

The Proper Pursuit of Holiness

Discussion Questions for Mark 7:1-23

Open It

What are some of the traditions in your church?
When did you first learn to wash your hands before eating?
What are some of your favorite traditions?

Explore It

Who was gathered around Jesus? (7:1)
What did the Pharisees and teachers of the law notice? (7:1–2)
How were the practices of Jesus' disciples different from those of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law? (7:2–4)
What were the Pharisees and teachers of the law concerned about? Why? (7:2–5)
Why were the Pharisees and teachers of the law concerned about what Jesus' disciples were doing? (7:3–4)
What did the Pharisees ask Jesus? (7:5)
How did Jesus avoid answering the Pharisees' question directly? (7:6)
What were the Pharisees doing wrong? (7:6–8)
Of what did Jesus accuse the Pharisees? (7:6–13)
How were the Pharisees being hypocritical in this instance? (7:9)
What example did Jesus give to prove His accusations against the Pharisees? (7:10–12)
How did Jesus use the Law of Moses? (7:10–19)
How did Jesus place tradition in proper perspective? (7:10–19)
How did the Pharisees' use of "unclean" differ from Jesus'? (7:14–23)
How did Jesus explain the parable to His disciples? (7:18–23)
What actually makes a person "unclean"? (7:20–23)

Get It

What's wrong with "holding on to the traditions of men"?
What did Jesus want His audience to do?
In what ways are Christians today hypocritical?
What church traditions either can or do stand in the way of non-believers becoming interested in Christianity?
What traditions do you hold on to that can go against the commands of God?

What can we do to place traditions—especially religious traditions—in proper perspective?

In what ways do you think it is possible to worship the Lord in vain?

From the list of “unclean” things that come from within a person’s heart (greed, deceit, envy, etc.), which attitude or action do you need to work on eliminating from your life?

How can we be sure we are “clean” in God’s sight?

What can we do to work toward being clean in God’s sight?

What practices in your local church do you think might be distracting people’s attention from the central concerns of the faith?

How can you guard against practicing the type of tradition-bound, external religion that Jesus condemned?

Apply It

What can you do to honor the commands of God above your traditions?

What is one practice that you can eliminate or modify to help you focus on the teaching of Jesus?

What is one step you can take to guard against hypocrisy?