of your life that you wish was different moving forward, but it's hard to believe it can be. Allow today's passage to be a precious reminder that Jesus has come to do something new, and His new activity is still at work in your life and mine. Invite God to do something new within you that you, alone, don't have the power to change.

Someone told me this week that he once saw a motel in the backwoods of Louisiana named "It'll Do Motel." I'm not sure any of us would ever want to stay somewhere with that name, and we certainly wouldn't expect much customer service. Yet sometimes we can approach our lives in this way. We hold onto what's familiar and comfortable, telling ourselves, "It'll do." As those in today's passage discovered, though, seeking to preserve the status quo places us on a collision course with the new God wants to do.

As we leave today, take these two questions with you. Where do you sense God currently stirring up something new in your life? And, Where do you currently need God's ability to make things new? As we discern where God is doing something new in our lives, let's embrace this initiative, and join Him in it.