

The Jesus Identity

Studies in Mark's Gospel

Starter: Mark 7

Can things out in the world contaminate Christians? Do things like massage, heavy metal music, drugs and brothels, make us sinful?

Read Mark 7:1-23

1. In this passage Jesus confronts the Pharisees practice of 'religion'. They are very strict in their observance of their religious traditions but they ignore God's commands in scripture. Which particular examples of this does Jesus cite?

Do we share Jesus' view of the Bible? Do we get as upset when people add a few 'harmless' traditions?

2. Do you think the Pharisees are 'obeying the letter of the law while ignoring the spirit of the Law' or is it something else?
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3. What does Jesus mean when he says that 'uncleanness' does not come from outside a man but from the inside (see verse 15)? (That is, where does sin come from?)

Will better laws or better education make the world a better place?

4. When we sin, who is responsible? Can we ever blame other people, or situations?
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5. The Pharisees' problem was that they were concerned about external actions rather than the inward attitude. Can you think of some contemporary Christian parallels?
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6. In your life, which inward attitudes need work?
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Read Mark 7:24-30

Tyre and Syrian Phoenicia are a long way from Israel and the Jewish world— in many ways. It seems that Jesus has taken his disciples for a holiday by the sea specifically to teach them without disruption. He entered a house there and wanted to keep it secret.

7. Do you think Jesus treats the Gentile woman harshly (v27?) Why or why not?

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8. Jesus’ response to the woman begins with the word ‘first’, indicating that he is acting according to a set of priorities. What do you think those priorities might have been?

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What does Jesus reveal here about the strategy and scope of His ministry?

9. How might Jesus’ priorities here impact your life? Do you need to change your priorities?

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10. In this gospel Mark has already reported several examples of Jesus driving out demons from various people. Why might he have also included this account?

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Q10. hint: What’s different about this case? What does Jesus demonstrate by expelling demons?

11. What do we learn about God's new kingdom from this chapter?

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12. Optional. Read Mark 7:31-37. How might Isaiah 35:5-6 add to our understanding of this event?

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