

Learning another language is a long process.

It starts with learning new vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation.

But to achieve fluency one has to ultimately learn to think in that language, which means thinking in new and different ways.

This is why when people are starting out to learn another language, a common statement you will hear them saying, is, “I don’t understand why they say that, that way!” This happened to us over and over in Costa Rica as we learned Spanish.

Another challenge to be faced in learning a new language is understanding humour. With humour, you need to be an insider – for humor assumes there are certain things a person knows. This is why when native speakers are “busting a gut,” the new language learner is left thinking, “I don’t get it.”

Coffee/Question

Talk with another person about an experience you’ve had in another language, where you either didn’t understand what someone was telling you, or where you weren’t understood. It can be funny or serious.

Mark 7:1-5.

What’s being talked about in this chapter concerns matters that insiders (Jewish people) would have understood. But as outsiders looking in, we’re left puzzled, asking, “I don’t get it. Why is washing your hands such a big deal?”

One of the surprising things we’ve seen so far in our study of Mark, is Jesus declaring certain Jewish practices and symbols, as having served their purpose.

He did this with the Temple and the Sabbath.

Mark 2 – he forgave the paralytic’s sins.

Mark 2 – he announced he is the Sabbath

A signpost is no longer needed, once one has reached their destination.

In Mark 7, Jesus is going to declare yet another signpost has served its purpose.

Watch to see how he does so. And also watch to see how he turned a question about things that were so insignificant, to reveal humanity’s desperate need of a Savior.

Jesus responded to the Pharisees question – **Mark 7:6-16**.

The Pharisees believed that ceremonial washing of one's hands, as well as cups, pitchers and kettles would make and keep a person pure.

But did the Scriptures teach this?

When God gave the law to Moses, he had instructed his people regarding the practice of ceremonial washings. Look at: Exodus 30:17-21, Leviticus 14:1-8. (See also Exodus 40:12-14; Leviticus 16:26-28; 22:1-7; Numbers 19.)

>Ceremonial washing was required of the priests, as they made sacrifices and sacred offerings to God on behalf of the people.

>Ceremonial washing was also done to cleanse a person who had an infectious disease, but was now healed, so that they could once again participate in the shared life of the community.

The ceremonial washings reminded and impressed upon the priests and the people,
(1) the holiness of God,
(2) the fact that their sin was a huge issue, and
(3) the great lengths which a person had to go to in order to come near to God.

What were the Pharisees trying to uphold? v.5.

In their own words, they were concerned about the *“tradition of the elders.”*

So we need to ask – what was that?

When the Exile, which had lasted seventy years, ended in 538 BC, the survivors who returned from Babylon to Israel, resolved to obey God in every area of their life.

In order to do that, they carefully studied the Law, which God had given to Moses, and then articulated in extensive detail how each law was to be kept.

Their deliberations, were orally passed on... to each succeeding generation.

A lady who was preparing supper, took a roast out of the fridge and then cut off both ends, before putting it into the roasting pan.

Her daughter, watching her asked, “Why do you do that?”

She thought for a moment, and then answered, "Because that's what my mom did." Later that day the lady called her mom and asked, "Why do you cut off the ends of a roast before putting it into the roasting pan."

Her mom, was silent for a moment as she thought, and then answered, "Because that's how my mom did it."

By now the lady was intrigued. So she called her great-grandma and asked, "Great-grandma, why did you cut off the ends of a roast before putting it into a roasting pan?" Great-grandma laughed. "Oh that's an easy answer," she said. "I only had a tiny roasting pan. The roast wouldn't have fit if I hadn't cut the ends off."

"By the time of Jesus, this oral teaching which had been passed down from generation to generation, since the Exile, had become known as the **'tradition of the elders.'** But what had begun with the sincere desire to press into God and to love him with all of one's heart, mind and soul, had slowly become something that each succeeding generation did more and more by rote. They forgot the reason why they were doing what they did.

