

DISCUSSION NOTES

FEBRUARY 19, 2017

Pray and ask God to teach you, help you trust Him more deeply, & strengthen you to live what you learn.

GETTING STARTED

1. Do you have a story of time you made a huge mess or stain on clothes, carpet, or something else?

DIGGING IN

2. Read Mark 7:1-23. Make 5-10 quick observations about what is happening. Who is present? What is the tone of their interaction? What happens first, second, third, and so on? Who is Jesus talking to at different points in these verses?
3. How does Jesus link the problem of the Pharisees with centuries old problems of religious people (see verses 6-7)? If this was true in the time of Isaiah and true in the time of Jesus, do you think it's likely to be true today as well?
4. According to the religious leaders, what makes a person "unclean" or "defiled"? According to Jesus, what makes a person "unclean" or "defiled"? How different are these two approaches to life with God?
5. In your own words, how would you explain the main idea that Jesus is teaching?
6. In the Bible, the "heart" is the core of our being, including the mind, emotions and will. When Jesus speaks of the heart and what comes out of a person, how does he characterize our hearts?
7. Read Jeremiah 17:9. What does this verse teach about our hearts? How does this fit with what Jesus was teaching? How effectively can we change our own hearts?
8. Why is Jesus' teaching about our hearts so essential to our understanding the gospel?

LIVING IT OUT

9. The religious leaders in Jesus' day set up extra guidelines for people to follow beyond what God had commanded in order to create a buffer between them and sin. Is this generally a good idea or a bad one? What are some ways Christians "add to the law" today?
10. How might we "worship" God and "honor" God while our hearts are far from God?
11. How do religious rules fail to get at the heart-attitudes and motivations that are the core of the spiritual life?
12. What is the most challenging thing for you to understand from this passage? What is the most helpful thing for you?
13. Why is it essential to see that commandment-keeping is not the essence of good and commandment-breaking is not the essence of bad? Why is a relationship and a heart that is close to God most important?
14. Have you ever felt too sinful or too stained for God to love you? What does the gospel say about your sin and about how completely loved you are in Christ? How should we respond to such good news?