



Mark 7:1-23 - That Which Defiles

7 The Pharisees and some of the teachers of the law who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus ² and saw some of his disciples eating food with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed. ³ (The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders. ⁴ 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.) ⁵ 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?” ⁶ He replied, “Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: ⁷ ‘These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules. ⁸ You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to human traditions.’ ⁹ And he continued, “You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions! ¹⁰ For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and mother,’ and, ‘Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death. ¹¹ 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)— ¹² then you no longer let them do anything for their father or mother. ¹³ Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that.” ¹⁴ Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, “Listen to me, everyone, and understand this. ¹⁵ Nothing outside a person can defile them by going into them. Rather, it is what comes out of a person that defiles them.” ¹⁷ After he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about this parable. ¹⁸ “Are you so dull?” he asked. “Don’t you see that nothing that enters a person from the outside can defile them? ¹⁹ 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.) ²⁰ He went on: “What comes out of a person is what defiles them. ²¹ For it is from within, out of a person’s heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, ²² adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. ²³ All these evils come from inside and defile a person.”

➤ **In today's lesson, Jesus was approached by Pharisees and scribes. They traveled from Jerusalem to Galilee-roughly 80 miles-to accuse Jesus and His disciples of breaking a law. That's a trip of 8 to 10 days just to rebuke a rural rabbi and His small crew of followers. The Pharisees prided themselves on upholding what God commanded, but they also added extra rules of their own that made life unnecessarily harder for everyone. They took the commandments and laws in Scripture and "built a fence" around them to make sure no one got close to breaking them. The fence was what Jesus referred to as "traditions."**

- 1. Read Exodus 30:17-21. What are the requirements for washing hands from God's commandments?**
- 2. What is a modern example of tradition or rule competing with a law?**
- 3. What traditions or rules have you created in your own Christian walk that are not found in Scripture? Read Galatians 1:9.**

Reflect: After Jesus rebuked the Pharisees about their pre-dinner rituals in Mark 7:6-13, He delivered a rebuke about the food itself. Not only would their dirty hands not defile them, but neither would the food they ate. In Jewish law, there were several foods that made a person “unclean,” but Jesus knowing He had come to fulfill the purification said there is nothing you could eat that could defile you.

- 1. Read Jeremiah 17:9-10 and Matthew 12:33-34. What do these passages say about our hearts?**
- 2. Review the list of thoughts and actions in Mark 7:21-22. What are the three thoughts or actions you find yourself struggling with most?**
- 3. Describe one example of how you’ve seen one of those thoughts or actions show up in your life this week.**
- 4. Think of a Bible verse that can help encourage and strengthen you as you face these struggles.**

Mark 7:24-30 - Jesus Honors a Syrophoenician Woman's Faith

24 Jesus left that place and went to the vicinity of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it; yet he could not keep his presence secret. 25 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. 26 The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia. She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter. 27 “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.” 28 “Lord,” she replied, “even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.” 29 Then he told her, “For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter.” 30 She went home and found her child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

In Mark 7:24-30, Jesus left the Galilee region and headed north to Tyre and Sidon, a predominately Gentile region. While Jews typically avoided going to Gentile areas, Jesus made it a point to not only go but engage with a Syrophonecian (Gentile) woman who stopped Him to ask for help. She told Him about her demon-possessed daughter and begged Him to heal her.

- 1. Read Matthew 15:21-28. In Matthew's account of this story, how do the disciples respond to the woman?**
- 2. Have you ever felt annoyed by someone who was asking for help? Have you ever preferred to avoid or ignore them?**
- 3. Do you confidently approach God with your requests? Why or why not?**
- 4. How does this challenge your own faith?**

Mark 7:31-37 - Jesus Heals a Deaf and Mute Man

31 Then Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went through Sidon, down to the Sea of Galilee and into the region of the Decapolis. 32 There some people brought to him a man who was deaf and could hardly talk, and they begged Jesus to place his hand on him. 33 After he took him aside, away from the crowd, Jesus put his fingers into the man's ears. Then he spit and touched the man's tongue. 34 He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, "Ephphatha!" (which means "Be opened!"). 35 At this, the man's ears were opened, his tongue was loosened, and he began to speak plainly. 36 Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone. But the more he did so, the more they kept talking about it. 37 People were overwhelmed with amazement. "He has done everything well," they said. "He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak."

When they returned to Galilee, Jesus was approached by a group begging Him to heal a man who was deaf and couldn't speak well. Jesus pulled the man aside, put His fingers in his ears, and touched his tongue, commanding his ears and mouth to "be opened." This is the only time the word *ephphatha* appears in the Bible. There was no script for how Jesus healed people. His miracles follow no pattern.

1. What was Jesus' method of healing in the following verses?

- **Matthew 12:13**
- **Luke 13:10-13**
- **John 9:6-7**

2. In 7:36, Jesus asked the group not to tell anyone, but they couldn't contain their excitement. Why do you think Jesus told them to not tell anyone? When was the last time you were so excited about your faith that you couldn't help but share?

3. If nothing specific comes to mind, ask God to provide you with that opportunity this week.