

FURTHER STUDY GUIDE

Clean hands—Dirty Hearts | Mark 7:1-23

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In Mark 7, Jesus confronts the Pharisees and scribes over their emphasis on religious traditions—especially ceremonial cleanliness. These traditions were not commanded in Scripture but had become elevated to the level of God’s law.

Jesus exposes the deeper issue: their focus on outward behavior had blinded them to the true problem—the human heart. In doing so, He redefines what it means to be “clean” before God, shifting the focus from external practices to internal transformation.

ICEBREAKER QUESTION

Have you ever followed a rule or tradition simply because “that’s how it’s always been done”? What was that like?

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

When Tradition Replaces Truth (vv. 1-13)

- 1. Why were the Pharisees so concerned about handwashing, and what does that reveal about their priorities?

- 2. Jesus accuses them of honoring God with their lips while their hearts are far from Him. What might that look like in a modern Christian context?

- 3. In what ways can traditions (personal or church-wide) subtly take the place of God's Word in our lives?

When the Heart Is Ignored (vv. 14-19)

- 4. Why do you think Jesus' teaching about defilement was so difficult for the disciples to understand?

5. What is the difference between behavior modification and heart transformation? Why does it matter?

6. How can focusing only on outward behavior give a false sense of spiritual health?

When Sin Is Revealed (vv. 20-23)

7. Looking at Jesus' list of sins, which ones seem most "respectable" and which seem more obvious? What does that tell us?

8. Jesus teaches that sin comes from within. How does this challenge the way we typically explain or excuse our sin?

9. What do your words, reactions, and private thoughts reveal about the condition of your heart?

PERSONAL DEVOTION

Take time this week to sit quietly before God with this passage.

- Ask Him to search your heart (Psalm 139:23–24).
- Confess not just actions, but the desires and attitudes behind them.
- Reflect on the truth that Jesus didn't come just to correct behavior—but to give you a new heart.

QUESTIONS | REFLECTIONS | OBSERVATIONS
