

VIDEOS

[Jesus vs Religion Christopher Hilken Mark 6:53-56; Mark 7:1-13 \(50:24\)](#)

[Discussion guide.pdf](#)

- A.W. Tower – What comes to mind when you think about God?
- Christianity pulls us to the Father, Religion pushes us away
- The cost of discipleship is high, but the cost of non-discipleship is infinitely higher.
- The fun of non-discipleship is great, but the joy of discipleship is infinitely greater.

[The Battle Between Culture and Church - Chris Brown - Mark 7:9-30](#)

[Discussion guide.pdf](#)

[JMT Gospel Reflection Mark 7:1-13 \(2:14\)](#)

[JMT Gospel Reflection Mark 7:14-23 \(2:00\)](#)

[Gospel of Mark Chapter 7 \(4:56\)](#)

[Mark 7 Explained \(8:54\)](#)

[God Looks at the Heart - Calvary Chapel](#)

[You're Not Far - Loophole Religion - Andy Stanley](#)

From an early age, we learn quickly to look for loopholes in the rules. We try to figure out what we can get away with and still be okay. We tend to take this same mindset into our relationship with God, but it doesn't work. When we opt for loopholes and workarounds, we find ourselves in a category no one wants to be in: hypocrites. Jesus calls us to move beyond loophole religion.

Discussion Questions

1. Did you grow up with any religious traditions that,
2. Are you inclined to believe that confessing your sin to God makes things right between you and God, regardless of whether or not you've made things right with the person you sinned against? If so, why?
3. Read Mark 7:1–15.
 - What stands out to you?
 - Jesus accused religious leaders of nullifying the intent of God's commands with made-up traditions. Can you think of any modern-day examples of this?
4. Are there any ways you have let go of the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions? Do you identify with any of the following? If so, how?

- Do you ever try to figure out how close you can get to sin without sinning?
- Do you believe there is a ritual that makes you right with God while removing your responsibility to make things right with others?
- Do you feel guiltier about missing church than mistreating someone at work (or home, school, or in your community)?
- Are you banking on the myth that God has short-term memory loss?

Changing Your Mind

Loophole religion is pervasive in our culture, but following Jesus is an invitation to be done with all the games and traditions. We are part of a kingdom of conscience informed by the law of Christ: to love others as God through Christ has loved us. There are no loopholes in that kind of love—no workarounds. In this kingdom, we wake up every day with the question:

What does love require of me?

The kingdom of God is near, and everyone is invited to participate.
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Mark 7 - Prayer

Great Lawgiver of Israel, Your people have twisted together their own traditions and Your holy Law, treating the mixture as somehow divine. Forgive us, for we would reject Your commandments and establish our own traditions as the pathway of righteousness. Help us to see our real duty and the corruption of our wicked hearts. From within, out of the hearts of men, come evil thoughts, words, and actions. Through these habits of sin we have been utterly defiled. Cleanse us, O God! Have mercy also on our sons and daughters. Grant us a crumb from Your holy table, and deliver us from the doctrines and moral directives of demons. Grant to us holy speech, and open our mouths in praise to You. You do all things well.

COMMENTARIES

Preaching the Word: Mark – Jesus, Servant and Savior

- The Mishnah, a compilation of Jewish oral laws made at the end of the second century a.d., says, “Tradition is a fence around the law.” Tradition, as the Jews saw it, protected God’s Holy Word and assisted his people in keeping it. This fencing of the Law probably began well enough, but as the years passed it produced some famous absurdities
- The biggest concern of the Mishnah (some 186 pages) was “cleannesses,” and much of the concern here was with ritual washing.
- In the text considered in this chapter, Jesus set the scribes and Pharisees straight about the nature of real purity and its source. He taught the need for radical purity which could only be supplied by his life
- Jesus said their legalism was simply “rules taught by men.” This was enough to make them choke, because for the Pharisees the oral law was equally binding with the Scriptures.