By the time of Jesus, the Pharisees, believed the tradition of the elders was **as equally inspired and authoritative, as the Torah...**

But instead of helping people spiritually, Jesus stated this tradition was a..."burden" which was impossible for men to carry." See Matthew 23.

<http://www.bible-history.com/pharisees/PHARISEESTradition.htm>

In his answer to their question, you see Jesus directing the conversation to the real issue: ***"Your hearts are far from God."***

"Your worship is in vain (useless)."

"You teach and obey man-made rules, not the Scripture."

Jesus told the Pharisees the truth about themselves.

And then, he stated so clearly, how their practice of "Corban," caused them to disobey God in order to obey their traditions.

It wouldn't have been easy for the Pharisees to receive what Jesus told them. They considered themselves to be good people; smart people; devoted people.

In fact, in Matthew's account, in 15:12, the disciples told Jesus, "Did you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard [your answer]?"

Here's the thing about Jesus.

Even if it made a person uncomfortable, or caused pain, or made someone angry with him, speaking the truth to a person, was more important to Jesus, than not hurting their feelings.

You have to ask why is that? The answer is surprising.

It wasn't that Jesus had to be "**right;**" but that he wanted everyone to be "**right with God.**"

Jesus said, *"If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*
John 8:31-32.

The Pharisees thought keeping the tradition of the elders, would set people free... free to find God; free to draw near to God, when actually, according to Jesus, their traditions left people... and kept people... far from God. See Matthew 23.

The only truth that sets a person free, is the teaching of Jesus, when it is practiced.

Luke 7:17-19.

After the crowd had left, Jesus' disciples asked him to explain the parable. This was the moment, when he declared that the law of clean and unclean food, which had been a signpost, was now fulfilled, and no longer needed.

The signpost had originally been given by God in order to set his people apart.

Leviticus 20:25-26: "You must therefore make a distinction between clean and unclean animals and between unclean and clean birds. Do not defile yourselves by any animal or bird or anything that moves along the ground—those that I have set apart as unclean for you.

You are to be holy to me... because I, the Lord, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations... to be my own."

God's greater purpose in giving the food laws was that they would create a longing for, and point his people to, the One, the Messiah, who would ultimately make them holy by his sacrifice for their sin, and who would set them apart, not by the food they ate, but by his Spirit who would live in them.

The disciples request to explain the parable, was used by Jesus to spell out just what he had to rescue humanity from. **Luke 7:20-23.**

It isn't things outside of us, like dirt or touching dirty people, that comes into us and corrupts our hearts. Jesus' news is shocking: we're corrupt from the inside out. He has to rescue us from ourselves!!!

As Jeremiah wrote, ***"The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?"*** **17:9.**

Every generation faces this dilemma: how to fix what's wrong within us.

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn wrote: The battle line between good and evil, runs through the heart of every man.

It is human to think that what is wrong with the world is "out there."

Jesus tells us the truth – remember that's what he does – and he says, what's wrong with the world is in us.

While we can't understand our own hearts, the Lord does. **Jeremiah 17:10a:**
'I the Lord search the heart and examine the mind...'

Not only does God understand; he says through the prophet Ezekiel, that while we can't cure our heart, he can. What's God cure?

Ezekiel 36:26: ***"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh."***

Our heart problem is beyond our ability to fix.

How does a spiritually dead person rescue themselves?

That's what "heart of stone" means.

We need a Savior.

And praise God, Jesus is that Savior.

Ravi Zacharias writes:

Jesus didn't come to make bad people good.
He came to make spiritually dead people alive.

He came to fulfill what God had promised through Ezekiel.
Jesus came to bring life.
He came to give us "a new heart."

How does it happen?

Listen to **John 1:10-13**: *"He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him. He came to his own people, and even they rejected him. But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God."*

They are reborn—not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God." NLT

Listen to what Jesus said to Nicodemus, **John 3:5-9**:

"I assure you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life. So don't be surprised when I say, 'You must be born again.'

The wind blows wherever it wants. Just as you can hear the wind but can't tell where it comes from or where it is going, so you can't explain how people are born of the Spirit." NLT

God does not patch up or repair or renovate our defiled hearts. Instead, his solution is to birth a new one in every person who places their faith in Jesus.

