



Mark 7

“Truth Over Traditions”

Reading and Study Guide for the
Week of May 28-June 4, 2023

Memory Verse for the Gospel of Mark: *Jesus called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."* (Mark 8:34)

This week, read Mark 7. On Sunday, June 4, Pastor John will preach on the theme, “**Truth Over Traditions**” (Mark 7:1-13). The religious leaders valued their preferential traditions over God’s doctrinal truth. As followers of Jesus, we must ensure that we hold the Word of God as superior to the traditions of man.

Some questions to answer and think about this week with your family or Community Group:

1. What are some of your favorite traditions? What are some of the traditions in your church?
2. Who was gathered around Jesus? ([7:1](#))
3. What did the Pharisees and teachers of the law notice? ([7:1-2](#))
4. How were the practices of Jesus’ disciples different from those of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law? ([7:2-4](#))
5. What were the Pharisees and teachers of the law concerned about? Why? ([7:2-5](#))
6. What were the Pharisees doing wrong? ([7:6](#))
7. How were the Pharisees being hypocritical in this instance? ([7:9](#))
8. What example did Jesus give to prove His accusations against the Pharisees? ([7:10-12](#))
9. What’s wrong with "holding on to the traditions of men"?
10. What did Jesus want His audience to do?
11. What church traditions either can or do stand in the way of non-believers becoming interested in Christianity?
12. What can you do to honor the commands of God above your traditions?
13. What is one step you can take to guard against hypocrisy?

Life Application Bible Notes

[7:1ff](#) The religious leaders sent some investigators from their headquarters in Jerusalem to check up on Jesus. The delegation didn't like what they found, however, because Jesus scolded them for keeping the law and the traditions in order to look holy instead of to honor God. The prophet Isaiah accused the religious leaders of his day of doing the same thing ([Isaiah 29:13](#)). Jesus used Isaiah's words to accuse these men.

[7:3, 4](#) Mark explained these Jewish rituals because he was writing to a non-Jewish audience. Before each meal, devout Jews performed a short ceremony, washing their hands and arms in a specific way. The disciples did not have dirty hands, but they were simply not carrying out this traditional cleansing. The Pharisees thought this ceremony cleansed them from any contact they might have had with anything considered unclean. Jesus said they were wrong in thinking they were acceptable to God just because they were clean on the outside.

[7:4](#) Christians become like Pharisees when they worry that contact with unbelievers may leave them tainted—avoiding "worldly" places where sinners hang out or rejecting books or speakers whose ideas do not conform to theirs. Some Christians and some Pharisees have a lot in common: Both would try to stop Jesus from working certain places or talking to certain people. Jesus wants us to go out into the world and make contact. Jesus didn't intend for us to withdraw, purify ourselves, and never reach out.

[7:6, 7](#) Hypocrisy is pretending to be something you are not and have no intention of being. Jesus called the Pharisees hypocrites because they worshiped God for the wrong reasons. Their worship was not motivated by love but by a desire to attain profit, to appear holy, and to increase their status. We become hypocrites when we (1) pay more attention to reputation than to character, (2) carefully follow certain religious practices while allowing our hearts to remain distant from God, and (3) emphasize our virtues but others' sins.

[7:8, 9](#) The Pharisees had added hundreds of their own rules and regulations to God's holy laws, and then they tried to force people to follow these rules. These men claimed to know God's will in every detail of life. There are still religious leaders today who add rules and regulations to God's Word, causing much confusion among believers. It is idolatry to claim that your interpretation of God's Word is as important as God's Word itself. It is especially dangerous to set up unbiblical standards for *others* to follow. Instead, look to Christ for guidance about your own behavior, and let him lead others in the details of their lives.

[7:8, 9](#) Jesus wasn't against all tradition, but he was against those who made their traditions as important, if not more important, than God's Word. Good traditions shine a spotlight on God's Word, move us to obedient service, and help our hearts sing. They explain and reinforce the teachings of God. God's Word should always be the focus, and tradition a means of bringing that Word alive. Celebrate your traditions with the prayer that Christ would be exalted. Change your traditions if they become more important than God's Word.

[7:10, 11](#) The Pharisees used God as an excuse to avoid helping their families. They thought it was more important to put money in the Temple treasury than to help their needy parents, although God's law specifically says to honor fathers and mothers ([Exodus 20:12](#)) and to care for those in need ([Leviticus 25:35-43](#)). (For vowing to give money to God, see the note on [Matthew 15:5, 6](#).) We should give money and time to God, but we must never use God as an excuse to neglect our responsibilities. Helping those in need is one of the most important ways to honor God.

Mark Study Guide questions and notes are from

