



Sunday, June 14, 2026 | “Comfortable in Traditions & Rigid Religion” – Old Wine” Lesson 4 - | Katrina Brown-Graham

## Lesson Summary

In this week’s lesson, Katrina walked us through what it really means to be “**comfortable in the old wine**”—our traditions, routines, and church habits that feel safe but can keep us from growing. She reminded us that **tradition itself is not the problem**; the problem is when we **love our traditions more than we love truth, freedom, and people**.

Using Scripture (Luke 5:39, Matthew 15:1–9, Galatians 5:1) and real-life stories, she showed how we often:

- Choose **comfort over change**
- Protect **rules over relationships**
- Perform **worship** but neglect **acts of love**
- Hold onto what’s familiar, even when God is clearly calling us **higher and deeper**

Katrina challenged us to ask:

**What “old wine” in my life—what habit, rule, or expectation—do I actually love more than God?**

Because that’s the place where God is asking us to **surrender**, so He can pour something new.

## 1. Setting the Foundation: Old Wine, New Wine, and the Container

Last week, Katrina taught on **the container** – *us* – our bodies, souls, and lives that hold whatever God wants to pour in.

This week, she shifted to **the old wine** – **traditions, systems, and ways of doing church and life** that feel safe, familiar, and comfortable.

- She made it clear:
  - **Tradition itself is not the enemy.**
  - The problem is when we **bind tradition** as if not following it will **send people to hell**.
- She used family examples:
  - The **family song tradition**, with each generation adding their part.
  - Morning **routines** (walking, line dancing) that ground and structure her life.
  - These are good and helpful—*until* we start treating them like divine law.

### Key idea:

Old wine = **traditions, routines, religious patterns** that feel good and familiar. They aren’t automatically bad—but they can become a **prison** when we can’t receive what God is trying to do *now*.

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## 2. Why We Cling to the Old: Comfort Over Growth

Katrina walked us into **Luke 5:39**:

“And no one after drinking old wine wants the new, for they say, *‘The old is better.’*” [~1:11:40]

She unpacked it:

- Jesus **isn’t condemning** the old wine.
- He’s **diagnosing our tendency** to prefer:
  - What’s **comfortable**
  - What’s **familiar**
  - What feels **safe and predictable**

She illustrated this with real-life examples:



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- **Favorite clothes** – the old blue college shorts with a rip and safety pins that she wore to death because they made her feel good and comfortable.
- **The comfort house dress** or favorite wig – the thing you reach for when you want to feel like *yourself*.
- That’s how we treat **tradition**:

It’s familiar, it “fits,” and we don’t *really* want to do anything different.

But spiritual maturity means:

- **Training your palate** to like what you didn’t like before:
  - As a child: only wanting sweets
  - As an adult: choosing squash, zucchini, carrots, whole foods because you’ve learned **health > taste**
- Like **Father John** medicine:
  - It’s **nasty**, but when you’re really sick, you want what actually **works**, not just what goes down easy.

### Core point:

Sometimes, to get better, you must be willing to **feel discomfort** and **consume what doesn’t taste good to your flesh** but is good for your soul.

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### 3. Tradition vs. God’s Command: When We Invalidate the Word

Katrina had Tutu read **Matthew 15:1–9**, where the Pharisees ask Jesus why His disciples break the “tradition of the elders” by not washing their hands before eating.

Jesus’ response exposes the heart of the issue:

- They were **protecting tradition** while **violating God’s actual commands**, especially about honoring parents.
- Katrina highlighted Jesus’ rebuke that they had:

“Invalidated the word of God for the sake of your tradition.” [~1:00:30–1:01:00]

She translated that into our context:

- **Handwashing** is good, wise, hygienic.  
But if a person is **homeless and hungry**, what’s more important:
  - A lecture on washing hands, or
  - **Putting food in their mouth?**
- She called out the attitude of people who:
  - Want to “serve the homeless,” but
  - Are scared to touch them, cringe when they eat, and only want to feel *good about themselves*.

She expanded it to the church:

- Churches sitting **in the middle of the hood**, hearing gunshots, but not willing to **walk the streets**, talk to people, or love the neighborhood.
- **Tradition** becomes a cover for **fear, apathy, and self-protection**.

### Key conviction:

We are often **more concerned about rules, image, and order** than about the **heart of God**, which is always people, justice, mercy, and love.

#### 4. Galatians 5:1 – Freedom vs. Voluntary Slavery

Katrina read **Galatians 5:1**:

“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again with the yoke of slavery.”

She broke it down:

- Jesus came to **set us free**, and we keep **re-yoking ourselves** to:
  - Old rules
  - Old systems
  - Old expectations
  - Old religious performances
- She used a powerful family story:
  - A woman in abuse whose grown son **refused** to go fight her abuser anymore, because she **kept going back**.
  - His point: *I’m not about to risk my freedom for someone who will return to bondage.*
- Spiritual parallel:
  - Christ has broken the chains, but **we keep walking back into the same slavery**—to tradition, to religion, to people-pleasing, to fear—**by choice**.

**Reflection question Katrina raised:**

When God has opened the door, **are you choosing to walk back into the cage?**

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#### 5. When Tradition Becomes Idolatry: Modern Church Examples

Katrina didn’t stay theoretical—she went **straight at the church**:

**Dress & Respectability**

- The tradition of **dressing up for church** comes from:
  - Enslaved and oppressed Black folks having one day to “look like” how they wanted to be treated.
- That made sense in its time.  
But now:
  - We **judge young people** for wearing jeans, Jordans, natural hair, pink hair, braids, or dreads to worship.
  - Some churches **won’t let men serve** unless they have a tie and button-down.
- Katrina’s stance:
  - If you want to **dress up**, dress up.
  - But **do not bind it on others** as if God has a dress code in Scripture.
  - Young people can **love God in jeans, in Jordans, in locs**.

