

PART ONE: Hear and Understand

Mark 7:1-37

As we have discussed, Mark's Gospel focuses on Jesus' ministry as a servant. In the early chapters, Mark showed us who Jesus is. Then he detailed how Jesus demonstrated His power in victory over demons, disease, storms, and sin! In this chapter we will begin to see how Jesus served the people, both Jews and Gentiles, but not without opposition.

Read Mark 7:1-5.

1. The Pharisees and Scribes traveled from Jerusalem to find and check in on Jesus (Mark 3:2). What did they observe some of the disciples doing that they found fault with? (v. 2)

2. Why was this an issue for these religious leaders? (v. 3)

3. **THINK:** Verse 3 tells us that the Jews did this special washing because they were "holding to the traditions of the elders." How is a tradition of the elders different than a commandment of God?

Holding – to hold fast i.e., tropically, not to discard or let go; to keep carefully and faithfully one's authority.

Tradition – a giving over which is done by word of mouth or in writing; tradition by instruction, narrative, precept, of the body of precepts, especially ritual, which in the opinion of the later Jews were orally delivered by Moses and orally transmitted in unbroken succession to subsequent generations, which precepts, both illustrating and expanding the written law, as they did, were to be obeyed with equal reverence

It wasn't that the disciples weren't washing their hands before eating but that they were not observing the practice of a "special washing" that men had added to the command of God.

4. What question did the Scribes and Pharisees ask Jesus? (v. 5)

5. Think back over all you have studied so far in Mark. What remarkable events did they have to overlook to notice the disciples' hand washing, or lack thereof?

6. This was not the first time the Scribes and Pharisees had come to Jesus with their questions. Go back and review the questions Jesus had faced from the religious leaders, and record what they were trying to point out with their questions.

Mark 2:7

Mark 2:18

Mark 2:24

7. What accusation did they make against Jesus in Mark 3:22?

Up to this point, Jesus had always taken the time to answer the questions of the Scribes and Pharisees, despite knowing their less than honorable motives. But here, in chapter seven, we see Jesus make an accusation of His own.

Read Mark 7:6-23.

8. Jesus, referring to the religious leaders as hypocrites, indicated that Isaiah did well in his prophecy regarding them. What were the main faults highlighted in Isaiah's prophecy? (v. 7)

9. What example did Jesus use as confirmation that Isaiah's prophecy applied to them? (v. 8)

10. In what ways do you see the authority of Scripture being set aside in order to embrace man's ideas happening in the church today (either adding to it or taking away from it)?

11. What about in your own life? Are there any areas where you choose to lay aside the commandments of God and hold to the ideas of man instead? If so, what are they and how can you change your thinking?

Jesus continues with an even more specific example. In the Ten Commandments, children were told to honor their father and mother. If their parents were to fall on hard times and had a need that could be met by their child, then the child should honor their parents by providing for them. But a Jewish tradition had come about that had undermined the heart of God's law.

12. If a child had the means to help their parents but didn't want to, what could they say that would relinquish them from their duty? (v. 11)

While the heart of God's law was compassion and serving others, man's traditions had found a way to appear super religious (reserving all their profits for the church) while protecting a heart driven by selfishness and self-glory.

13. What did Jesus want the people to "hear" and "understand"? (v. 15)

The religious leaders had missed the point. They had years of study and memorization of the Word, and yet they failed to hear and understand what the Word was saying.

14. Moving into a house away from the crowds, the disciples asked Jesus for more clarity. Note what Jesus asked them in response to their question in verse 18a.

In Mark 4, Jesus taught about the Kingdom of Heaven in parables. He asked His disciples a similar question in Mark 4:13, "Do you not understand this parable?" The religious leaders, with all their education and expertise, may have heard the Word, but they did not understand it. If these disciples were to be successful in charting a new course for the early church and the message of the Gospel, they would need to not only hear the Word but truly understand the heart of it!

The religious leaders saw the disciples eating without observing their traditions (traditions that made them feel special, elite, and undefiled among the Gentiles) and judged the disciples as defiled. They were, however, greatly mistaken. It was the condition of their own hearts that made the religious leaders defiled.

Defiled – to make (Leviticallly) unclean, render unhallowed, defile, profane

15. Take a moment to pray and ask the Lord where He might be calling you to hear and understand His Word with regard to your personal life right now.

Read Mark 7:24-30.

This is one of those passages that can leave you scratching your head, wondering what Jesus is talking about and why He would use the words “little dog” to refer to this desperate woman asking for His help. So, let’s dig in and see what we can learn.

16. Write down what you know to be true about Jesus.

17. Write down everything you know about why God chose the Jews to be His chosen people. What was their God-given mission? (Isaiah 49:6)

The Jews failed at their mission. They became prideful and saw themselves as people who had earned what they saw as God’s exclusionary favor. So much so that they openly and with much disdain referred to Gentiles as dogs.

