



Gospel of Mark Bible Study

Session #8 November 3rd – Nov. 8th Mark 7:1-7:37

Tuesday 6am @LW – Tuesday 5:15pm @AV

Wednesday 10am & 6:15pm @LW

Sunday 10:30am @AV

Clean and Unclean - Mark 7:1-23 Life Application Notes

7:1ff The religious leaders sent some investigators from their headquarters in Jerusalem to check up on Jesus. The delegation didn't like what they found, however, because Jesus scolded them for keeping the law and the traditions in order to look holy instead of to honor God. The prophet Isaiah accused the religious leaders of his day of doing the same thing (Isaiah 29:13). Jesus used Isaiah's words to accuse these men.

7:3-4 Mark explained these Jewish rituals because he was writing to a non-Jewish audience. Before each meal, devout Jews performed a short ceremony, washing their hands and arms in a specific way. The disciples did not have dirty hands, but they were simply not carrying out this traditional cleansing. The Pharisees thought this ceremony cleansed them from any contact they might have had with anything considered unclean. Jesus said they were wrong in thinking they were acceptable to God just because they were clean on the outside.

7:6-7 Hypocrisy is pretending to be something you are not and have no intention of being. Jesus called the Pharisees hypocrites because they worshiped God for the wrong reasons. Their worship was not motivated by love, but by a desire to attain profit, to appear holy, and to increase their status. We become hypocrites when we (1) pay more attention to reputation than to character, (2) carefully follow certain religious practices while allowing our hearts to remain distant from God, and (3) emphasize our virtues but others' sins.

7:8-9 The Pharisees added hundreds of their own petty rules and regulations to God's holy laws, and then they tried to force people to follow these rules. These men claimed to know God's will in every detail of life. There are still religious leaders today who add rules and regulations to God's Word, causing much confusion among believers. It is idolatry to claim that your interpretation of God's Word is as important as God's Word itself. It is especially dangerous to set up unbiblical standards for *others* to follow. Instead, look to Christ for guidance about your own behavior, and let him lead others in the details of their lives.

7:10-11 The Pharisees used God as an excuse to avoid helping their families. They thought it was more important to put money in the temple treasury than to help their needy parents, although God's law specifically says to honor fathers and mothers (Exodus 20:12) and to care for those in need (Leviticus 25:35-43). (For an explanation of *Corban*, see the note on +Matthew 15:5-6.) We should give money and time to God, but we must never use God as an excuse to neglect our responsibilities. Helping those in need is one of the most important ways to honor God.

7:18-19 Do we worry more about what is in our diets than what is in our hearts and minds? As they interpreted the dietary laws (Leviticus 11), the Jews believed they could be clean before God because of what they refused to eat. But Jesus pointed out that sin actually begins in the attitudes and intentions of the inner person. Jesus did not degrade the law, but he paved the way for the change made clear in Acts 10:9-29 when God removed the cultural restrictions regarding food. We are not pure because of outward acts—we become pure on the inside as Christ renews our minds and transforms us into his image.

7:20-23 An evil action begins with a single thought. Allowing our minds to dwell on lust, envy, hatred, or revenge will lead to sin. Don't defile yourself by focusing on evil. Instead, follow Paul's advice in Phil. 4:8 and think about what is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and admirable.

Study Questions:

1. What are some of your favorite traditions?
2. What were the Pharisees and teachers of the law concerned about? Why? (7:2-5)
3. What were the Pharisees doing wrong? (7:6-8)
4. How did Jesus place tradition in proper perspective? (7:10-19)
5. What's wrong with "holding on to the traditions of men"?

6. What did Jesus want His audience to do?
7. What can you do to honor the commands of God above your traditions?

The Faith of a Syrophenician Woman - Mark 7:24-30 Life Application Notes

7:24 Jesus traveled about 30 miles to Tyre and then went to Sidon. These were port cities on the Mediterranean Sea north of Israel. Both cities had flourishing trade and were very wealthy. They were proud, historic Canaanite cities.

In David's day, Tyre was on friendly terms with Israel (2 Samuel 5:11), but soon afterward the city became known for its wickedness. Its king even claimed to be God (Ezekiel 28:1ff). Tyre rejoiced when Jerusalem was destroyed in 586 B.C., because without Israel's competition, Tyre's trade and profits would increase. It was into this evil and materialistic culture that Jesus brought his message. It is interesting that Jesus stressed the importance of inner purity just before visiting Tyre.

7:26 This woman is called a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia, in Mark and a Canaanite in Matthew. Mark's designation refers to her political background. His Roman audience would easily identify her by the part of the empire that was her home. Matthew's description was designed for his Jewish audience, who remembered the Canaanites as bitter enemies when Israel was settling the promised land.

7:27-28 *Dog* refers to little dogs or house pets, not outdoor scavengers. Jesus was saying that his first priority was to provide food for the children (teach his disciples), not to allow pets to interrupt the family meal.

The woman did not try to argue. Using Jesus' choice of imagery, she pointed out that she was willing to be considered an interruption as long as she could receive God's healing for her daughter. Ironically, many Jews would lose God's spiritual healing because they rejected Jesus, while many Gentiles, whom the Jews rejected, would find salvation because they recognized Jesus.

7:29 This miracle shows that Jesus' power over demons is so great that he doesn't need to be present physically in order to free someone. His power transcends any distance.

Study Questions:

1. When was a time when you felt like an outsider?
2. Who came to see Jesus? Why? (7:25-26)
3. Why was Jesus impressed with the woman? (7:28-29)
4. What happened to the woman and her daughter? (7:30)
5. What was exemplary about the woman who came to see Jesus?
6. What about the woman's attitude can we apply to our prayer life?
7. What concrete step can you take to show your faith in the Lord and your dependence on His power?

The Healing of a Deaf and Mute Man - Mark 7:31-37 Life Application Notes

7:36 Jesus asked the people not to talk about this healing, because he didn't want to be seen simply as a miracle worker. He didn't want the people to miss his real message. We must not be so concerned about what Jesus can do for us that we forget to listen to his message.

Study Questions:

1. What do you think it would be like to be deaf or unable to speak?
2. Who was brought to Jesus? Why? (7:32)
3. What did Jesus do so that the man would know it was Jesus who helped him? (7:33-36)
4. What command of Jesus got the opposite effect He intended? (7:36)
5. How has God helped you in a way that met your personal, unique needs, as He did for the man in this story?
6. How can we tailor the way we reach out to each person?
7. What can you do to reach out to someone in need this week?

Bible Memory Verse: "First let the children eat all they want," he told her, "for it is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs." "Yes, Lord," she replied, "but even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." **Mark 7:27-28**