Jesus Associates with Sinners and Challenges Traditions

1. Read Luke 5:33. Although this is just one verse, consider how the Pharisees' observation about Jesus' disciples emphasizes what a life of following Jesus should look like. One word: Normal!!! Christians aren't supposed to be weird or holier-than-thou. Just normal. The disciples would eat and "drink." Notice that this is a clear indication that Jesus' disciples consumed alcohol. Although they are not being accused of being drunk or of debauchery. But they are clearly not practicing total abstinence from alcohol as must have been the custom of other religious groups. While abstaining from alcohol might be necessary for people who have struggled with substance abuse, it is not a mark of a holy life.

   Fasting was used to prepare for something. But when Jesus is with you, what need is there to fast? When Christians today fast, it should be a time to remember Christ's second coming and what that means for our lives.

2. Read Luke 5:34-39. Humanly speaking, old wine is better than new wine. But contrary to what we might normally expect, the fullness of the kingdom of God is hidden in new wine, a paradox that demonstrates the upside-down nature of the kingdom. How did the table fellowship of Jesus—His hanging out with and having dinner with sinners—demonstrate the new wine of God's kingdom? What does He mean in verse 39 when He says, "No one after drinking old wine desires new wine, for he says, 'the old is good'"?

   Jesus' act of dining with sinners illustrates the new wine of God's kingdom by breaking the social and religious barriers that Judaism had created. In that cultural context, table fellowship was significant; it indicated acceptance and kinship connection. By welcoming sinners, Jesus was demonstrating that God's kingdom is inclusive and even connected to sinful people, that God seeks to restore rather than condemn. This was always God's purpose, even in the OT. But the OT was a shadow of the fullness that was to come in the NT. The OT purity laws were about seeking to restore he relationship to God and his people. The Jews mistakenly interpreted this to mean that ONLY Jews were allowed—good law-abiding, Torah following Jews. They lost sight of wonderful stories like Rahab, Naaman, Jonah and Ninevah, etc, that showed that God wanted even gentiles to be restored into the family of God. Jesus approach contrasts sharply then with the current religious establishment, which often emphasized purity laws over compassion. His interactions revealed that the kingdom of God is about relationship and grace rather than rigid adherence to OT laws.

   In verse 39, when Jesus states, "No one after drinking old wine desires new wine, for he says, 'the old is good'," He is highlighting a natural human tendency to cling to familiar comforts and traditions. The "old wine" symbolizes established religious practices and beliefs, which can feel comfortable and secure. People accustomed to the old ways may resist the new, transformative message of the kingdom because change can be unsettling. Jesus points out that those who have grown accustomed to the old

ways might dismiss the newness He offers, even if it holds greater depth, fulfilment and alignment with God's heart and will.

3. Read Luke 6:1-11. The Pharisees placed an enormous yoke or burden on the people concerning the various laws surrounding the Sabbath—many of which were manmade. As such, the religion of the rank-and-file people became wooden, legalistic and entirely self-centered. There wasn't much concern for actual acts of kindness and mercy towards others, such as Jesus healing the man with the withered hand.

   Reflect on Genesis chapters 1 and 2. What was the significance of the Sabbath, and how does it relate to God's original design for humanity as outlined in Genesis 1:26-28? How does Jesus' statement about "being the lord of the Sabbath" connect?

   The significance of the Sabbath in Genesis chapters 1 and 2 is foundational to understanding God's original design for humanity. In Genesis 2:2-3, God rests on the seventh day after the creation, which not only establishes a day of rest but also sets a divine rhythm of work and rest for human beings. The Sabbath is significant in that it is a time set apart for restoration, reflection, and relationship—with God and with one another.

   In Genesis 1:26-28, God creates humanity in His own image and gives them dominion over the earth, instructing them to be fruitful and multiply. This original design implies that human beings are meant to engage in fruitful work and stewardship of creation, but it is equally important that they also take time to rest and connect with the Creator. The Sabbath serves as a reminder of God's creative work and invites humanity to pause, reflect, and recharge. It emphasizes that resting is not merely about ceasing from work but also about nurturing spiritual and relational well-being.

   When Jesus states, "I am the Lord of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:28), He asserts His authority over the Sabbath and emphasizes that it should be understood in the context of mercy and human need rather than merely as a set of rules. By healing on the Sabbath, He restores the true meaning of the day, highlighting that it is a time for grace, healing, and love. This perspective shifts the focus back to God's original intent for humanity—finding rest in Him while actively engaging in love and care for others. Ultimately, the Sabbath is about the relationship between God and humanity, inviting them into a rhythm of life that embodies both work and rest in harmony.

4. After the resurrection of our Lord on Easter Sunday, Christians would begin to worship on Sundays rather than the traditional Sabbath day, which was Saturday. How was this "new" move actually more in tune with the original intentions of the Sabbath than all the Old Testament Sabbath regulations and rules? It showed the early Christian's confidence that Christ is the fulfillment of the OT and that the Sabath had always been about our hope, peace, and rest in the salvation God would provide. Every Sunday gathering became a weekly reminder of the hope and victory found in Jesus. The resurrection was not just an isolated event; it became the very foundation of Christian worship and a source of continual celebration for believers. It was a declaration that the old order had been fulfilled, and a new order had begun—a new covenant sealed by the blood of Christ and celebrated in His resurrection. Itnitially, it doesn't seem like Sunday was meant to replace Saturday worship, it was seen as a new opportunity to worship. But over time the significance of Saturday faded in comparison to the Christian faith and hope in Christ, which was better represented by Sunday worship. The change from Sabbath

observance to Sunday worship was not about dismissing the importance of rest but rather embracing the greater spiritual reality that Jesus brought. The early church recognized that the substance of the Sabbath—rest, reflection, and worship—was fulfilled in Christ. In Him, they found rest for their souls, and their worship became an expression of gratitude for the salvation He provided. The day itself became less significant compared to the Person it honored.

Colossians 2:16-17

Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.

To insist on the literal OT Sabbath is to make the Sabbath like an alternate Christ—that we are saved by observing the Sabbath and Jesus death and resurrection. Or at the very least it's to say that Jesus is just an add-on to the salvation that God provides through Sabbath observance. In fact, this argument could be made about any OT observance. The early Judaizers argued this and many of the NT epistles argue against it, such as Galatians.

5. In Gen. 3 sin ruined God's good creation. God immediately promised to send a Savior (Genesis 3:15). Of course, Jesus is that Savior. While the first Sabbath—the seventh day of creation—was intended for resting after the work of creation, the work that God initiated after Genesis 3 is focused on redemption and saving humanity from its rebellion. How did Jesus' miracles and His remarks to the religious leaders illustrate this redemptive work and clarify the true purpose of the Sabbath, regardless of which day it is observed?

   From the moment that sin entered the world God began working to reverse it; He worked to redeem it; he worked to re-create it. So the pattern of redemption not only builds on the pattern of creation but also supersedes it. The pattern of creation set aside one day in seven to rest from the work of this world. The pattern of redemption built on this by taking that day of rest, using it to look forward to God's redemption of the world back to the way he first intended. *This redemption and re-creation is God's kingdom*.

6. How do you feel our Sabbath worship reflects the true essence of what God intended for the Sabbath—bringing us rest, moments for reflection, redemption, and pathways for restoration? What personal experiences or examples can you think of?