

**05-12-2024 – Mother's Day
A Persevering Mother**

Context:

Mark 7.14-23 LSB

A Study of Mark 7. 24-30 LSB

Mark 7:24 LSB

24 Now Jesus stood up and went away from there to the region of Tyre. And when He had entered a house, He was wanting no one to know [of it]; yet He could not escape notice.

Jesus used _____ as a teaching tool.

Mark 7:25 LSB

25 But after hearing of Him, a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately came and fell at His feet.

Mark 7:26-27 LSB

26 Now the woman was a Greek, of Syrophenician descent. And she kept asking Him to cast the demon out of her daughter. 27 And He was saying to her, "Let the children be satisfied first, for it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs."

Matthew 15:22-23 LSB

22 And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and [began to] cry out, saying, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is cruelly demon-possessed." 23 But He did not answer her a word. And His disciples came and were pleading with Him, saying, "Send her away, because she keeps shouting at us."

Jesus crosses artificial _____ - barriers

Mark 7:28 LSB

28 But she answered and said to Him, "Yes, Lord, [but] even the dogs under the table feed on the children's crumbs."

Mark 7:29-30 LSB

29 And He said to her, "Because of this answer go; the demon has gone out of your daughter." 30 And going back to her home, she found the child lying on the bed, the demon having left.

Jesus loves the _____.

Application:

1. A mother's _____ for her child(ren). V 7.25
2. A mother's _____. V 7.26-27
3. A mother's _____. V 7. 28
4. A mother's _____. V7.29-30

Life Group Questions:

1. Jesus left the region of Capernaum when taking a “break” from the tension of ministry. What do you do to relax or recharge? What is your go to for dealing with stress?

Read Mark Chapter 7.24-30 (prior to life group): When you read through the scripture take note of anything interesting, unique, or questions that come to mind when reading. Take some time and dig in deeper in the following areas.

2. Read Mark 7.14-23. How does Jesus’ teaching about what makes us “clean” and “unclean” impact our understanding of the verses that follow (24-30)?
3. This passage of scripture is an example about a mother’s love and commitment to her child. The truth in this passage extends well beyond just mothers. What truths are being taught by Jesus and how do they impact us and our lives? How can we live these truths out?

Clean and Unclean

(טהור, *tahor*; טמא, *tame'*; καθάρος, *katharos*; ἀκάθαρτος, *akathartos*). Designate states of ritual suitability or unsuitability before God. Closely related to the states of holy and profane. Often used to denote a state of righteousness. Used in regard to physical state, behaviors, and animals.

Introduction

The concepts of clean and unclean are closely related to the states of holy and profane. Those who are clean are able to be in the presence of God, while those who are unclean perish in His presence (2 Sam 6:6–7). Additionally, cleanness (בֵּר, *bor*) may be used to denote a state of righteousness. The terms are first presented in regard to animals in Gen 7 and later clarified in Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. The Historical Books, Wisdom literature, and Prophetic Books of the Old Testament use the terms primarily when referring to major sins leading to the loss of purity or discussing how a person in a profane state may regain cleanliness or holiness.

The New Testament clarifies acts that lead to uncleanness, including:

- idolatry
- sexual immorality
- theft
- murder
- greed

Although the Old Testament and New Testament agree about the causes of uncleanness, the New Testament Gospels transform the cure. In the Old Testament, unclean people were required to perform a purification act and wait a period of time; in the New Testament, Jesus touched the unclean personally to cleanse and purify them, illustrating that Jesus holds the power to transform the lives of individuals.

Theological Development

Although the statutes regarding clean and unclean seem culturally and historically foreign to modern readers, the theological significance of cleanliness—closely associated with the state of holiness—remains relevant. The statutes regarding cleanliness were designed to allow a person access to God. To be in God's presence, a person needs to be in a state of holiness. A person who is clean is in a state of holiness; therefore, becoming clean is essential for entering into the presence of God. Likewise, anything that makes a person unclean separates that person from God.

One way to look at clean and unclean starts from the observation that God is associated with a full and perfect life. In general, things associated with life are a pathway to cleanliness, while things associated with death are aligned with uncleanness (see Hartley, *Leviticus*, 141). If this is the case, those things that are healthy are typically also clean. For example, a perfect one-year-old lamb—one at the peak of life and health—was an acceptable sacrifice; but a lamb that was lame—or nearer to death—was unacceptable. In the same way, things that made a person less healthy and thus closer to death, including blood flows and skin diseases, were unclean. The quintessential example of this concept is death, explaining why association with corpses and animal carcasses required the most stringent purification.

Restoration of cleanness entailed (see Hartley, *Leviticus*, 142):

1. stopping the cause of the uncleanness (i.e., ceasing to touch the corpse or allowing the skin disease to heal);
2. washing the clothing and the person; and
3. conducting a purification offering.

The oppositions inherent in this position may be illustrated with the following chart.

