CRAWFORD BIBLE COMMENTARY

BIBLE STUDY

Mark Chapter 7 —
Tradition, Faith, and Healing

A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

Introduction

Mark Chapter 7 deals with a question that matters in every generation.

What makes a person clean or unclean before God?

Religious leaders from Jerusalem came to inspect Jesus and His disciples.

They noticed the disciples ate without doing the special hand-washing their tradition required.

This was not about hygiene.

It was about religious tradition.

Jesus answered strongly.

He showed how human traditions had come to replace God's commands.

Then He taught that true uncleanness does not come from food or outward things.

“What comes out of a person is what defiles him.”

Sin begins in the heart.

Then Jesus went into Gentile territory.

A Greek woman begged Him to free her daughter from a demon.

Her humble, persistent faith moved Jesus to heal her child.

Finally, Jesus healed a deaf man who could hardly speak.

The crowd said, **“He has done everything well.”**

The chapter shows that God's grace is not limited by human rules or human boundaries.

This chapter is not a criticism of any one group.

Jesus' warning about empty tradition applies to religious people of every time and place, including Christians today.

The chapter moves through four movements:

- Confrontation with the Pharisees (verses 1–13).
- What Truly Defiles a Person (verses 14–23).
- The Faith of a Gentile Woman (verses 24–30).
- Jesus Heals a Deaf and Mute Man (verses 31–37).

The central truth of Mark 7 is:

God looks at the heart, not at outward religious rituals, and His grace in Jesus reaches past human traditions and boundaries to cleanse, heal, and welcome all who come to Him in faith.

I. FROM JERUSALEM

Mark 7:1 — Gathered Around Jesus

“The Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus.”

“The Pharisees and some of the scribes.”

Religious leaders who were experts in the law and its traditions.

“Who had come from Jerusalem.”

This was another official delegation.

Jerusalem was the center of religious authority.

They had come to examine Jesus.

“Gathered around Jesus.”

They were watching closely.

Cross References

Matthew 15:1

> Then some Pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus from Jerusalem.

Luke 11:53

> When Jesus left, the teachers of the law and the Pharisees began to oppose Him strongly and question Him about many things.

John 1:19

> The Jewish leaders in Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask John, “Who are you?”

Spiritual Principle

Religious authority does not guarantee a heart open to God.

Key Truth

Some come to Jesus to learn; others come to find fault.

II. UNWASHED HANDS

Mark 7:2 — They Found Fault

“They saw some of His disciples eating bread with “unclean” (that is, unwashed) hands, and they found fault.”

“They saw some of His disciples eating bread with ‘unclean’ hands.”

The issue was not dirt.

It was a ritual washing.

Religious teachers required a special way of washing before eating.

“And they found fault.”

They were quick to criticize.

They focused on outward ceremony.

Cross References

Matthew 15:2

> “Why do Your followers break the traditions of the elders? They do not wash their hands before they eat.”

Luke 11:38

> The Pharisee was surprised to see that Jesus did not wash before the meal.

Romans 14:14

> Because I belong to the Lord Jesus, I am sure no food is dirty by itself. But if a person believes something is unclean, then for him it is.

Spiritual Principle

A critical spirit often focuses on outward details and misses the heart.

Spiritual Warning

Be careful not to judge others by man-made rules.

III. THE TRADITION OF THE ELDERS

Mark 7:3 — A Special Washing

“(The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands in a special way, holding to the tradition of the elders.”

Mark explains this custom for his readers.

Many of them were Gentiles who did not know Jewish customs.

“Holding to the tradition of the elders.”

These were rules passed down by religious teachers over many generations.

They were meant to help people obey God's law carefully.

But over time, many came to treat these traditions as if they were God's own commands.

Cross References

Matthew 15:2

> Why do Your followers disobey the rules handed down by the elders?

Colossians 2:8

> Watch out that no one carries you off with hollow, tricky ideas that come from human customs and the ways of this world instead of from Christ.

Galatians 1:14

> I was ahead of many people my age in the Jewish religion and was very eager to keep the traditions of my ancestors.

Spiritual Principle

Traditions can be helpful, but they must never be treated as equal to God's word.

Key Truth

Good intentions can slowly turn into heavy rules.

IV. CUPS, PITCHERS, AND KETTLES

Mark 7:4 — Many Other Traditions

“When they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. They also hold many other traditions, such as the washing of cups, pitchers, kettles, and dining couches.)”

“When they come from the marketplace.”

The market was full of people, including Gentiles.

Some feared they might have touched something unclean.

“They also hold many other traditions.”

Washing cups.

Washing pitchers.

Washing kettles.

Even washing dining couches.

The list of rules kept growing.

Religion had become a matter of outward washing.

Cross References

Matthew 23:25

> How terrible for you, teachers of the law and Pharisees! You clean the outside of your cups and dishes, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence.

Leviticus 11:32

> If one of these dead creatures falls on anything, that thing becomes unclean, whether it is made of wood, cloth, leather, or sackcloth.

Hebrews 9:10

> These were only about food, drink, and different washings, outward rules that lasted until the time God would make things new.

Spiritual Principle

Outward washing cannot make the heart clean.

