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Concerning Jesus (Mark 7) ~Aaron McRae

This Discussion Guide is designed to help you **think more deeply** about the sermon and **engage with others** through thoughtful conversation, biblical exploration and **allow God to work** in your life as you apply what you discover.

➤ CONVERSATION STARTER

What is your favorite family tradition?

➤ EXPLORATION

As we turn our attention to Mark chapter 7, we see that Jesus encounters criticism and challenge from the Pharisees and teachers of the law. They had very strict traditions and customs that every “good” Jewish person was supposed to follow in order to demonstrate that they were in fact “good”.

Our passage starts off with a confrontation between Jesus and the religious leaders.

Mark 7:5 (From your bible, read aloud)

Dirty hands is not the real issue here. Living according to tradition was more important to the leaders than the reasons the traditions were held. Jesus goes right to the heart of the matter as he responds to their criticism.

Mark 7:6-7 (From your bible, read aloud)

How would you describe what makes a person a hypocrite?

The word hypocrite is translated from the Greek word *Hypōkritēs* = an actor under an assumed character. Jesus calls them hypocrites because they liked to look like they were devoted, but it was just an act. Jesus’ central concern is a radical transformation of the human heart, not just external practices. He is interested in hearts that are transformed by his love.

Mark 7:8-9 (From your bible, read aloud)

Jesus warns the religious leaders that they have completely missed the point. They chose to observe certain rituals without embracing what the ritual was meant to demonstrate.

“For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and mother,’ and, ‘Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death.’ 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)— then you no longer let them do anything for their father or mother.” Mark 7:10-13

The religious leaders had created their own tradition where they chose not to support their aging parents as was the custom, but instead they said they gave the money they would have used to make a larger offering at the temple. In doing this, they totally neglected their responsibility to their parents. This was only one example of the way they had twisted God’s laws to suit their own desires.

Mark 7:14-15 (From your bible, read aloud)

This teaching is grounded in the Biblical concept that the heart is the source of all spiritual and moral conduct.

Read the following verses out loud:

- **Jeremiah 17:9**
- **Psalms 51:10**
- **Romans 7:19**

What do these verses tell us about the human heart? Why do you think it matters?

The familiar phrase, “follow your heart” sounds good in theory, but the bible reminds us that the human heart is not the most trustworthy guide. We need to keep our focus on Jesus because we need a Savior.

Mark 7:17-19 (From your bible, read aloud)

Jesus is talking to the disciples here and is using some rather graphic imagery to get their attention. There were very clear laws that guided Jewish people about what they could and could not eat. But Jesus is making a radical statement when he declares that all foods are clean.

“No matter what we do, or how hard we try, external solutions don’t deal with the soul. Outside in will never work, because most of what causes our problems works from the inside out.”

Timothy Keller ‘King’s Cross’

For Jesus to say that all foods were now clean would have been shocking for the disciples to hear. But Jesus is letting them know that he has come to fulfill every law.

From the very beginning, people have been trying to make their own rules to create the kind of life they desire.

- **Religion** - do this, don’t do that. Try hard to be good and God will accept you
- **Politics** - get this policy in place, pass this legislation and then the deep issues will be addressed
- **Education** - learn enough and you will be ok

None of these are bad things. The problem comes when we substitute external behaviors for authentic heart transformation.

Mark 7:20-23 (From your bible, read aloud)

As you slowly consider each of the items on this list, are there things listed that you struggle with? If you are willing, share this with the group.

Jesus doesn’t say that purity or holiness doesn’t matter. He simply redirects the attention from external behaviors to the internal condition of the heart. It is only when we surrender ourselves to God and allow him to work in us that true transformation begins.

> TAKE AWAY

God knows what is in your heart, there are no secrets, nothing is hidden from him. He is offering to transform you from the inside out.

Take some time to read these scriptures and to pray them for yourself and for those in your group.

Prayers for Our Heart

Search me God and know my heart

Psalms 139:23-24

Create in me a pure heart, O God

Psalms 51:10

Renew in me a wholehearted love for You

Mark 12:30

God, help me to delight in Your word

Psalms 1:1-3

In the coming week, set aside time to pray these scriptures regularly. Pay attention to the things you notice as you read - this may be a way that God can help you see areas that are in need of his loving transformation.

Pray together, asking God to show you any places in your life that are not yet fully devoted to following Jesus.