



# CHAPTER 5

## *Existing Service Formats*

**T**here is perhaps no stronghold more invisible to the modern church—and yet more influential in shaping its outcomes—than the one we now confront. It is not rooted in rebellion, nor in pride, nor in false doctrine. It is rooted in tradition—a 1,400-year-old wineskin so familiar that most Christians have never questioned it.

And yet, for all its history and familiarity, this wineskin is one of the primary reasons the church is failing to produce mature, Christ-like disciples.

This subject, how we conduct our meetings and the order of our services, must be approached with respect and honor. For although the structure is deeply flawed, God has used it. He

has blessed His people through it. He has saved souls, healed hearts, and visited congregations in power within this wineskin.

We must not dishonor what God has done. But we must acknowledge what God is about to do requires something different.

### **A Wineskin Is Not Eternal—Only the Wine Is**

Jesus warned us:

**“No man puts new wine into old wineskins...  
else the wineskins burst, the wine is spilled,  
and the wineskins ruined.”**

—Mark 2:22

The wine is the life of God—the move of His Spirit, the revelation of His Word, the anointing that changes hearts.

The wineskin is the structure that carries that life.

God’s wine is perfect. But He changes the wineskin from time to time to steward new seasons.

The early church had one wineskin.

The medieval church built another.

The Reformation modified it but did not replace it.

The modern church inherited a system so old, so rigid, and

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so unexamined that we forgot it was never biblical to begin with.

And yet, God still used it—because God meets His people wherever He can find faith.

But now, the Lord is pouring new wine into the earth. The end-time rain is coming and the old wineskin cannot hold it.

### **Where Did Our Modern Service Format Come From?**

Most pastors never ask this question. Most believers assume the way we “do church” is rooted in Scripture. But the order of service used in 95% of churches today is not found in the New Testament.

In fact, the structure we now call “Sunday service” was created approximately 600 years after the Book of Acts.

### **The Format Originated with the Roman Catholic Mass**

Around 600 A.D., the Catholic Church formalized the liturgy—the order of worship—based largely on symbolism from the Last Supper and Jewish temple tradition.

The structure included:

- Opening rites,
- Processionals,
- Prayers,

- Scripture readings,
- Sermons,
- Confession,
- Eucharistic ritual,
- Benediction.

This order remained virtually unchanged for over a millennium.

**"From roughly the time of St. Gregory [d. 604] we have the text of the Mass, its order and arrangement, as a sacred tradition that no one has ventured to touch except in unimportant details."**

*Fr. Adrian Fortescue, The Mass: A Study of the Roman Liturgy [1912], p. 173*

### **The Reformation Changed Theology—but Not the Wineskin**

When Luther and the Reformers recovered the Gospel of grace, they broke free from many Catholic doctrines—but not from Catholic structure.

They removed icons, shortened rituals, preached in the common language, and replaced Latin liturgy with vernacular readings. But the fundamental structure of the service remained intact.

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That same structure became the backbone of Protestantism. It gradually softened into modern evangelical service models. Today, the liturgical skeleton is still there, hidden beneath contemporary style.

We changed the language, the instruments, the style of preaching, and the décor—but the wineskin remained the same.

This would not be a problem—if this wineskin were capable of producing mature disciples.

But it is not.

### **The Old Service Format Cannot Produce Christ-Like Maturity**

I must say this clearly, respectfully, and without apology:

The modern order of service was never designed to produce full spiritual maturity, and as a result, it has reached the limits of what it can form in believers.

### **Why?**

#### **Because the service model is centered around:**

- passive listening,
- one primary speaker,

- one weekly gathering,
- minimal participation,
- scripted worship,
- little to no spiritual activation,
- no impartation,
- no reproduction,
- no real disciple training.

**This wineskin was never designed for training and equipping disciples. It was designed for liturgy, ceremony, and remembrance.**

It can inspire.

It can teach.

It can comfort.

It can stir emotions.

It can introduce people to Jesus.

**But it cannot produce men and women who:**

- hear God's voice like Ananias,
- walk in power like Stephen,
- disciple others like Paul,
- operate in gifts like the early believers,
- turn cities upside down like the church of Acts.

Our services create listeners, not disciples.

### **Imagine Training Soldiers Using Church Methods**

If the military adopted our meeting-based training methods, boot camp would look like this:

Recruits have a meeting once or twice a week. They listen to announcements about future meetings. They sing some patriotic songs. They listen to the drill sergeant talk about how to be a better soldier. Every week the subject changes. This week how to salute. Next week how to make your bed. The following week the importance of the gas-mask. Portions from the official manual are read. Some sections are memorized, but this is not mandatory.

Imagine if that same order of training was repeated every week. Even if it went on for decades, recruits could never master basic skills. With no intentional plan to equip them and make them into mature soldiers, they would hear many of the same things repeated over and over. Even after a lifetime of attendance, minimal progress could be made.

How many soldiers could be made combat-ready in this system?

None.

Yet this is exactly how the modern church attempts to prepare believers to overcome the world and live a victorious life. Even

if people attend optional Sunday School and Small Group meetings, they are just more of the same disjointed sessions. They still lack the clear goal of full-maturity and an intentional plan to lead people there.

### **Why God Is Replacing This Wineskin**

We honor what God has done through Sunday and other services. God has visited His people in sanctuaries, cathedrals, storefronts, gymnasiums, and rented school auditoriums. He has saved souls, broken addictions, healed bodies, restored marriages, and transformed lives.

### **Honoring the Past While Embracing the Future**

We do not dishonor our fathers and mothers in the faith. They served faithfully within the structure they were given. God moved because they sought Him with sincere hearts—not because the wineskin was perfect.

### **We must distinguish between what God can bless and what God can build with.**

God blessed Israel in the wilderness—but He never intended them to live there. Likewise, God blessed the old service wineskin—but He never intended it to be the final expression of His Church.

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Now the Lord is calling His Church to grow up—to shed the structure of children and step into maturity.

He is not tearing down the old wineskin because it was evil.

He is replacing it because it is inadequate for the days ahead.

The Lord is preparing His people for:

- the former and latter rain to fall,
- the end-time harvest,
- the full stature of Christ,
- and the return of the Bridegroom.

The old structure cannot hold this.

The coming outpouring—the former and latter rain—will require: - daily discipleship, - activation of gifts, - team leadership, - hands-on equipping, - spiritual apprenticeship, - house-to-house ministry, - and true biblical community.

The old wineskin cannot support this.

The mature Bride Christ is returning for cannot be formed in a structure not designed to produce maturity.

We honor what God has done through Sunday services. Truly, He has worked wonders through a structure that was never

ideal. Because God's mercy fills every space where His people gather.

We honor where we have been. But we cannot stay there.

### **The Stronghold Must Fall**

The modern service format—regardless of style, size, or denomination—is a wineskin that cannot produce mature disciples.

For the wine God is about to pour out will be unlike anything seen since the first century.

And new wine must always have a new wineskin.

In the next chapter, we will confront another critical barrier to maturity: improper training methods—and why the Church no longer trains disciples the way Jesus and the Apostles did.