God	Sin
Life	Death
Holiness	Uncleanness

Various aspects of uncleanness may be viewed in a spectrum ranging from holy to very unclean (adapted from Wenham, *Leviticus*, 177 n. 34):

Holy	Priests
	Sacrificial animals
Near Holy	Handicapped priests
	Blemished sacrificial animals
Clean	Clean population
	Clean animals
Unclean	Unclean people
	Unclean animals
Very Unclean	Human corpses
	Dead animals

The concept also holds true for the actions of the individual and society. Actions and thoughts that make the body or soul impure defile the body and separate the individual from God. Examples of such actions include:

- sexual immorality
- idolatry
- greed
- deceit
- envy

As with physical uncleanness, spiritual uncleanness is corrected by:

1. stopping the behavior;
2. washing with cleansing water (real or metaphorical); and
3. conducting a purification offering.

Interpretations

Douglas argues that the distinctions between clean and unclean served to remind Israel of its unique position as God’s chosen people. For Douglas, the point is that Israel was separated from the Gentiles to be God’s people. In her anthropological study, she finds that people, animals, birds, and spaces are each segmented into unclean, clean, and holy—with the holy being closest to God (Douglas, *Purity and Danger*).

Category	Humanity	Animals/Birds	Space
Unclean	Gentiles	Unclean	Outside Camp
More Clean	Israel	Clean	Camp
Cleanest	Priests	Sacrificial	Tabernacle

Wenham argues that the relationship between unclean, clean, and holy is best understood as a continuum. In this way, cleanness is an intermediate step between unclean and holy (Wenham, *Leviticus*, 19).

<==	Sanctify	<==	Cleanse	<==
Holy		Clean		Unclean
==>	Profane	==>	Pollute	==>

Hoffner argues that clean and unclean were not unique to Israel, as these classifications were found throughout the ancient Near East. For example, in Hittite culture clean animals were those known to the culture (oxen, sheep, pigs), and unclean animals were those less understood or less familiar (horse and mule). Hoffner argues that Israel, as a nomadic population, did not encounter the pig as it was the domesticated animal for sedentary populations. For this

reason, Israel marked the pig unclean. Similar logic would apply to the horse and the camel (Hoffner, *The Laws of the Hittites*, 224).

Clean and Unclean in the New Testament

The New Testament transforms the concept of clean and unclean. Jesus either healed or abolished the natural forms of uncleanness. For example, Jesus' touch healed or restored dead bodies, individuals with skin diseases, and those suffering a blood flow to a state of cleanliness. In Mark 7:15, Jesus proclaimed that nothing going into a person can make that individual unclean—only things coming out of a person. In this passage Jesus abolished the defiling physical and animal aspects that made a person unclean.

Milgrom argues that the distinction between clean and unclean foods highlighted the distinction between Jew and Gentile (Milgrom, "The Biblical Dietary Laws as an Ethical System," 288–301). With Jesus, this distinction became irrelevant as the gospel was preached to all people; therefore, the dietary laws were abolished, signifying a new era (Matt 15:16–17, 21–28; Mark 7:18–19, 24–30). In Acts 10 Peter's teaching further clarifies that clean and unclean animals are metaphorically similar to clean and unclean people when referring to Jews and Gentiles. Further, that distinction is no longer relevant. The final clarification occurs in Acts 15, which describes how the Jerusalem council allowed Gentiles into the Church and revoked most dietary laws.

Biblical Relevance

The concepts of clean and unclean are found in every major section of the Bible. Some Old Testament aspects of clean are transformed in the New Testament, where food that was previously considered unclean is considered clean. The New Testament also emphasizes some Old Testament aspects of cleanness, including moral behavior. The discussion of clean and unclean may be understood through the exploration of animals, behavior, bodily states, and the role of the priest.

Animals

The first reference in the Bible to clean or unclean occurs in Gen 7:1–8:22, where God orders Noah to take seven pairs of each kind of clean animal and two pairs of each unclean species. Leviticus 11 specifies which types of animals were clean and which were unclean. All clean animals could be eaten, and a subset of those was permitted for sacrificial offerings; however, unclean animals were neither edible nor permitted for sacrifice. The general rule for clean and unclean animals was that a clean animal did what was natural in its environment and did not feed on other animals. For example, birds that could fly were

generally clean, and those that could not fly were generally unclean; fish that swam were generally clean, but shellfish that walked underwater were generally unclean.

The distinction for land-based animals was that they must have a divided hoof and chew a cud (Lev 11:1–4). This meant that cattle, sheep, and goats were clean, while camels, pigs, and rabbits were unclean. Fish had to have fins and scales (Lev 11:9–12) to be clean. Shellfish, including shrimp, crab, oysters, and lobster, were unclean. Birds of prey (e.g., eagles, hawks, vultures, owls, and storks) and those that cannot fly (ostrich) were unclean, while most others were clean (Lev 11:13–23). The firstborn of unclean animals had to be redeemed (Num 18:15).