Key Truth

A clean cup does not mean a clean heart.

V. WHY DON'T YOUR DISCIPLES?

Mark 7:5 — The Question

“The Pharisees and scribes asked Him, “Why don't Your disciples walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?””

The leaders asked Jesus directly.

They criticized His disciples.

But the real target was Jesus.

“Walk according to the tradition of the elders.”

To **walk** means to live.

They believed faithful people lived by these traditions.

Jesus would show that faithfulness is about following God, not human rules.

Cross References

Matthew 15:2

> Why do Your followers break our traditions? They do not wash their hands before they eat.

Mark 2:16

> When the teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw Him eating with sinners and tax collectors, they asked His followers, “Why does He eat with them?”

Luke 11:38

> The Pharisee noticed that Jesus had not washed first before the meal, and he was surprised.

Spiritual Principle

Faithfulness is measured by God's word, not by human customs.

Key Truth

The question is not whether we follow tradition but whether we follow God.

VI. HONORING WITH THEIR LIPS

Mark 7:6 — Hearts Far Away

“Jesus replied, “Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites, as it is written: ‘This people honors Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me.”

“Isaiah was right.”

Jesus quoted Isaiah 29.

“When he prophesied about you hypocrites.”

A **hypocrite** was originally an actor wearing a mask.

Someone who plays a part on the outside.

“This people honors Me with their lips.”

They said the right words.

“But their hearts are far from Me.”

Their hearts did not match their words.

God wants the heart, not just the lips.

Cross References

Isaiah 29:13

> The Lord says, “These people come near Me with their mouths and honor Me with their words, but their hearts are far away from Me.”

Matthew 15:8

> These people show honor to Me with words, but their hearts are far from Me.

Titus 1:16

> They say they know God, but what they do shows they do not.

Spiritual Principle

God desires the worship of the heart, not just the words of the lips.

Application

Does your heart match your worship?

VII. WORSHIP IN VAIN

Mark 7:7 — Commandments of Men

“In vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’”

“In vain they worship Me.”

Their worship was empty.

It had no value.

“Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”

They taught human rules as if they were God's commands.

This is a serious danger.

When human rules are put on the same level as God's word, worship becomes empty.

Cross References

Isaiah 29:13

> Their worship of Me is made up only of rules taught by people.

Colossians 2:22

> These rules are about things that wear out when they are used. They are only human commands and teachings.

Matthew 15:9

> Their worship of Me is worthless, because they teach rules that people made up.

Spiritual Principle

Worship based on human rules instead of God's truth is empty.

Spiritual Warning

Every church must be careful not to treat its customs as if they were God's commands.

VIII. SETTING ASIDE GOD'S COMMAND

Mark 7:8 — Holding to Human Tradition

“You set aside the command of God to hold on to human tradition—such as washing cups and pitchers—and you do many other similar things.””

“You set aside the command of God.”

This was the heart of the problem.

They let go of what God said.

“To hold on to human tradition.”

And they gripped tightly to what people said.

They had it backward.

God's word should come first.

Traditions should serve God's word, never replace it.

Cross References

Matthew 15:3

> Jesus answered, “Why do you break God's command to keep your own traditions?”

Colossians 2:8

> Do not let anyone lead you away with empty ideas based on human traditions instead of on Christ.

Isaiah 29:13

> Their worship is only rules made by people.

Spiritual Principle

God's word must always stand above human tradition.

Key Truth

When we hold tightly to tradition, we may let go of God's command.

IX. SKILLFULLY REJECTING

Mark 7:9 — Keeping Your Own Tradition

“And He continued, “You skillfully reject the commandment of God to keep your own tradition.”

“You skillfully reject.”

Jesus used sharp words.

They were clever at it.

They found smart ways to get around God's law.

“To keep your own tradition.”

Notice the words **“your own.”**

The tradition was theirs, not God's.

Cross References

Matthew 15:3

> Why do you break God's command for the sake of your traditions?

Matthew 15:6

> You have made God's word worthless by following your own traditions.

Mark 7:13

> You cancel God's word by the traditions you pass down.

Spiritual Principle

Cleverness that gets around God's word is not wisdom.

Spiritual Warning

It is possible to be very religious and still find clever ways to disobey God.

X. HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER

Mark 7:10 — What Moses Said

“For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and mother,’ and, ‘Whoever curses father or mother must be put to death.’”

Jesus gives a clear example.

“Honor your father and mother.”

This is one of the Ten Commandments.

Honoring parents included caring for them in their old age.

“Whoever curses father or mother must be put to death.”

God took this very seriously.

Dishonoring parents was a grave sin.

Cross References

Exodus 20:12

> Respect your father and mother, so that you will live a long time in the land the Lord your God is giving you.

Deuteronomy 5:16

> Honor your father and mother as the Lord your God commanded you, so that you may live long and things may go well for you.

Exodus 21:17

> Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.

Spiritual Principle

God commands us to honor and care for our parents.

Application

How are you honoring your parents?

XI. CORBAN

Mark 7:11 — Dedicated to God

“But you say, ‘If a man declares something Corban (that is, dedicated to God), he no longer has to help his father or mother.’”

“Corban.”

This word meant a gift set apart for God.

