

Old And New Wineskins In Children's Ministry

Steve Alley

Jesus said that we can't put new wine (new ideas or procedures) into old wineskins (people who aren't willing to change). To build a team, we may need to remove "old wineskins" before the Lord can pour "new wine" into our team.



"He told them this parable: 'No one tears a piece out of a new garment to patch an old one. Otherwise, they will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old. And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the new wine will burst the skins; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins. And no one after drinking old wine wants the new, for they say, 'The old is better.'"

– Jesus Luke 5: 36-39

Foundational Principles

1. God has a plan for you and the ministry. (Jer. 29:11)
2. God's plan involves people whose hearts are totally His. (2 Chron. 16:9)
3. People with unwilling or stubborn hearts can stop God.
4. God doesn't like stagnation or compromise. (Rev. 3:16)
5. God warns us about "wolves" and those who cause dissension. (Mat. 7:15)
6. God desires unity. (Rom. 16:7)
7. "New" ways cannot always be "applied" to the "old" ways.
8. Those who are used to the "old" ways may compare and dislike the "new" ways.
9. Those who are used to the "old" ways may not be able support the "new" ways.
10. In making the shift from the "old" to the "new," we cannot rely on personal opinions.
11. The "new" doesn't wait for the "old" to adjust.

God's Examples

1. God offers us "new life" – He doesn't force it on us. (Rev. 3:20)
2. God doesn't compromise His standards to suit our needs. (Ex. 20:2)
3. God lets us choose to apply the "new life" concepts to our lives, if we don't, that's our decision.
4. God's ways are not our ways, we are expected to adjust our ways to His. (Isa 55:8, 9)
5. Jesus listened to those with differing views, but He never compromised for their sake.
6. Jesus understood the "rich young ruler's" fears, yet He didn't lessen His demands. (Mk. 10:17-27)
7. Jesus had meals with, and was kind to, Levi and Zaccheus; but He challenged them with "new" ways of living. (Mt. 9: 9-12; Luke 19: 1-10)

Who Is An "Old Wineskin"?

1. A person who is more interested in the security of the past than in the potential of the future and refuses to change.
2. A person who is offended by someone else telling him/her what to do and refuses to change.
3. A person who needs conflict in order to feel valuable and refuses to change.
4. A person who is not Kingdom-focused or child-focused and refuses to change.
5. A person who doesn't see the ministry vision and who refuses to change.



How To Identify "Old Wineskins"

1. Grumbling about the changes
2. Negative letters, emails, texts, or social media entries
3. Back-biting comments about the change or the leadership

4. Not attending meetings
5. Socializing with negative people
6. Lack of eye contact, no joy
7. Comments others make about him/her

How To Handle “Old Wineskins”

1. Pray for wisdom and discernment.
2. Seek counsel (CAUTION: Protect confidentiality, risk of slander).
 - a. From your supervisor (use the umbrella).
 - b. From your spouse.
 - c. From a ministry partner (same level).
 - d. From an “outside” connection.
3. If possible,* seek to “win” the person.
 - a. Compliment and affirm his/her value.
 - b. Understand his or her needs and seek to satisfy them.
 - c. Spend time with him or her (meals, golf, etc.).
 - d. Ask for opinions or “advice.”



* If the person’s influence on the ministry team or children is obviously negative, you may need to skip this step to protect the ministry. Pray for discernment here.

4. If necessary (see note above), confront the person. (INFORM YOUR PASTOR).
 - a. Recognize his or her time and investment into the ministry.
 - b. Affirm his or her potential influence on the team and children.
 - c. Be honest about your observations of his or her attitude.
 - i. Be specific.
 - ii. Don’t name any other names.
 - d. Let him or her react to your observations.
 - e. Based on the reactions,
 - i. Suggest improvements (time limit, accountability, evaluation).
 - ii. Require a “leave of absence” to pray and consider the call.
 - iii. Thank him/her for past service, ask to step down from ministry. (Prov. 22:10)
 - f. Watch for others to react. If needed, repeat the steps with them.
 - g. Pray for God to replace the “old wineskin” with “new wineskins.”



Cautions

1. When a “new” approach to ministry is presented, we have to be kind, willing to listen, and re-teach if necessary (Matthew 13).
2. We are challenged to “not cause anyone to stumble...” (1 Cor. 10: 31-33)
3. We are challenged to be “steadfast and immovable” regarding the “work of the Lord.” (1 Cor. 15:58)
4. We are challenged to “please God” and not to “please men.” (1 Thes. 2: 1-7; Acts 5:29)
5. We are challenged to nurture and care for others as much as possible. (1 Thes. 2: 7-12)

Watch God Work

1. Don’t give into doubts, fears, or compromise.
2. Trust God’s leadership.
3. Praise Him for His mercy.
4. “Get up,” “Go forth.”