When a dead animal was touched, regardless of whether the living animal was clean or unclean, it made the one touching unclean. Similarly, touching or being in the presence of a dead body rendered a person unclean and required cleansing, including a seven-day period of purification with ritual bathing on the third and seventh days (Num 19:11–12). Failure to perform ritual purification could defile the tabernacle and cut the person off from the community. Accidentally touching anything unclean rendered a person unclean, as that person carried the guilt associated with the uncleanness (Lev 5:2–3). Further discussion of clean and unclean animals may be found under dietary laws.

Bodily States

Various naturally occurring events and conditions led to an unclean state. Leviticus 12 discusses the uncleanness brought on by the blood associated with childbirth: A mother was unclean for 40 days (seven-day menstruation period plus 33 extra days) after the birth of a son and 80 days (14-day menstruation period plus 66 extra days) after the birth of a daughter. Following the purification period, the mother had to bring a burnt offering and a sin offering to the priest at the doorway of the tent of meeting.

Leviticus 15:18–19 clarifies that the period of uncleanness for menstruation lasted for seven days, and sexual intercourse polluted both parties, requiring bathing and waiting until evening for purification. Any other bodily discharge from a man or a woman was unclean. If any of these discharges touched a bed, chair, clothing, or any other object, then the object was unclean (Lev 15:4, 17, 20–23). Those who touched the unclean object or person had to wash their clothing, bathe, and remain unclean until evening (with a few exceptions; Lev 15:5–12, 20–23). After the discharge was healed, the person remained unclean for seven days and had to wash clothing and bathe (Lev 15:13). On the eight

day, the unclean person had to go to the priest and offer a sin and burnt offering (Lev 15:14–15, 29–33).

Different kinds of skin diseases could lead a person to become unclean (Lev 13). The priest was responsible for determining whether the skin condition was unclean or clean. Unclean conditions generally included (Lev 13:3, 10, 14, 18–20, 25, 30, 35–36):

- an active sore penetrating into the skin
- discoloration of the surrounding hair
- swelling
- an open wound

Skin conditions that were stable or healing were usually classified as clean (Lev 13:6, 23, 34, 37–41, 50). If the priest was not sure, that person was quarantined for seven days and reevaluated (Lev 13:4–6, 21, 26–7, 31–33, 43–9, 51–9). Those who were unclean due to a skin condition were to remain outside the camp while they were unclean (Num 5:2–4).

With regard to bodily states, discharges, and skin diseases, the person was unclean until the condition stabilized and began to heal. Short-term conditions were purified in one day through washing the clothes, bathing, and waiting until evening. Conditions occurring over a long period of time or in a major category (childbirth and skin diseases) required a longer recovery period for purification; the period was concluded with sacrifices, including a sin offering and burnt offering. An exception was made for a person who touched a dead person while on a journey: Those people were allowed to observe the Passover (Num 9:10).

Behavior

Some behaviors in the Old Testament are considered sinful, leading to an unclean state for the individual, the land, and even the sanctuary. For example:

Leviticus 18 associates several immoral sins with uncleanness, including adultery, incest, homosexuality, and bestiality.

Joshua 22:19 and Ezra 9:11 state that the land of Canaan was unclean because of the behavior of the Canaanites.

Psalms 106:39, Isaiah 1:16, and Jeremiah 13:27 describe sinful deeds leading to an unclean state.

Proverbs 16:2 states that God weighs not only actions but also motives to determine whether someone is clean.

Lamentations 1:8 and Amos 7:17 highlight that Jerusalem and the land of Israel (thus, places) could become unclean because of the sins of the inhabitants.

Ezekiel focuses on the uncleanness brought on by Israel's continual moral and spiritual apostasy, including the nation's idolatry and bloodshed, which he classifies as harlotry (Ezek 22:3–4, 11, 27; 33:25–26; 36:17–18). The prophet even condemns the priests for failing to follow God's statutes by not teaching the difference between clean and unclean (Ezek 22:6; 44:23).

The rectification for unclean behavior is similar to that for bodily uncleanness:

1. ceasing the sinful behavior
2. washing for purification
3. offering a sin and burnt offering

The concept of unclean behavior is brought into even clearer focus in the New Testament, where the essence of uncleanness is opposition to God. For example, Matthew and Mark identify cast-out demons as unclean spirits (Matt 12:43; Mark 1:23, 26–27; 5:8, 13; 7:25; 9:25). In Mark 7:15–23 Jesus specifies that it is behaviors that make people unclean, not dietary choices or external impurities. Unclean behaviors include:

evil thoughts
sexual immorality
theft
murder
adultery
greed
malice
deceit
lewdness
envy
slander
arrogance
folly

Of these, the misuse of sexual relations is the most frequently discussed sin (Matt 15:19; Mark 7:21; Rom 1:24; Eph 5:3; Gal 5:19; Col 3:5; 1 Thess 4:7).

Role of the Priests

Leviticus 10:10–11 clarifies that the priests were responsible for determining clean and unclean as well as distinguishing between things that were holy or profane. The priests were to bring portions of offerings to a clean place outside the camp and complete the incineration of the carcass of the offering (Lev 4:12; Hess, “Leviticus”, 669; Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 615–16).