

# LIFE GROUP STUDY GUIDE

February 19, 2012

**Series: Jesus 101**

**“Religion vs Gospel” Mark 7:1-23**

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## **Sermon Summary:**

Jesus has some strong words in this passage, ones that we need to pay careful attention to. He calls the Pharisees “hypocrites” (basically meaning “play actors”) - they are not who they say they are and His disciples He calls “dull”. Jesus answers two basic questions in this chapter: “what does it mean to be holy?” and “where does evil come from?” The chapter begins with the Pharisees question: “Why don’t your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders?” Actually it was more than a question, it was an accusation: “you and your disciples are lax - morally and spiritually - you don’t follow the prescribed rules for what it means to be a holy person”. The Pharisees were continually offended by Jesus and His disciples - they felt threatened by them - likely because their own religious and political agenda was threatened by what Jesus was revealing of the kingdom of God. Jesus says, your “hearts are far from me”. This is clear by their total inability to see and understand what is going on around them. People are being healed and set free, Jesus feeds 5000 and they are angry about ritual hand washings! Jesus goes on to teach that holiness is an “inside job” not an “outside job” and that evil does not come from external things (eg. unclean food that we eat) but from the inside - “what comes out of a man is what makes him ‘unclean’”. External rituals cannot deal with this - the only solution is the righteousness of Christ.

## **Group Discussion Questions:**

- I. What was the best thing that happened in the last week? What did you struggle with?
- II. Read Mark 7:1-23
- III. What stood out to you from the sermon on Sunday? What strikes you from this text?
- IV. What was right about the Pharisees approach to religion and holiness? How did they go so far wrong?
- V. How can we recover a sense of the holiness of God (see Isa.6:1-5) and our need for holiness without becoming Pharisaical about it?
- VI. 7:6-13 How do you think someone can “worship” God and “honor” God and yet have “hearts far from Him”? An example of this is the Elder Brother in Lk. 15:11ff

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**Quote:** *“Men never do evil so completely and cheerfully as when they do it from religious conviction.”*  
~ Blaise Pascal

VII. “Religion” these days is a bad word. For some people “religion” is the source of just about everything that is wrong with the world. What do you think Jesus would say about that? (see James 1:27; Matt. 5:17). When does good religion go bad?

VIII. How does Col. 2:20-23 shed light on the inadequacy of man-made religion?

**Quote:** *“Jesus here refutes the Pharisees argument in the most thorough way. He shows them that he takes the Law and the need for holiness far more seriously than they do. He shows that the problem of defilement is not an “outside” job that can be dealt with by self-improvement, but an “inside condition” that can only be dealt with by radical intervention and grace.”* ~ Tim Keller.

IX. 7:14-23 Jesus gives a diagnosis of our condition that is radically different from the Pharisee and also from the secular humanist of our day. What is His diagnosis? What is the cure?

X. Read Ezekiel 36:26-27. How do these verses speak to our “heart problems”?

**Working it Out:** How is your heart today? Do you find yourself worshiping God but your heart is far from Him? Do you see a little of the Pharisee in you? What is God saying to you? What are you going to do about it?

***May God richly bless your time together as a group!***