A person could declare money or property **Corban**.

Then, according to some teachers, it could not be used to help anyone else.

But the person might still keep using it for himself.

“He no longer has to help his father or mother.”

This became a religious excuse.

A son could avoid supporting his aging parents by saying his money belonged to God.

It looked holy.

But it broke God's command.

Cross References

Matthew 15:5

> But you say that if anyone tells his father or mother, “What I might have used to help you is a gift to God,”

Matthew 23:18

> You say, “If anyone swears by the altar, it means nothing. But if anyone swears by the gift on the altar, he must keep his promise.”

Numbers 30:2

> If a man makes a promise to the Lord, he must not break his word. He must do everything he said.

Spiritual Principle

Religious excuses can never cancel God's clear commands.

Spiritual Warning

Be careful of using religion as an excuse to avoid love.

XII. NOTHING FOR HIS PARENTS

Mark 7:12 — Blocked from Helping

“In this way you no longer let him do anything for his parents.”

The result was cruel.

Aging parents were left without help.

And the religious leaders allowed it.

They thought they were honoring God.

But they were breaking His command and hurting people.

Cross References

Matthew 15:5

> You teach that a person who gives his money to God does not have to help his parents.

1 Timothy 5:4

> If a widow has children or grandchildren, they should first learn to serve God by caring for their own family and repaying their parents. This pleases God.

Matthew 15:6

> You let them avoid honoring their father and mother.

Spiritual Principle

True devotion to God shows itself in love for family.

Key Truth

You cannot honor God while neglecting the people He told you to care for.

XIII. NULLIFYING GOD'S WORD

Mark 7:13 — Many Things Like That

“Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that.””

“Thus you nullify the word of God.”

To **nullify** means to cancel or make empty.

Their traditions canceled out God's word.

“By your tradition that you have handed down.”

What was passed down from people overruled what came from God.

“And you do many things like that.”

Corban was only one example.

There were many others.

Cross References

Matthew 15:6

> You have canceled God's word because of your traditions.

Isaiah 29:13

> They worship Me with rules made by people.

Colossians 2:8

> Be careful that no one leads you away with human traditions instead of Christ.

Spiritual Principle

Human traditions can empty God's word of its power if they are placed above it.

Application

Is there any tradition in your life that is pushing aside God's word?

XIV. LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND

Mark 7:14 — Calling the Crowd

“Jesus called the crowd to Him again and said, “Listen to Me, everyone, and understand this:”

Jesus turned from the leaders to the crowd.

He wanted everyone to hear this.

“Listen to Me, everyone, and understand this.”

This was important.

He was about to teach a truth that would change how people understood purity.

Cross References

Matthew 15:10

> Jesus called the crowd to Him and said, “Listen and understand.”

Mark 4:9

> Then Jesus said, “Let anyone who has ears listen.”

Matthew 13:9

> Whoever has ears should listen.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus wants everyone to understand the truth about the heart.

Key Truth

Some truths are too important for only a few to hear.

XV. WHAT DEFILES A PERSON

Mark 7:15 — From the Inside Out

“There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him. It is what comes out of a person that defiles him.”

“There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him.”

Food cannot make a person spiritually unclean.

Unwashed hands cannot make the soul unclean.

“It is what comes out of a person that defiles him.”

The real problem is inside.

Sin comes from the heart.

This was a revolutionary teaching.

Cross References

Matthew 15:11

> What goes into a person's mouth does not make him unclean. What comes out of his mouth is what makes him unclean.

Acts 10:15

> The voice spoke to him again: “Do not call anything unclean that God has made clean.”

Romans 14:14

> I am sure, as one who belongs to the Lord Jesus, that no food is unclean in itself.

Spiritual Principle

Uncleanness before God comes from the heart, not from outside things.

Key Truth

The problem is not what goes in but what comes out.

XVI. EARS TO HEAR

Mark 7:16 — Let Him Hear

“If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.””

Jesus repeats His familiar call.

Listen carefully.

Think about this.

Some of the oldest copies of Mark do not include this verse.

But the same words appear elsewhere in Mark, and the call to listen fits Jesus' teaching.

Cross References

Mark 4:9

> Whoever has ears to hear should listen.

Matthew 11:15

> If you have ears, then listen.

Revelation 2:7

> Everyone who has ears should listen to what the Spirit says to the churches.

Spiritual Principle

God's truth calls for careful listening.

Key Truth

Hearing is not the same as listening.

XVII. ASKING ABOUT THE PARABLE

Mark 7:17 — In the House

“After He had left the crowd and entered the house, His disciples asked Him about this parable.”

Again the disciples came privately to Jesus.

They did not fully understand.

They called His saying a **parable**, a word picture that needed explaining.

Jesus was patient with their questions.

Cross References

Matthew 15:15

> Peter said, “Explain this saying to us.”

Mark 4:10

When He was alone, the Twelve and the others around Him asked Him about the stories.

Mark 4:34

When He was alone with His followers, He explained everything to them.

Spiritual Principle

Disciples bring their questions to Jesus.

Application

Do you take your questions about Scripture to Jesus?

