



FJBC

DISCIPLE: HOPE IN THE BOOK OF MARK •
CHOOSING BETWEEN TRADITION AND SCRIPTURE • MARK 7:1-23 •
CORRELATED TO BEN'S SERMON ON 10/18/2020

MAIN POINT

God's people often do things a certain way because that's the way they've always done them, not because that's how the Bible says they should do them.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Are there certain traditions that you practice in your family or personal life? If so, what are they?

What traditions do we practice as a church?

What are some good things about traditions? What are some bad things about traditions?

While traditions can be valuable, they can also get in the way of doing what God wants us to do. Our study today highlights this danger. Like the Jewish religious leaders in Mark 7, people today are tempted to interpret Scripture in light of their religious traditions rather than evaluating tradition on the basis of Scripture. But we must be willing to evaluate our preferences in light of God's Word. Whenever traditions and Scripture collide, we must choose Scripture.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Take some time to review the points from Dr. Ben Phillips's sermon on this passage.

What were some things that stood out to you from the sermon?

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MARK 7:1-5.

What complaints did the Pharisees and scribes make against Jesus' disciples? What did this complaint reveal about their hearts?

What motivated the religious leaders to ask Jesus about their traditions?

The "tradition of the elders" (v. 3) was a huge body of meticulous rules of conduct passed down for centuries and considered almost as authoritative as the law of Moses. The issue for the religious leaders was not one of hygiene but of adherence to their traditions, which required a ceremonial washing of hands prior to eating. When the leaders asked Jesus about these traditions, they were not concerned about His holiness; rather, they were trying to trap Jesus and damage His authority in front of the crowds.

What are some practices of believers today that would be equivalent to eating with ceremonially unclean hands?

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER TO READ MARK 7:6-13.

Jesus separated Himself from the Pharisees and scribes by distinguishing between God's commandments, the authoritative laws of Scripture, and man-made traditions (v. 8).

According to Jesus, how were the Pharisees and scribes breaking God's commandments? Were they aware of it?

Dedicating a gift to the temple that would have gone to support one's parents was a practice called "Corban," which means, "a gift devoted to God." This gift, though dedicated to the temple, did not have to be paid during the owner's lifetime; it just had to be verbally promised to the temple, thus keeping it in the hands of the owner for his personal use instead of being used to help his parents. In Jesus' day, Corban became a loophole that allowed the people to violate God's command to honor their parents.

Why would someone place traditions over God's commands?

Why is following Scripture always more important than following tradition?

Jesus called the religious leaders hypocrites. What does it mean to be a hypocrite? Why did the religious leaders qualify? How are people negatively affected spiritually by others' hypocrisy?

The religious leaders were hypocrites because their actions were based on appearance and were not motivated from the heart. Their teaching reflected this because they appealed to the tradition of the elders instead of appealing to God's Word. To honor your father and mother meant to provide for them in their old age. By giving what was due to their parents to the temple, the religious leaders gave the appearance of devotion without the heart motivation.

In what ways do religious people today act like hypocrites? How do you avoid hypocrisy in your life?

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER TO READ MARK 7:14-23.

What did Jesus want the crowd to understand in verses 14-15?

What would the religious leaders have said it took to be clean before God? What was Jesus saying it meant to be clean before God?

What extra standards do you impose upon people that God does not impose upon them? How could you identify these?

Jesus focused on the real problem—a sinful heart. Failure to conform to human standards and rules does not condemn us; our sinful hearts condemn us. No amount of religious activity can change the selfish nature of the heart or make it clean. Jesus is only one way. By trusting in Him, we can be changed from the inside out.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

How can you tell if you are just going through the motions of religious activity?

Is there anyone in your life that can tell you when you are leaning on traditions instead of upon God? What is the value of having such a friend?

What changes would you make in your own life to more effectively embrace the commands of God?

PRAYER

Pray that God will enable followers of Christ to live as genuine believers who follow Scripture, avoid hypocrisy, and have hearts cleansed by Jesus..

COMMENTARY

MARK 7:1-23

7:1-23. This is Jesus' longest conflict speech in the Gospel of Mark.

7:2. As in 2:18,24, the dispute occurred over the actions of Jesus' disciples. Unclean... hands refers to ritual cleansing, not hygiene.

7:3-4. These verses are an explanatory parenthesis. This is Mark's only reference to the Jews as a group. Wash their hands ritually (lit "wash their hands with the fist") could refer to washing with a fistful of water, or washing up to the wrist. The tradition of the elders (cp. vv. 5,8-9,13) refers to oral traditions which had grown up around the written law. Such traditions became the heart of rabbinic Judaism. Apparently when the Pharisees returned from the marketplace they did more than just ritually wash their hands; they thoroughly purified themselves.

7:5. Jesus replied in verse 8 that the tradition of the elders is merely "the tradition of men."

7:6-7. The word for hypocrites referred to an actor who hid behind a mask. Thus the word meant "pretender." Jesus' quotation from Isa 29:13 clearly defined what a hypocrite was and focused on God's condemnation of those who taught as doctrines the commands of men.

7:8-9. Jesus accused the scribes and Pharisees of disregarding the command of God while keeping the tradition of men. They made their oral traditions more important than God's law.

7:10. By quoting the fifth commandment (Ex 20:12; Dt 5:16) and Ex 21:17 (Lv 20:9), Jesus introduced a specific example of what He charged in Mk 7:8-9.

7:11-13. You say is emphatic and pits the rabbis' teaching against God's word. The rabbinic custom of Corban (modified from Lv 27:28; Num 18:14) allowed a person to devote all his material goods to the Lord. The rabbis shamefully allowed Corban to excuse sons from meeting the material needs of their aging parents. You do many other similar things emphasized that the Corban practice was representative of other hypocritical Pharisaic practices.

7:14-16. Jesus broadened His audience to the crowd and expanded His topic to true defilement. Verse 15 is the heart of His teaching. A person is defiled by what comes out, not what goes in.

7:17-18. The disciples asked Jesus privately about the parable of verse 15. Jesus repeated what He had said and rebuked them for their lack of understanding.

7:19. What goes into a person's stomach doesn't defile because it is digested and eliminated. Recall that Mark was written under Peter's influence and that Peter learned in Ac 10:15 that all

foods are clean. Thus the parenthetical statement of Mk 7:19 indicates that Mark, Peter, and others looked back afresh on Jesus' saying and realized that He had pronounced all foods clean. They failed fully to grasp this when Jesus originally uttered it.

7:20-23. Jesus listed 13 moral problems to illustrate His point about internal defilement. The first seven are plural and indicate repeated acts. Sexual immoralities includes all illicit sexual practices outside marriage. Evil actions is a term for maliciousness. The last six evils are all singular, indicating attitudes. Stinginess is literally "the evil eye." It refers to jealousy, envy, covetousness, and a grudging attitude. Blasphemy includes slander of others (cp. 2Tim 3:2). The word for pride refers to exalting oneself above others. Foolishness is lack of moral judgment.