

The Gospel of Mark

Walking with the Servant Saviour

Lesson 11

Mark 7:1-37

Day One: Staining the Soul

What to look for . . .

Mark now transitions from the drama of chapter six to a conversation between the religious leaders and Jesus. Hearing of the enormous crowds coming to Jesus and unable to point the finger of wrong at Him, the scribes and Pharisees traveled all the way from Jerusalem. They were already plotting to do away with Jesus. Arriving with the hope of setting a trap for Him, their opportunity came when they focused their attention on the disciples.

Read Mark 7:1-13.

1. What did the religious leaders notice that allowed them cause to accuse the disciples? v. 2
 - ❖ What insight does Mark add about their reasoning? vv. 3-4

The Pharisees and scribes were looked to by the people as the interpreters and teachers of the law, but their interpretations had obscured and even violated God's written word. These men now aimed their attack at the disciples, wanting to know why Jesus' closest followers didn't follow the ancient traditional *hand washing*.

- ❖ Why do you suppose they registered their complaint with Jesus instead of the offenders?
2. Instead of answering their verbal attack, Jesus addressed their heart attitude. What did He say about each of the following:
- ❖ *their lips* – v. 6a
 - ❖ *their heart* – v. 6b
 - ❖ *their worship* – v. 7a
 - ❖ *their teaching* – v. 7b

Jesus declared in essence that these leaders were guilty of the sin of *hypocrisy*. They had established and followed strict rules of conduct in order to protect the law, but in doing so had allowed their man-made rules to supersede the law. Their emphasis was on practicing externals, while their hearts were far from God and their worship in vain.

Getting a workout . . . (Word study)

Using the resources you have on hand, write a definition below for the word hypocrisy.

The Pharisees and scribes were going through the motions of following God, but for the wrong reasons. Their inward motives were selfish, and their outward emphasis was on their own virtue, while at the same time they pointed to the sins of others.

3. Notice the charges Jesus brought against them using the following comparisons:
- ❖ *What did these men lay aside?* v. 8
 - ❖ *What did they hold onto?*
 - ❖ *What did they reject?* v. 9
 - ❖ *What did they keep?*

They knew the law by heart, but they did not honor it *in* their hearts! They found a way to break the commandments while still *looking righteous* to the people. Moses said, “*Honor your father and your mother.*” This involved obedience from children when they were young, and also provision for parents when they became old. But Jesus went on to say that these leaders had twisted the law to mean they could give everything to God (designate it as “Corban” or donation), thus ignoring their parents and feeling justified in doing so. Such persons were elevating man-made traditions above the Scripture.

4. Jesus added that the scribes and Pharisees were doing *many such things*. What did He say such actions were, in effect, making on God’s law? v. 13

5. **Personal:** Be very careful about imposing (adding on with authority or by force) your own rules to what God’s Word already says—this will work against you to nullify God’s work in your life. Is there anything you know of that you have added to make God’s commands stricter to follow?

❖ Is there any area of your life where you are giving “lip service” but not *heart service* to God?

Heartbeat . . . (Memory verse) “*You are not defiled by what you eat; you are defiled by what you say and do. Anyone who is willing to hear should listen and understand.*”
Mark 7:15-16 (NLT)

Day Two: The Heart of the Matter

Read Mark 7:14-23.

Turning from the religious leaders to the larger crowd, Jesus spoke so that everyone could benefit from His teaching: “*Hear Me, everyone, and understand*” (verse 14).

1. What is the lesson He wanted them all to learn? v. 15

Note: Verse 16, “*If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear!*” was not included in the early manuscripts and does not appear in most modern English translations. It was borrowed from Mark 4:23 to add a conclusion to Jesus’ message.

2. Sometime after, when Jesus and the disciples met in a local house, they asked Him to explain His earlier remarks. Who requested the explanation? Matthew 15:15-16

❖ Did the disciples understand the message Jesus was conveying?

3. In your own words, summarize His explanation to them in Mark 7:20.

The food a person takes into the body has no effect on the condition of the heart; it is the sin in the heart that defiles the person.

4. Listed below are the evil thoughts (intentions) that come from the heart, defiling a person (Mark 7:21-22 NKJV). Write a brief dictionary definition of each one.

❖ *adulteries* –

❖ *fornications* –

❖ *murders* –

❖ *thefts* –

❖ *covetousness* –

❖ *wickedness* –

❖ *deceit* –

❖ *lewdness* –

❖ *an evil eye (envy)* –

❖ *blasphemy* –

❖ *pride* –

❖ *foolishness* –

When the above things are present in the human heart, what comes out in words and actions will defile the individual (verse 20). Our words and actions begin in the thoughts of our mind and that is why Paul the apostle encouraged believers to follow his advice and to concentrate on the things that have value.

