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## CONCLUSION

Jesus said: “No one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, he pours new wine into new wineskins.”<sup>1</sup> His point was simply that some actions are inappropriate. Some church practices are also inappropriate. If we compare the new wine to our new lives in Christ, then the wineskin could be likened to what we do when we come together as God’s people (ecclesiology). The most appropriate wineskin is arguably found in the dynamics of New Testament church practice.

The growth strategies of the ancient church were *simple*—a family atmosphere, participatory worship, weekly fellowship over food with friends who love Jesus, servant leaders, and the in-depth discussion of Scripture. Economist E.F. Schumacher said, “Any intelligent fool can make things bigger and more complex. It takes a lot of genius and a lot of courage to move in the opposite direction.”<sup>2</sup>

The growth strategies of the ancient church were *strategic*—God’s people got involved in church meetings through participatory worship that stirred up good deeds, loving relationships were formed through the weekly *Agapé*, and a strong commitment by the leaders to build congregational consensus promoted unity. Overflowing love and unity is a powerful witness to the watching world.<sup>3</sup>

The growth strategies of the ancient church were *scriptural*—based on Jesus’ teachings, clearly seen in the Bible, practiced by first-century believers, and prescribed in the New Testament.<sup>4</sup> They constituted a divine design for making disciples of all nations. Who knew better than the apostles the best church practice wineskins? Aren’t their traditions worthy of our consideration?

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<sup>1</sup> Mark 2:22. After waiting patiently for Job’s three friends to finish speaking, Elihu said, “Behold, my belly is like wine that has no vent; like new wineskins ready to burst. I must speak, that I may find relief ...” (Job 32:19-20).

<sup>2</sup> EF Schumacher, “Small is Beautiful”, *The Radical Humanist* Vol. 37, No. 5 (August 1973), 22.

<sup>3</sup> John 13:35, 17:21.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Thessalonians 2:15, 1 Corinthians 14:37.