

## Mark 7:1-30 Study

<sup>1</sup> The **Pharisees** and some of the teachers of the law who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus <sup>2</sup> and saw some of his disciples eating food with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed. <sup>3</sup> (The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders. <sup>4</sup> When they come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash. And they observe many other traditions, such as the washing of cups, pitchers and kettles.<sup>[a]</sup>)

<sup>5</sup> So the Pharisees and teachers of the law asked Jesus, “Why don’t your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with defiled hands?”

<sup>6</sup> He replied, “Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written:

“These people honor me with their lips,  
but their hearts are far from me.

<sup>7</sup> They worship me in vain;  
their teachings are merely human rules.”<sup>[b]</sup>

<sup>8</sup> You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to human traditions.”

<sup>9</sup> And he continued, “You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe<sup>[c]</sup> your own traditions! <sup>10</sup> For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and mother,’<sup>[d]</sup> and, ‘Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death.’<sup>[e]</sup> <sup>11</sup> But you say that if anyone declares that what might have been used to help their father or mother is Corban (that is, devoted to God)— <sup>12</sup> then you no longer let them do anything for their father or mother. <sup>13</sup> Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that.”

<sup>14</sup> Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, “Listen to me, everyone, and understand this. <sup>15</sup> Nothing outside a person can defile them by going into them. Rather, it is what comes out of a person that defiles them.”<sup>[f]</sup> <sup>[16]</sup> <sup>[g]</sup>

<sup>17</sup> After he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about this parable. <sup>18</sup> “Are you so dull?” he asked. “Don’t you see that nothing that enters a person from the outside can defile them? <sup>19</sup> For it doesn’t go into their heart but into their stomach, and then out of the body.” (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean.)

<sup>20</sup> He went on: “What comes out of a person is what defiles them. <sup>21</sup> For it is from within, out of a person’s heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, <sup>22</sup> adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. <sup>23</sup> All these evils come from inside and defile a person.”

### Jesus Honors a Syrophenician Woman’s Faith

<sup>24</sup> Jesus left that place and went to the vicinity of Tyre.<sup>[h]</sup> He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it; yet he could not keep his presence secret. <sup>25</sup> In fact, as soon as she heard about him, a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an impure spirit came and fell at his feet. <sup>26</sup> The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia. She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter.

<sup>27</sup> “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 the dogs.”

<sup>28</sup> “Lord,” she replied, “even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.”

<sup>29</sup> Then he told her, “For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter.”

<sup>30</sup> She went home and found her child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

### Footnotes:

- a. [Mark 7:4](#) Some early manuscripts *pitchers, kettles and dining couches*
- b. [Mark 7:7](#) Isaiah 29:13
- c. [Mark 7:9](#) Some manuscripts *set up*
- d. [Mark 7:10](#) Exodus 20:12; Deut. 5:16
- e. [Mark 7:10](#) Exodus 21:17; Lev. 20:9
- f. [Mark 7:16](#) Some manuscripts include here the words of 4:23.
- g. [Mark 7:24](#) Many early manuscripts *Tyre and Sidon*

### **Main Points:**

- Vs 1-13.
  - To follow God is not to just follow the oral law (outward actions i.e. washing of hands before eating or after being in contact with the Gentiles in the market place, and giving the appearance of worshipping). The law to the Jews represented cleanliness and purity.
  - The Jewish people (Pharisees and scribes) are following the oral laws without having a heart for God.
  - These oral laws have become to mean more to the Jewish people than the commandments of God.
- Vs 14-23.
  - Jesus proclaims that it is what is inside that counts!
  - We are not defiled by the outside i.e. food but by our own evil desires on the inside
- Vs 24-30.
  - Jesus comes across a GENTILE woman and he conversed with her – links to previous passage of Jews tradition of washing hands after associating with a gentile in the marketplace, this is in direct opposition to that oral law. Mark is highlighting Jesus' good news is for all people.
  - The gentile woman has faith in Jesus, she asks him for his healing powers.
  - Jesus states that the children (representing Israel) are to be fed first (given the good news first). The dogs (the gentiles) cannot steal their food (the gentiles turn for the good news will come later). Gentile woman's response is with faith and humility. She states that the even the dogs want the crumbs, that is, even she a gentile, wants and believes in the good news NOW. Jesus response to this is to heal her daughter. The gentile's inner desire to have faith in Jesus has resulted in the healing of her daughter. Again, inward desires outweigh outward practices, and this occurs through a reliance and faith in Jesus.

### **SUMMARY:**

The Pharisees and scribes are complaining that being unwashed on the outside (whether hands or food or utensils) is what leads you to become unclean on the inside. This belief has occurred to the extent where the elders have developed their own 'oral laws' as well as the Old Testament laws. Jesus challenges this misuse of the Old Testament and the obedience to these oral laws. He insists that true matters of clean and unclean originate on the inside.

The detailed OT purity codes were concerned with how one entered into the presence of God. They were not works by which the Israelites could ingratiate themselves before God. Rather, they showed God's grace in negotiating a way for himself to live among his people. Jesus has now rendered these 'access guidelines' null and void, there must therefore now be a new way to meet with God. Then answer... Jesus is the new temple, the new way to meet with God.

The following passage is closely linked to this. Jesus' visit to Tyre universalises the concept of Messiah in terms of geography, ethnicity, gender, and religion in a way entirely unprecedented in Judaism.

### **SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY:**

To identify the separate groups in this passage and observe their actions, reactions and the reason why.

Divide the group into groups of two or three and ask them to complete the table on the following page.

(As leaders, you may need to do some further reading for some of the answers, it would be best if you have had a chance to answer the table before hand.)

Come back together as a group and discuss:

1. How does this episode contribute to our understanding of Jesus? How does vs 24-30 suggest that Jesus is the answer, we do not have to rely on our own works?
2. How do you respond to this story and how does it apply today? Are there those amongst us who are at risk of living like the Pharisees? For example, those whose gifts are to serve may be at risk of forgetting to seek out a robust relationship with Jesus **or** are you engaging in false obedience/pseudo holiness?

Encourage a time of confession and prayer.

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Description/Definition</b>	<b>Action/Reaction</b>	<b>Reason behind the action of the participants or Reason behind inclusion in passage</b>
Pharisees and Scribes			
Jesus			
Disciples			
Tradition of the Elders (Oral laws)		N/A	

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Description/Definition</b>	<b>Action/Reaction</b>	<b>Reason behind the action of the participants or Reason behind inclusion in passage</b>
OT testaments prophets: Isaiah, Moses		N/A	
The crowd			
Syrophoenician Women			