XVIII. STILL WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING?

Mark 7:18 — Nothing from the Outside

“He said to them, “Are you still without understanding? Don't you realize that nothing entering a person from the outside can defile him?”

“Are you still without understanding?”

Jesus was disappointed they were slow to understand.

“Don't you realize that nothing entering a person from the outside can defile him?”

He repeated the point.

What goes in from outside does not make a person unclean before God.

Cross References

Matthew 15:16

Jesus said, “Do you still not understand?”

Mark 4:13

Jesus asked them, “Do you not understand this story? How then will you understand any story?”

Matthew 16:9

Do you still not understand? Don't you remember the five loaves for the five thousand?

Spiritual Principle

Jesus patiently teaches those who are slow to understand.

Key Truth

Jesus does not give up on slow learners.

XIX. ALL FOODS CLEAN

Mark 7:19 — Into the Stomach

“It doesn't go into the heart but into the stomach, and then out of the body.” (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean.)”

“It doesn't go into the heart but into the stomach.”

Food affects the body, not the soul.

It passes through and leaves.

“And then out of the body.”

Jesus used very plain language.

“In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean.”

Mark adds this important note.

The food laws of the Old Testament had a purpose for Israel.

But Jesus brought something new.

Later, God showed Peter the same truth in a vision.

Most Christians understand this to mean believers are free from the Old Testament food laws.

What matters to God is the heart.

Cross References

Acts 10:15

> The voice spoke a second time: “Stop calling things unclean when God has made them clean.”

Romans 14:14

> As one who belongs to the Lord Jesus, I am fully sure that no food is unclean in itself.

1 Timothy 4:4

> All that God created is good. If we thank Him for it, we do not need to turn any of it away.

Spiritual Principle

In Christ, what matters is not what we eat but the condition of our hearts.

Key Truth

Jesus moved the focus from the plate to the heart.

XX. WHAT COMES OUT

Mark 7:20 — The Real Source of Defilement

“He continued, “What comes out of a person is what defiles him.”

Jesus repeats the main point.

The source of uncleanness is inside us.

Our words.

Our actions.

Our attitudes.

They all flow from the heart.

Cross References

Matthew 15:18

> But what comes out of the mouth comes from the heart, and that is what makes a person unclean.

James 3:6

> The tongue is like a fire. It is a world of evil among the parts of our body. It spreads its evil through the whole body.

Matthew 12:34

> The mouth speaks what the heart is full of.

Spiritual Principle

What comes out of us reveals what is inside us.

Key Truth

The heart is the fountain; words and actions are the stream.

XXI. FROM WITHIN

Mark 7:21 — Out of the Heart

“For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts: sexual immorality, theft, murder,”

“For from within, out of the heart of man.”

This is a sobering truth.

The problem is not outside us.

It is inside us.

“Come evil thoughts.”

Sin begins with thoughts.

Then it grows into actions.

“Sexual immorality, theft, murder.”

Jesus begins a list of sins.

Each one starts in the heart.

Cross References

Genesis 6:5

> The Lord saw how wicked people had become on the earth. Every thought and plan in their hearts was always evil.

Jeremiah 17:9

> Nothing fools us like our own hearts. They are sick beyond cure. Who can really know them?

Matthew 15:19

> Out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual sin, stealing, lying, and insulting others.

Spiritual Principle

Sin begins in the heart before it shows in our actions.

Application

What thoughts do you need to bring to God for cleansing?

XXII. A LIST OF EVILS

Mark 7:22 — More from the Heart

“adultery, greed, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance, and foolishness.”

The list continues.

- **Adultery** — breaking faithfulness in marriage.
- **Greed** — always wanting more.
- **Wickedness** — doing harm to others.
- **Deceit** — lying and tricking.
- **Lewdness** — shameless sinful behavior.
- **Envy** — resenting what others have.
- **Slander** — speaking evil of others.
- **Arrogance** — pride that looks down on others.
- **Foolishness** — living as if God does not matter.

These are not only outward sins.

Many are attitudes no one else can see.

But God sees them.

Cross References

Galatians 5:19

> The things the sinful nature does are clear: sexual sin, impurity, and shameful behavior.

Romans 1:29

> They were filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed, and hatred. They were full of jealousy, murder, fighting, lying, and thinking the worst about others.

Matthew 15:19

> Evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual sins, stealing, lying, and slander all come from the heart.

Spiritual Principle

God sees the hidden sins of the heart as clearly as the outward ones.

Spiritual Warning

Pride and envy are just as serious to God as theft and adultery.

XXIII. ALL THESE EVILS

Mark 7:23 — From Within

“All these evils come from within, and they defile a person.””

“All these evils come from within.”

Every one of them starts inside.

“And they defile a person.”

These make a person truly unclean.

Washing hands cannot fix this.

Avoiding certain foods cannot fix this.

Only God can make a heart clean.

That is why we need Jesus.

Cross References

Matthew 15:20

These things make a person unclean. But eating with unwashed hands does not.

James 1:14

But each person is tempted when his own evil desires drag him away and trap him.

Proverbs 4:23

More than anything, watch over your heart, because your whole life comes out of it.

Spiritual Principle

Only God can cleanse the heart that sin has made unclean.

