

“We don’t hold with new ideas around here. No use in talking about it, our way is best.”

This is what we heard all through our trip in the countryside. It was as if we were speaking a foreign language. We are a non-profit group that visits impoverished areas and offers help to improve their standard of living. We have a tractor trailer full of free, useful equipment to improve the quality of lives, but because of pride or tradition, few will accept the gifts that could possibly save their lives.

We did have success in one area. The land had been over-logged and there was not much firewood available for cooking or for providing warmth. We gave out several solar ovens to families and showed them how to cook meals, and boil water by using the sun's rays. The firewood they did have could now go toward keeping them warm. Shoes and clothing for young and old, along with thermal blankets were well received, and the children eagerly accepted stuffed animals.

We encountered a group of folks that had to haul water by hand from a creek some distance away. An offer of a large cistern, hand pump and piping was refused. It just wasn’t their way. It is hard to grasp why anyone would turn down a cistern of water inside their home.

Our last stop was at a community church on a Sunday. We waited outside until the service was over. We had set up tables with soap, clothing, blankets, food and first aid supplies. Siding and roofing supplies along with nails, hammers and saws were available for the taking.

Church let out and folks drifted toward the tables. Out of what we think was desperation, all the items were taken, including the cisterns. Offers to help with building repairs and the cutting of firewood were turned down.

As we bumped along in the cab of the truck, we wondered why some folks facing life or death situations in the harsh winter would turn away from life saving gifts. Lamar said, "I just don't understand why they won't accept something that can change their lives for the better. Well, maybe the next generation will see that there is a better way to live." Doris was silent for a moment then said, "You know, in a way it reminds me of the story in the Bible about putting new wine into old wineskins." Robin said, "I don't really understand what that story means." Doris explained that in Biblical times, wine was kept in leather bottles. After new wine had fermented for about a week, it was poured into brand new leather bottles - wineskins. New, supple wineskins could expand as the wine fermented. If the new wine had been poured into an old wineskin, fermentation

would crack open the old, rigid wineskin and the wine would be lost.

It's a picture of the self-righteous Pharisees and their strict adherence to a system of laws and works that they thought would earn them salvation. The Pharisees represent the old, cracked wineskin that could not hold the new wine of Jesus and His salvation. The Gospel did not agree with the old, carnal hearts of the Pharisees, so they rejected it and let it run out of their ears, minds and hearts - the old cracked wineskins could not hold the transforming truth and love of Jesus, the new wine.

Those that heard and believed in Jesus as their Savior were transformed. They represent the new wineskins. The Word of Jesus was poured into their hearts and spirits. The new wine of Jesus and His teachings grew in them and they held Him in their supple, teachable hearts.

Wow! Said Robin, "that really is a living picture of the old wineskins. I never had a clear understanding of that before. So, the new wine and the new wineskins are both preserved and nothing is lost. Thanks, Doris."

The truck hummed along toward home. They all said a prayer for the folks they left behind, asking the Lord to

open their ears and hearts to Him, to be their new wine in a new wineskin. A supple, teachable heart is a wonderful thing.

Nor do people put new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wineskins burst, and the wine pours out and the wineskins are ruined; but they put new wine into fresh wineskins, and both are preserved.” -Matthew 9:17