18. At the time of Jesus’ birth, there was a devout and just Jewish man by the name of Simeon who had been promised he would not die until he had seen the Messiah. What aspect of the Messiah’s mission did Simeon reveal in Luke 2:32?

Now that we have established a foundation of truth to work from, let’s proceed with Mark’s account. Jesus had left the Jewish area of Galilee and traveled 50 miles north to the area of Tyre and Sidon - ancient sister cities in Canaan that Israel failed to overthrow in their conquest of the Promise Land. As a result, their idolatry and pagan practices continued and had a devastating influence on the people of Israel in their own pursuit of idol worship. In Jesus’ time, these areas represented nothing but wickedness to the Jewish people.

19. What is Mark careful to point out about the woman in verse 26?

After much persistence, Jesus says to the woman, “Let the children be filled first, for it is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the little dogs.”

20. Having established that the Jews referred to Gentiles as “dogs”, who then can we assume are the “children” in this scenario? _____

Jesus used a play on words to confirm His authority in the order of things and to test the caliber of this woman’s faith. Would she be submissive and patient in waiting? Did her desire for Him extend beyond the need for her daughter? He, of course, already knew that healing her daughter was the reason He was there, but He was inviting her to have a look at her own faith.

21. Can you think of a time when the Lord invited you to recognize His authority in things and to test the authenticity of your own faith? If so, explain.

Presented with her own opportunity to test her faith, she found it to be rooted and grounded in truth! By saying, “Yes Lord,” she was admitting that she agreed with Jesus. He was right and she could now be filled with the hope that Jesus offers to both the Jews and the Gentiles.

22. How did Jesus respond to her demonstration of submission and faith? (v. 29)

Read Mark 7:31-37.

Jesus healed the Gentile woman’s daughter and headed back to the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee. Here, friends bring a man who is both deaf and mute to Jesus and beg for healing. This man was unable to hear Jesus speak to him, and we see Jesus take very specific actions in his healing. Perhaps Jesus sought to communicate with this man through a sort of sign language that would be unique to his circumstances.

23. Look closely at each of Jesus' actions and consider what He may have been trying to communicate to this man who was encountering Him for the very first time.

He took the man aside - _____

He put His fingers in his ears - _____

He spat and touched his tongue - _____

He looked up to Heaven - _____

He sighed (compassionate response to pain and sorrow) - _____

He said, "Be opened" - _____

24. Take a moment to reflect on the things Jesus has done in your life. Thank Him for His faithfulness.

PART TWO: Evil Comes from Within

Mark 7:23

25. The phrase *evil things* in Mark 7:23 simply means: vices just enumerated. List the vices from verses 21-22.

Read 2 Timothy 3:1-5. This is the description of men and women in the last days.

26. Do you see this evil around you today? Compare the evil Jesus mentioned centuries before and the evil today.

It doesn't take much study time in the Bible to learn that men (and women) are basically evil. Scripture teaches us that we were born into sin.

27. Look up the following verses and write what you discover about original sin.

Ecclesiastes 7:20

Psalms 51:5

Romans 5:12

28. Read Genesis 6:5. What does this verse tell you about the depravity of man?

When Adam and Eve disobeyed God and ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they sinned, and corruption entered the world (Genesis 3). The result is a wicked heart.

29. Read Jeremiah 17:9 and describe the heart.

30. Read Romans 3:11-18. What is the hopeless condition of man without Christ?

31. Next, read and record Romans 3:23.

Jesus said in Mark 7:15a, "There is nothing that enters a man from outside which can defile him." We can get the best education; learn culture through travel, art, and music; eat all the natural foods; drink the purest water; and yet our hearts will remain evil. Sin has corrupted us.

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.

- Matthew 23:27

There is only one solution for our depraved situation. Jesus.

32. Read John 3:3. What must we do? _____

If you have confessed Jesus as your Lord and Savior and asked for forgiveness of sin, you are born again.

33. Read the following verses, considering the condition of our hearts before Jesus. Then write down the hope these verses give.

Ezekiel 36:26

2 Corinthians 5:17

Revelation 21:5

Praise God for the gift of His Son, Who shed His precious blood for our sins and evil hearts. It is only through Him that we can walk in newness of life! But let us be mindful of how quickly we can return to our sins.

34. Read Hebrews 3:12-13. What can we proactively do to keep from having an evil heart?
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As women, let us not be overly concerned with our outward appearances but be committed to a heart that brings glory to the God who gives us a new heart.

Do not let your adornment be merely outward —arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel - rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.

- 1 Peter 3:3-4

35. Finish this lesson by thanking the Lord for taking your inherently evil heart and making it new. Look up some verses you can use in prayer as you walk in newness of life.
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