Selah . . . (Pause and consider)

Close your study today by meditating on Philippians 4:8. Which of the thoughts listed in this verse are just what you need to focus on today? Why?

Review this week's memory verse.

Day Three: Perseverance Is Rewarded

What to look for . . .

Jesus' healings and miracles were for all people who had the faith to receive them—both Jews and Gentiles alike. The Lord never looked the other way or rejected anyone who came to Him with a sincere heart.

Read Mark 7:24-30; and Matthew 15:21-28.

Jesus traveled north about thirty miles to the Gentile cities of Tyre and Sidon (Matthew 15:21), situated on the Mediterranean coast. He entered someone's house hoping that His presence would not be noticed.

Looking at both the Mark 7 and Matthew 15 accounts, record your answers as you follow the unfolding of the story.

1. Who heard about Him right away and why did she come seeking Him?
 - ❖ Did she make her request more than once?

Mark tells us that this mother was Greek, a Syrophenician by birth; Matthew says she was a woman of Canaan. Matthew's description was directed to a Jewish audience; Mark's was designed to allow his Roman audience to identify her by her home.

2. What additional information did Matthew provide about her daughter?

- ❖ Did Jesus immediately respond to her?
- ❖ What did the disciples recommend be done?
- ❖ Initially, Mark tells us that she fell at His feet; but then what two things did Matthew mention she did out of desperation? v. 25

3. When Jesus finally answered her, what did He say? Mark 7:27

Jesus answered this woman using the language of a parable; she would not have understood Him using the Aramaic tongue. His reference to *little dogs* was the word *kunarion*, referring to a household pet. He may have been trying to convey to her that the Jews were to have the first opportunity to receive the message of salvation before it went out to the entire world. In doing so, He was not rejecting her, but testing her faith.

- ❖ Was she deterred? How did she respond? v. 28
- ❖ How did Jesus reward her? vv. 29-30

Come closer . . . Whose faith was tested in our story today?

This woman knew her need; she believed Jesus could provide the answer; she seized her moment and persevered until the answer came.

- ❖ What does this story teach you about the power of a praying parent? How does this encourage you?

Review this week's memory verse.

Day Four: The Personal Touch

Read Mark 7:31-37.

The miracle recorded here occurs only in Mark's gospel. After the visit to Tyre, Jesus took the long road back to Galilee, passing through the region of Decapolis.

1. Who did they bring to Jesus and what was their request? vv. 31-32
2. How did Jesus choose to heal the man in this instance? vv. 33-34

Jesus spoke one word in Aramaic, which Mark translated into Greek for his readers: "*Be opened.*"

3. Record the step by step progression of this man's healing in verse 35.
4. Once again, what is the peoples' response to the miracle? v. 37

Jesus commanded them to tell no one about what had taken place, but the more He insisted, the more widely people proclaimed the miracle. In verse 37, Mark echoes the prophecy of Isaiah: "*Then the eyes of the blind will be opened, and the ears of the deaf will be unstopped. Then the lame will leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb will shout for joy*" (Isaiah 35:5-6 NIV).

The people recognized *He was doing everything well*, but sadly, they did not all recognize who He really was!

Selah . . . (Pause and think about it.)

What will it take in your life for you to recognize not only that Jesus does everything well, but that He wants to do all things well in *your life*? What adjustments will you have to make in order for this to happen? Please record what God ministers to you.

Review this week's memory verse.

Day Five: Praying God's Purpose

It's time to do some *prayer walking*—not in the literal, but the *spiritual* sense. The Holy Spirit will lead you today as you consider three points from your lesson, write them in the form of a prayer, and lift them to the Lord. If practicing the presence of God is new to you—be patient—it will come, and you will be blessed!

“ . . . We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.”

Romans 8:26-27 NLT

A prayer for cleansing the heart . . .

If you discovered any trace of *hypocrisy* or *evil intentions* in your heart this week and you have not yet confessed it to God, take a moment to do so now. Ask Him to help you make sure there is no bend against His will as you follow Him.

A prayer for perseverance in the midst of trial . . .

Is *your* faith currently being tested by someone close to you who has a great need? Lift that individual to the Lord today and hang on to what He shows you in His Word.

A prayer for “being opened” to God's purpose . . .

Are your spiritual *ears* fully opened to what God is saying to you through your study of His Word? “*If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear!*” Repeat back to God in prayer what you know He is speaking to your heart.

Write out this week's verse from memory:

Notes