Key Truth

We do not need cleaner hands; we need new hearts.

XXIV. TO THE REGION OF TYRE

Mark 7:24 — He Could Not Stay Hidden

“Jesus left that place and went to the region of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it, but He could not keep His presence hidden.”

“Jesus left that place and went to the region of Tyre.”

Tyre was a Gentile city on the coast, north of Galilee.

Jesus had just taught that food does not make a person unclean.

Now He went into Gentile territory, where Jews thought people were unclean.

“He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it.”

Jesus may have wanted rest.

“But He could not keep His presence hidden.”

Jesus' fame had spread even here.

Cross References

Matthew 15:21

> Jesus left that place and went to the area of Tyre and Sidon.

Matthew 11:21

> If the miracles done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have turned from their sins long ago.

Mark 3:8

> People came from the area around Tyre and Sidon because they heard about what He was doing.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus cannot be hidden from those who are looking for Him.

Key Truth

Jesus went where others would not go.

XXV. A MOTHER'S PLEA

Mark 7:25 — She Fell at His Feet

“A woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit heard about Him, and she came and fell at His feet.”

“A woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit.”

A mother with a suffering child.

“Heard about Him.”

News of Jesus had reached her.

“And she came and fell at His feet.”

She humbled herself.

She was desperate.

Like Jairus, she came for her daughter.

Cross References

Matthew 15:22

> A Canaanite woman from that area came and cried out, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is badly troubled by a demon.”

Mark 5:23

> He begged, “My little daughter is dying. Please come and put Your hands on her.”

Mark 1:23

> Suddenly a man with an evil spirit cried out in the synagogue.

Spiritual Principle

Love for our children drives us to the feet of Jesus.

Application

Who are you bringing to Jesus in prayer?

XXVI. A GREEK WOMAN

Mark 7:26 — Syrian Phoenicia

“The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia. She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter.”

“The woman was a Greek.”

She was a Gentile.

She spoke Greek and followed Greek culture.

“Born in Syrian Phoenicia.”

This was the region of Tyre and Sidon.

Long ago this land had been home to Israel's enemies.

“She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter.”

She kept asking.

She would not give up.

Cross References

Matthew 15:22

A woman from Canaan who lived there came to Jesus, crying out for help.

Acts 10:1

There was a man in Caesarea named Cornelius, an officer in the Italian army.

Matthew 15:24

Jesus answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.”

Spiritual Principle

God's mercy is available to people of every nation.

Key Truth

An outsider came with nothing but need and faith.

XXVII. THE CHILDREN'S BREAD

Mark 7:27 — First the Children

“He told her, “First let the children be fed, for it isn't right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.””

This is a hard saying.

“First let the children be fed.”

The **children** were Israel.

Jesus' mission was first to the Jewish people.

The word **first** is important.

It means others would come later.

“It isn't right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.”

Some Jews called Gentiles “dogs.”

The word Jesus used here meant small household dogs, family pets.

Jesus may have been testing her faith.

He knew how she would respond.

This was not cruelty but an invitation for her faith to speak.

Cross References

Matthew 15:24

> He said, “God sent Me first to the lost sheep of Israel.”

Matthew 15:26

> Jesus said, “It is not right to take the children's bread and give it to the dogs.”

Romans 1:16

> I am proud of the good news. Through it God's power rescues everyone who trusts Him, the Jews first and the Gentiles too.

Spiritual Principle

God's plan of salvation came first to Israel and then to all nations.

Key Truth

The word “first” held a door open for the Gentiles.

XXVIII. EVEN THE DOGS

Mark 7:28 — Crumbs from the Table

“She replied, “Yes, Lord, but even the dogs under the table eat the crumbs the children drop.””

Her answer is beautiful.

“Yes, Lord.”

She did not argue.

She did not get offended.

She accepted what Jesus said.

She called Him **Lord**.

“But even the dogs under the table eat the crumbs the children drop.”

She turned His picture into a plea.

She did not ask to take the children's place.

She only asked for crumbs.

She believed even a crumb of Jesus' power would be enough.

Cross References

Matthew 15:27

> She said, “Yes, Lord, but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table.”

Matthew 8:8

> The officer answered, “Lord, I am not good enough for You to come into my house. Just give the order, and my servant will be healed.”

Romans 3:29

> Is God only the God of the Jews? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, He is the God of the Gentiles too.

Spiritual Principle

Humble, persistent faith takes hold of God's mercy.

Key Truth

A crumb of Jesus' grace is more than enough.

XXIX. BECAUSE OF THIS REPLY

Mark 7:29 — The Demon Has Left

“Then He said to her, “Because of this reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter.””

“Because of this reply.”

Jesus was pleased with her answer.

Matthew tells us Jesus said, **“Woman, you have great faith!”**

“You may go.”

Her request was granted.

“The demon has left your daughter.”

Jesus healed the girl from a distance.

He did not even go to her house.

His word was enough.

Cross References

Matthew 15:28

> Jesus answered, “Woman, you have great faith! What you asked for will be done.” And her daughter was healed at that moment.

Matthew 8:13

> Jesus said to the officer, “Go home. It will be done just as you believed.” And his servant was healed at that very time.

