

This lesson is about making right choices. We are going to look at five areas.

## **1. Teaching over Traditions Mark 7: 1-9**

The Pharisees performed rituals while washing their hands. Jesus' disciples started to have food without washing their hands. When questioned why the disciples were breaking the tradition of the elders, Jesus quoted from Isaiah 29, challenging the teachers of the law- for they had let go of the commands of God. A tradition has detrimental effects when you don't ask the question 'why'. Our danger as a disciple is not that we would blatantly follow traditions against God's word, but rather, by not being rooted in the Word, we would not question why we do what we do. Here are some traps that we may fall into as a disciple: Doing our ritualistic prayer and not realizing that God is present, giving our exact 10% as tithe but never sacrificing, reading our bible but not making changes in our behavior, coming to meetings but not participating in singing, taking the communion but never deeply examining our hearts and finally, coming to church and never having a friend or a visitor. Let us decide to do away with traditions and hold onto the teachings of Christ.

## **2. Care over Corban Mark 7: 10-13**

Corban is an Aramaic word meaning 'Offering' or 'Consecrated to God'. The Pharisees thought it was more important to put their money in the temple treasury than to take care of their parents' needs. Jesus was reminding them that they are supposed to honor their father and mother according to the scriptures. We should give our Money (Tithe, Special missions, Sunday collections) to God, but never use this as an excuse to neglect our responsibilities towards our parents. Helping our mother and father is honoring God. As disciples, we need to put God first (Matthew 22:36-38), God's family next (Mark 3:31-35), and then our physical families follow. Do you honor your mother and father? Do you care about them? Have you asked them how they are doing? Do you thank them for food, clothes and education? Do you have the attitude of gratitude? If your parents are out of town, do you call them? Make a decision to bring about one practical change in this area.

## **3. Inside Cleanliness over Outside Tidiness Mark 7: 14-23**

Jesus explains that what comes out of a man is what makes him unclean. The world, with or without our knowledge, has infected us with beauty products. There are so many branded 'everything'. In our desire to look good and presentable, some have forgotten what really matters as a disciple. We would spend thousands of rupees on health and health care products, not realizing that there is no health care product that will make you live forever. Men have made great inventions. Many men have discovered great formulas. But no one has invented or discovered how to live forever. Only one man, Jesus Christ, reveals to us how we can live forever. Being with Jesus, we discover a secret. The secret is to recognize what poisons us. The problem is, we develop this poison in our hearts! We are responsible for its production. Don't let Satan fool you. Inner cleanliness should be of a great concern whether you are a disciple or not. Jesus gives us a list of lethal poisons and warns us to guard ourselves. How have you been doing in your thoughts? Have you been open? Are you impure? Have you been secretly texting/ calling/ meeting a brother or a sister?

Have you been secretly texting/calling/meeting a non – Christian, or your old boyfriend/girlfriend? Do you hate anyone in the church? How about outside the church? Do you take others paraphernalia without asking? Are you stealing from your office? Do you eat more than needed? How do you dress when you don't come to church – Is it lewd? Are you teachable or are you arrogant? Do you waste time – a whole five to six hours go by and you have done absolutely nothing at home or work? Talk today and remove this poison as it will surely kill you.

#### **4. Inner Want over Outer Worth Mark 7: 24-30**

While Jesus was in a house, a woman came and fell at Jesus' feet. This woman's daughter was possessed by an impure spirit. The woman, who was a Greek, was very persistent in asking Jesus to help her out. Jesus gave a strange reply to the woman. He explains how the bread (Jesus) given to the children (Israelites) should not be tossed to the dogs (Greeks/ Non-Israelite). The woman was not interested in the bread, but replied that the crumbs were enough. In other words, this woman did not want Jesus and his complete attention, but a slight thought of Jesus (Crumbs) was enough for her daughter to be cured. The Greek woman's inner want was Jesus' little attention. Jesus had used the word dog to refer to the Greek woman. The Jews would use the word dog to address a Gentile. Jesus actually uses the term 'little dog' which is more like a pet dog. Her focus was not on what Jesus said, but rather on who Jesus was. Many times in our lives we get hurt by what people say rather than trying to understand their heart. This lady was not affected by Jesus' reply. But rather, became more creative in finding a solution for her problem. In other words, her focus was in the nature of Jesus rather than the reply of Jesus. How are we today? Do we get easily offended by words? A lot of marriages would have peace if we know our spouse's heart rather than merely listening to their words. (This is not an excuse to speak rudely or insensitively). What is your inner desire today? Have you been creative and persistent in putting these things across to your Boss, parents, disciple or leader? The inner want will always find a way.

#### **5. True Healing over Fraudulent Remedy Mark 7: 31-37**

Here, Jesus heals a person who was deaf and spoke with difficulty. Jesus had a strange way of healing. He put his fingers into the man's ears and he used his spit to touch the man's tongue. Today, if any modern healer would try this, they would immediately become unpopular. Jesus was a true healer. The apostles who were commissioned by Jesus were also true healers. The early Christians who were closely associated with the apostles could have also been true healers. But for someone to say, in this present age, that they have healing power and can drive out demons is a bold step to cheat innocent people. They are fraudulent people looking for ways to make money and build their empire. A few things to note about true healing.

- a) Some people who probably had faith approached Jesus. It was not the deaf man's faith.
- b) The deaf man was completely restored by Jesus – he could hear and speak.
- c) The healing was instantaneous. No repeated trials were made.
- d) It happened in the open. People saw and were amazed.

Modern day healing performed by the Christian healers is in stark contrast to the way Jesus did his ministry. Never did Jesus, nor the apostles, start a healing ministry, but they truly healed whoever approached them. True healing cannot be suppressed, ignored, or escape people's attention. Today, only God can do true healing and the person that prays to God can be anyone, even a non-Christian. We need to have deep convictions to confront false preachers. Let us decide to go to God with our problems who indeed is the true healer.