- Those who try to justify themselves by the Law end up modifying it in order to escape its authority. In the same way, those who handle God's Word without submitting to it are in the constant process of conforming it to their self-complacency.
- This teaching was tough for the Hebrew mind. Verses 14 and 15 seem clear enough, but notice in verse 17 that Jesus' disciples just did not get it: "After he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about this parable" (v. 17). It wasn't a "parable"—it was straightforward as can be, but their mind-set couldn't receive it. So Jesus spelled it out again, in more depth. First, regarding what goes in:
(vv. 18, 19)
- Second, regarding what comes out:
(vv. 20–23)
- This is how Jesus viewed the heart of man apart from his grace. Jesus himself taught the doctrine of depravity—that every area of life is tainted with sin, which originates in man's heart.
- The inner life, the heart of man, is the problem. Jeremiah 17:9 tells us: "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? 'I the Lord search the heart and examine the mind.'"
- The Pharisees' problem was that though they had the Scriptures, they had a defective theology of man and sin. Because of this, they treated symptoms with their legalism, rather than dealing with the root cause. They made the outside of the cup clean, but neglected the uncleanness within. Even today some focus on outward conduct to the neglect of the heart.
- **Social reform (as needed as it may be!) will not do it. Even revolution and a new world order will not make it. There is only one answer: regeneration. There is no power in the world which can make a bad heart good. Only the gospel can do that. Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God"** There must be a radical new birth.
- John 3:3
There must be a new heart. - Ezekiel 36:26
There must be a resurrection! - Romans 6:3, 4
There must be a new creation! – 2 Corinthians 5:17; Revelation 21:5
- We can polish the outside. We can educate ourselves. We can do "good" things. But none of these things will really change us. We need Christ's life.

Exalting Jesus in Mark

- Amazingly we can have a passion for God yet not know God – Romans 20:2
- Why is God so opposed to pride? It is because human pride is in opposition to God. It thinks more of itself than it should. It thinks more of itself than God does!

- Not all traditions are bad. They become bad when we put them on the same level as Scripture or in the place of Scripture. It is a “Bible-plus” kind of religion.
- Warren Wiersbe says, “We must constantly beware lest tradition take the place of truth. It does us good to examine our church traditions in the light of God’s Word and to be courageous enough to make changes
- Every human heart has the root of every human sin in it. It is entirely possible to look nice on the outside while being dead on the inside. The most deadly contamination is not what I touch. The most deadly contamination is what is in my heart.
- This is one of the most critically important spiritual lessons in the whole Word of God. Jesus explains that corruption is not external but internal. Impurity is not a matter of the stomach but of the heart. Defilement is not what goes in but what comes out
- **The basic problem of fallen humanity is not what we do but who we are!**
- Inevitably, sin’s root will produce sin’s fruit

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Would the Romans of Jesus’ day likely consider pride a vice or a virtue? How do non-Christians generally view pride today?

What is different about the Christian worldview that makes us have a different judgment on the value of pride?

What is the connection between pride and legalism?”

Do you have any tendencies toward legalism? How would you recognize such tendencies in yourself? How would you battle against them?

What is wrong with the logic behind “guilt by association”? Do you know a person who is godly but who chooses to associate with less reputable types?

Which rituals in your church are possible to do as merely external show without necessitating an internal spiritual reality?

Which of your practices are long-held traditions that have no basis in Scripture?

What are some of your least favorite or most challenging verses in the Bible? Do you sometimes create ways to excuse yourself from obeying those verses, perhaps by employing some work-around or a fanciful interpretation?

In what ways do other religions focus on external actions? How is Christianity different from each of those religions?

What is the remedy for the list of sinful heart conditions? Why is “trying harder” inadequate and even counterproductive?”

MARK 4 EVERYONE – N.T. Wright

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The Old Testament “clean laws” use dirt to symbolize sin. Why is this a good metaphor? (In what ways does sin do to the soul what filth does to a body?)

Read verses 1-5.

- a) The religious leaders drew up specific moral guidelines for their faith community that went beyond those laid down in the Scripture. What are the advantages and disadvantages of doing this?
- b) On balance, is this a good idea or a bad one, and why?
- c) What are some ways Christians ‘add’ to the law today?

Read verses 6-13.

- a) How does Jesus answer the Pharisees' question (about why he ignores the elders' tradition) in these verses?
- b) What is his illustration and how can we do this today?

Read verses 6-7.

How do you think someone can “worship” God and “honor” God and yet have hearts “far from him?”

Read verses 14-23.

What does Jesus tell us in these verses is REAL uncleanness?

List everything we learn about the Christian doctrine of sin from verses 13-23.

From BE DILIGENT Warren Weirsbe – Discussion questions

Jesus’ servanthood stood in sharp contrast to the habits of the religious leaders of His day, who used their positions to gain power over the people. In what ways do we see that same problem today?

On a scale of 1–10 (1=extremely easy, 10=extremely difficult), how easy do you think it is to obey God outwardly through ceremony and yet be disobedient in your heart attitude? What spiritual problem does this create?

What are the positive effects of longtime traditions?

What are the negative effects of longtime traditions?

What hypocrisies do you see around you that Jesus would have rebuked?"