Mark 5:34

> He told her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace.”

Spiritual Principle

Jesus honors humble, persistent faith.

Key Truth

Distance is no barrier to the power of Jesus' word.

XXX. THE DEMON GONE

Mark 7:30 — Lying on the Bed

“She went home and found her child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.”

The mother believed and went home.

She found her daughter resting peacefully.

The demon was gone.

The torment was over.

What Jesus said had come true.

Cross References

Matthew 15:28

> Her daughter was healed at that very moment.

Mark 1:31

> He took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her.

John 4:52

> He asked them when his son got better. They said, “The fever left him yesterday at one in the afternoon.”

Spiritual Principle

Jesus' word can be trusted completely.

Key Truth

She went home on faith and found the promise fulfilled.

XXXI. THROUGH SIDON TO THE DECAPOLIS

Mark 7:31 — A Long Journey

“Jesus left the region of Tyre and went through Sidon down to the Sea of Galilee and into the region of the Decapolis.”

Jesus took a long route.

North to Sidon.

Then down to the area east of the Sea of Galilee.

The **Decapolis** was the region of ten Greek cities.

This was where the man freed from Legion had told his story.

Now Jesus returned.

The seed planted by one man's testimony was ready for harvest.

Cross References

Matthew 15:29

Jesus left there and went along the Sea of Galilee. He went up on a hill and sat down.

Mark 5:20

The man went away and told people in the Ten Towns how much Jesus had done for him.

Matthew 4:25

Large crowds followed Him from Galilee, the Ten Towns, Jerusalem, Judea, and across the Jordan.

Spiritual Principle

One person's testimony can prepare the way for Jesus.

Key Truth

Jesus came back to the place where a changed life had told His story.

XXXII. A DEAF MAN

Mark 7:32 — Brought to Jesus

“There some people brought to Him a man who was deaf and could hardly talk, and they begged Him to lay His hand on him.”

“There some people brought to Him a man.”

Again, friends brought someone to Jesus.

“Who was deaf and could hardly talk.”

He could not hear.

He could barely speak.

He was cut off from others.

“And they begged Him to lay His hand on him.”

They believed Jesus could heal him.

Cross References

Matthew 9:32

> As they were leaving, some people brought Jesus a man who could not talk because he had a demon.

Isaiah 35:5

> Then the blind will see again, and the deaf will hear.

Mark 8:22

> Some people brought a blind man to Jesus and begged Him to touch him.

Spiritual Principle

Bringing others to Jesus is an act of love and faith.

Application

Who can you bring to Jesus?

XXXIII. TAKEN ASIDE

Mark 7:33 — Fingers and Touch

“Jesus took him aside, away from the crowd, put His fingers into the man's ears, and then spit and touched the man's tongue.”

“Jesus took him aside, away from the crowd.”

Jesus gave him private attention.

The man could not hear words.

So Jesus used touch and actions he could understand.

“Put His fingers into the man's ears.”

Showing He would open his ears.

“Then spit and touched the man's tongue.”

Showing He would loosen his tongue.

In those days, saliva was thought to have healing power.

But the power was not in the method.

It was in Jesus.

He met this man in a personal, tender way.

Cross References

Mark 8:23

> He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. He spit on his eyes and put His hands on him.

John 9:6

> After He said this, He spit on the ground, made some mud, and put it on the man's eyes.

Mark 5:41

> He took the child by the hand and said, “Little girl, get up!”

Spiritual Principle

Jesus meets each person in a way they can understand.

Key Truth

Jesus spoke to the deaf man in the language of touch.

XXXIV. EPHPHATHA!

Mark 7:34 — Be Opened!

“Looking up to heaven, He sighed deeply and said, “Ephphatha!” (which means, “Be opened!”).”

“Looking up to heaven.”

Jesus looked to the Father.

The man could see this.

He would know the healing came from God.

“He sighed deeply.”

Jesus felt the pain of this man's suffering.

He grieved over what sin and sickness had done to God's world.

“Ephphatha!”

Mark records the very word Jesus spoke in Aramaic.

“Be opened!”

Two simple words with great power.

Cross References

John 11:41

> Jesus looked up and said, “Father, I thank You that You have heard Me.”

Mark 6:41

> He looked up to heaven, gave thanks, and broke the loaves.

John 11:33

> When Jesus saw her crying, He was deeply moved and troubled in spirit.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus feels deeply for those who suffer.

Key Truth

Before Jesus spoke the healing word, He shared the man's sorrow.

XXXV. HE SPOKE PLAINLY

Mark 7:35 — Ears Opened, Tongue Loosened

“At once the man's ears were opened, his tongue was loosened, and he began to speak plainly.”

“At once the man's ears were opened.”

He could hear.

“His tongue was loosened.”

What had held his tongue was released.

“And he began to speak plainly.”

He spoke clearly right away.

He did not need to learn slowly.

This fulfilled Isaiah's promise about the time of God's salvation.

Cross References

Isaiah 35:5

> In that day, people who could not see will see, and people who could not hear will hear.

Luke 1:64

> Right away Zechariah could speak again, and he began praising God.

Isaiah 32:3

> Then those who can see will not close their eyes, and those who can hear will listen.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus brings the promised healing of God's kingdom.