**Key warning:**

There is a difference between **valuing heritage** and being **enslaved to a form** that no longer reflects the heart of Christ.



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## 6. Acts of Worship vs. Acts of Love

Katrina drew a clear line between **performing worship** and **living love**:

- We proudly check off:
  - 5 songs, 30-minute sermon, Communion, Prayer, Dismissal
- But then:
  - We walk out during **announcements** and miss the names of the sick and shut-in.
  - We don’t write them down, call them, or pray for them.

Her point:

- **The act of love** is sometimes:
  - Staying seated,
  - Listening carefully to the names,
  - Carrying those names into your week in **prayer and presence**.
- We are often more devoted to **“5 acts of worship”** than we are to:
  - *One simple act of compassion.*

She also compared:

- Standing for hours at **concerts**—Beyoncé, Three 6 Mafia, etc.—no complaints, on our feet, singing every lyric, happy to have sore feet.
- Versus:
  - Complaining because **prayer went too long**, or
  - Service went 15 minutes over.

### Her challenge:

You don’t say “it don’t take all that” at a concert you enjoy.  
So **why** do you say it when it comes to God?

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## 7. Heaven, Attention Span, and What You Really Value

Katrina pressed this deeper:

- If you **can’t stand**:
  - A 45-minute worship,
  - An extended prayer,
  - Or an extra song of praise,
- Then what do you think you’re going to do in **heaven**, where the elders cast their crowns and cry: “Holy, holy, holy around the throne?”

She said plainly:

- This life is **training ground**.
- If you don’t love His presence now,  
**Why do you think you’ll enjoy it later?**

### Bottom line:

We always find time, energy, and attention for what we **truly value**.

So the real question is not, “Does it take all that?”

The real question is, **“What do I love most?”**

## 8. Old Covenant vs. New Covenant: Insufficient, Not Evil

Katrina used the analogy of **insufficient funds**:

- The Old Testament system wasn’t “bad”—it was **insufficient**:
  - Animal sacrifices could never fully cover sin.
  - They were **types and shadows**, pointing to **Jesus**, the ultimate sacrifice.
- Similarly:
  - Our **old systems, old religious structures, old habits** may have *worked for a season*,
  - But they cannot carry the **fullness of what God wants to do now**.

**Key line:**

Old wine and old wineskins aren’t always sinful;  
they’re often just **too small for the new thing God is pouring**.

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## 9. The Rich Young Ruler: What Do You Love More Than God?

Katrina closed by walking us into the story of the **rich young ruler**:

- On paper, he looked perfect:
  - Honored his parents
  - Kept the commandments
  - Morally disciplined
  - Young, powerful, rich, respected
- Jesus didn’t challenge the rules he kept—He **pressed the idol he wouldn’t let go**:
  - “Sell all you have and follow Me.”

**Katrina brought this all the way home:**

- You can: Show up every Sunday, Serve, Give, Keep all the visible rules
- And still have **one thing** you love **more than God**:
  - Your title
  - Your reputation
  - Your political ideology
  - Your comfort
  - Your traditions
  - Your wealth
  - Even your relationships.

She testified honestly:

- She **loves** her husband, her nieces, her mother, her role, her title—  
but **none of them** more than God.
- She’s clear:
  - She will not go to hell for *anybody*.

**Challenge question she left hanging in the room:**

What is the “old wine” in your life—the thing you prefer, protect, and excuse—that you actually love more than God?

That’s the thing you **must be willing to release**.



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## 10. The Call: Examine, Release, and Make Room for the New

Katrina’s whole lesson on **old wine** landed here:

- **Search your life:**
  - Which traditions are you **binding** on others without Scripture?
  - Where have you **made comfort your idol**?
  - What practices are **no longer serving God’s purpose**, but you keep them because “we’ve always done it this way”?
- **Stop invalidating God’s Word** for the sake of your preferences.
- **Stop confusing performance with love.**
- **Stop choosing slavery** when Christ has made you free.

Some battles are not won by **trying harder** at the old;  
they’re won by **surrendering deeper** to what God is calling you into now.

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This is the heart of Katrina’s voice this week:

- Honor what was,
- But don’t **worship** it.
- Love your traditions,
- But don’t **let them outrank truth, freedom, and love.**
- Be willing to **release the old wine**  
so you can receive what God is getting ready to pour next.

## Closing Summary – “Comfortable in Traditions & Rigid Religion (Old Wine)”

As Katrina closed this lesson, the message was clear and convicting:

God is not asking us to hate our traditions; He’s asking us **not to worship them**. Old wine—our familiar ways, routines, and church customs—may have served us for a season, but they become dangerous when they:

- Matter more to us than **God’s Word, God’s people, God’s new work** in our lives

Through Luke 5:39, Matthew 15:1–9, and Galatians 5:1, we were reminded that:

- Jesus came to bring **freedom**, not to reinforce our cages.
- We can “do all the right things” and still cling to **one thing** we love more than God.
- The real issue is not the old wine itself, but our **unwillingness to let go** when God calls us higher.

The question Katrina left with us is not, “What are *they* doing wrong?” but:

**What is the “old wine” in my life—the comfort, tradition, system, or identity—that I keep choosing over deeper surrender to God?**

This week, the invitation is to:

- **Examine honestly**
- **Release courageously**
- **Make room intentionally** for what God wants to pour next

Some battles will not be won by **striving harder** in the old way,  
but by **surrendering deeper** to the new thing God is doing.