Key Truth

The first thing the man heard was Jesus' voice.

XXXVI. THE MORE THEY SPREAD IT

Mark 7:36 — Not to Tell Anyone

“Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone. But the more He told them, the more they spread the news.”

Again, Jesus asked for silence.

He did not want to be seen only as a miracle worker.

But the people could not keep quiet.

The more He told them, the more they talked.

Joy is hard to hide.

Cross References

Mark 1:44

See that you do not tell anyone about this.

Mark 5:43

He gave them strict orders not to let anyone know.

Matthew 9:30

Jesus warned them sternly, “See that no one knows about this.”

Spiritual Principle

The works of Jesus are too wonderful to keep silent.

Key Truth

When Jesus changes a life, people cannot help but talk.

XXXVII. HE HAS DONE EVERYTHING WELL

Mark 7:37 — Overwhelmed with Amazement

“People were overwhelmed with amazement. “He has done everything well,” they said. “He makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.””

“People were overwhelmed with amazement.”

They were beyond amazed.

“He has done everything well.”

These words recall Genesis 1.

When God created the world, He saw that everything was very good.

Jesus was doing the work of the Creator.

Restoring what was broken.

“He makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.”

This was what Isaiah said God would do when He came to save His people.

These Gentiles were seeing God's promises fulfilled.

Cross References

Isaiah 35:5

> The blind will see again, and the deaf will hear.

Genesis 1:31

> God looked over all He had made and saw that it was all very good.

Matthew 15:31

> The crowd was amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled made well, the lame walking, and the blind seeing. And they praised the God of Israel.

Spiritual Principle

Everything Jesus does is done well.

Key Truth

Jesus is restoring God's good creation.

XXXVIII. FIVE GREAT LESSONS FROM MARK 7

1. Tradition Versus Truth

“You set aside the command of God to hold on to human tradition.”

Principle:

Human traditions can never override God's commands.

2. Defilement Comes from Within

“What comes out of a person is what defiles him.”

Principle:

Sin begins in the heart, not in food or outward rituals.

3. Faith Crosses Boundaries

“Yes, Lord, but even the dogs under the table eat the crumbs.”

Principle:

The Syrophoenician woman's faith showed that God's mercy reaches beyond Israel.

4. Jesus Heals in Unique Ways

“Ephphatha!” (which means, “Be opened!”)

Principle:

His power was not in rituals but in the authority of His word and His compassion.

5. All Things Done Well

“He has done everything well.”

Principle:

Christ's works were complete, perfect, and undeniable proof of His divine mission.

XXXIX. TRADITION AND GOD'S WORD

Mark 7 helps us think about traditions in our own lives and churches.

Traditions Can Be Good

- They can help us remember God's truth.
- They can give order to worship.
- They can connect generations.

Traditions Become Dangerous When

- They are treated as equal to God's word.
- They are used to judge others.
- They become a substitute for a changed heart.
- They are used as excuses to avoid obeying God.

Questions to Ask About Our Traditions

- Does this come from God's word or from people?
- Does it help or hinder love for God and others?
- Am I using it to look good or to honor God?
- Would I set it aside if it conflicted with Scripture?

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Hold God's word tightly and human traditions loosely.

XL. THE HEART OF THE PROBLEM

Verses 14–23 teach where sin really comes from.

What Does Not Defile

- Food.
- Unwashed hands.
- Outward things.

What Does Defile

- Evil thoughts.
- Sinful actions.
- Wrong attitudes.

Where It Comes From

“From within, out of the heart.”

What We Need

- Not cleaner hands, but a new heart.
- Not better rules, but God's cleansing.
- Not outward religion, but inward change through Christ.

Key Truth

Only God can give us the clean heart we need.

XLI. LESSONS FROM THE SYROPHOENICIAN WOMAN

Her faith teaches us how to come to Jesus.

She Came Humbly

“She came and fell at His feet.”

She Came for Someone Else

She begged for her daughter.

She Came Persistently

She would not give up.

She Accepted Jesus' Words

“Yes, Lord.”

She Asked Only for Grace

“Even the dogs under the table eat the crumbs.”

She Trusted His Word

She went home believing.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Humble, persistent faith that asks only for grace will never be turned away.

XLII. WHAT MARK 7 TEACHES ABOUT JESUS

He Knows the Heart

“Their hearts are far from Me.”

He Upholds God's Word

“You set aside the command of God.”

He Declares All Foods Clean

“In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean.”

He Welcomes Outsiders

“The demon has left your daughter.”

He Heals from a Distance

“She went home and found her child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.”

He Feels Our Pain

“He sighed deeply.”

He Does Everything Well

“He has done everything well.”

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Jesus sees past outward religion to the heart, and He opens His mercy to everyone who comes in faith.

XLIII. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR PERSONAL STUDY

Question 1

Why did the Pharisees criticize Jesus' disciples?

They did not perform the special ritual hand-washing required by tradition.

Question 2

What was the “tradition of the elders”?

Rules passed down by religious teachers that went beyond God's written law.

Question 3

Why did Jesus call them hypocrites?

Because they honored God with their lips while their hearts were far from Him.

Question 4

What was Corban?

A way of declaring something dedicated to God, which some used to avoid helping their parents.

Question 5

How did Corban break God's command?

It allowed people to avoid honoring and caring for their parents.

Question 6

What did Jesus teach about what defiles a person?

Nothing from outside defiles a person; what comes from the heart does.

Question 7

What did Mark mean when he said Jesus declared all foods clean?

Food does not make a person unclean before God; what matters is the heart.

Question 8

What sins did Jesus say come from the heart?

Evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance, and foolishness.

Question 9

Why did Jesus speak to the woman about the children's bread?

His mission was first to Israel, and He may have been testing and drawing out her faith.

Question 10

What made the woman's answer so remarkable?

She humbly agreed with Jesus and asked only for the crumbs of His grace.

Question 11

Why did Jesus touch the deaf man's ears and tongue?

To communicate with him in a way he could understand and show what He was about to do.

Question 12

What should Mark 7 change about the way Christians live today?

Mark 7 should cause believers to live:

- Worshiping God from the heart, not just the lips.
- Placing God's word above human traditions.
- Caring faithfully for their parents.
- Guarding their hearts from sin.
- Asking God for clean hearts.
- Welcoming outsiders to Jesus.
- Coming to Jesus with humble, persistent faith.

- Praising Jesus who does everything well.

XLIV. PERSONAL APPLICATION

Mark 7 asks several important questions.

Does My Heart Match My Worship?

Or am I honoring God only with my lips?

Have I Put Any Tradition Above God's Word?

What customs have become more important to me than God's commands?

Am I Using Religion as an Excuse?

To avoid loving the people God gave me?

How Am I Caring for My Parents?

Am I honoring them as God commands?

What Is Coming Out of My Heart?

What do my words and actions reveal?

Do I Look Down on Outsiders?

Or do I welcome them to Jesus?

Is My Faith Humble and Persistent?

Do I keep coming to Jesus even when the answer seems slow?

Do I Believe Jesus Does Everything Well?

Even in the hard parts of my life?

XLV. A CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“Clean Hands, Dirty Hearts”

The religious leaders had very clean hands.

They washed them carefully.

They washed their cups.

They washed their pitchers.

They even washed their couches.

They were proud of how clean they were on the outside.

But Jesus looked deeper.

He saw hearts far from God.

He saw greed.

He saw pride.

He saw people who would rather keep a rule than help their own parents.

Their hands were clean, but their hearts were not.

This creates a powerful principle.

It is possible to look clean and still be unclean.

What God wants most is not clean hands, but a clean heart.

And only Jesus can give us that.

Principle:

God cares less about how clean we look and more about how clean our hearts are.

XLVI. FINAL APPLICATION

Mark Chapter 7 moves from outward religion to the inner heart.

It warns against honoring God with the lips while the heart is far away.

It shows how human traditions can push aside God's word.

It teaches that sin comes from within.

It shows Jesus welcoming a Gentile woman with great faith.

And it shows Jesus opening deaf ears and loosening a silent tongue.

Mark 7 therefore reminds us:

Never let tradition replace God's word.

Never use religion as an excuse to avoid love.

Never think outward washing can clean the heart.

Never think anyone is too far outside God's mercy.

Never forget that Jesus does everything well.

The church does not need people with clean hands and cold hearts.

It needs:

Hearts that truly worship.

Lives shaped by God's word.

Faith that reaches across every boundary.

And praise for the One who does everything well.

The same Jesus still calls:

Tell people that God looks at the heart.

Tell people that Jesus can make the heart clean.

Tell people that His mercy is for every nation.

Tell people that He still opens deaf ears and loosens silent tongues.

And as you live:

Worship from the heart.

Honor God's word.

Guard your heart.

Come to Jesus with humble faith.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank You that You look at the heart and not only at outward actions.

Thank You for Your word, which stands above every human tradition.

Thank You that Jesus can make unclean hearts clean.

Thank You that Your mercy reaches people of every nation.

Thank You that Jesus honored the humble faith of an outsider.

Thank You that He opens deaf ears and loosens silent tongues.

Thank You that He does everything well.

Forgive us when we have honored You with our lips while our hearts were far away.

Forgive us when we have placed our traditions above Your word.

Forgive us when we have used religion as an excuse to avoid love.

Forgive us for the evil thoughts and attitudes that come from our hearts.

Forgive us when we have looked down on those outside.

Create in us clean hearts.

Help us honor and care for our parents.

Give us humble, persistent faith.

Open our ears to hear Your voice and our mouths to praise You.

And help us trust that You do everything well.

“He has done everything well.”

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Key Verse

“He continued, “What comes out of a person is what defiles him.”” — Mark 7:20

Central Truth

God looks at the heart, not at outward religious rituals, and His grace in Jesus reaches past human traditions and boundaries to cleanse, heal, and welcome all who come to Him in faith.

Mark 7 in One Sentence

Jesus rebukes religious leaders for setting aside God's commands to keep human traditions, teaches that true defilement comes from the heart rather than from food, honors the humble faith of a Gentile woman by freeing her daughter from a demon, and heals a deaf man so that the people declare, “He has done everything well.”