How does one respond to this good news?

The writer of Hebrews says in **3:7-8a**:

"Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts..."

If you've understood what I've been saying; if you grasp that you are in desperate need of a Savior, and believe the news that Jesus came to be your Savior, then I urge you to not walk away this morning without receiving him into your life.

Jesus has done for you what you can't do for yourself.

It is not something you can earn.

It is a gift that can only be received by faith.

So will you put your faith in him?

I have to say this: please don't presume you'll have other opportunities.

That's why this verse in the book of Hebrews stresses, "Today."

If you've heard God's voice, today, then this is your moment; this is your time.

Will you come to Jesus? Will you put your trust in him?

Prayer:

You say, sin is in me – I believe you.

Please forgive me for how I've offended you.

You say, you came to save me – I believe you.

Thank you for dying in my place.

I welcome you into my life.

From now on, you are in charge of me.

What about those of us who have already been born of the Spirit?

There are three takeaway's from this passage that I see.

1. In verse 6-7, Jesus spoke of worship. **Our worship**, whether on our own, or with the community of faith, is always a response of our heart... that speaks to God in faith; and that responds to God in love.

We have to guard our hearts.... against going through the motions.

Because if that happens, if our worship become mechanical, a thing we do by rote, then according to Jesus, our worship no longer touches the heart of God, nor connects us to God.

2. The Scripture is our **plumb-line**.

Everything gets measured against it – or thoughts; our opinions; and yes, even our feelings.

If we find ourselves in conflict with the Scripture, it's not the Scripture that is wrong. Look again at Mark 7:8.

If we state this verse positively, Jesus encourages us to hold onto the commands of God, and to let go of our own "traditions."

If we do, it is then that we will experience God's truth setting us free – from error; from futility; from uncertainty.

3. We are a distinct people.

It used to be food laws that distinguished God's people.

But since the death and resurrection of Jesus, what has set God's people apart is a new heart alive to God.

We were dead. Now we are alive.

This newness of life is the result of a miracles God does in us.

And it is something we put on.

Ephesians 4:22-24.

With the Spirit's powerful help, we "throw off" old desires and habits.

Throw off speaks of decisive, forceful action.

And we are to put on, like clothing, our new nature.

Life Group Study Questions, Luke 7:1-23

1. In Jesus' day, ceremonial washing before eating had become an indicator, an external marker of a person's spirituality and of their devotion to God. Do you think we have such external markers that we use to measure our own or someone else's spirituality or devotion? Explain.

How do you think a marker could become a hindrance or a distraction?

2. How did Jesus define hypocrisy? Carefully read verses 6-8. Is Jesus' definition different than our culture's? In what way?

Do the definitions below add anything to your understanding of hypocrisy?

Community in Mission

A Definition of Hypocrisy

The Greek word for hypocrisy used in the New Testament is "hypokrisis" and means "the acting on a stage" and it is from the use of having more than one face that the same actor portrayed. In other words, they are actors in the Greek theatres who would usually play more than one role. They would go off stage and pick up and use a different mask for each character and sometimes wouldn't even leave the stage as they sometimes carried two faces or masks (from which we get "two faced"). Sometimes they played more than once character and so these actors were portraying someone other than their real self and thus they were being hypocrites; acting on a stage and pretending to be someone who they really weren't.

This is exactly what most of the religious rulers in Jesus' day did. Essentially they had a way of acting in a way that goes against their claimed beliefs or feelings and pretending to have virtues and principles which they really did not have.

<http://blog.adw.org/2012/02/what-does-jesus-mean-by-hypocrisy-its-deeper-than-you-think/>

Holman Bible Dictionary

(hīh pahc' rih ssee) Pretense to being what one really is not, especially the pretense of being a better person than one really is. The word is based on the Greek hypokrisis. A hypocrite in classical Greek could be an interpreter of dreams, an orator, a reciter of poetry, or an actor. Originally a neutral term, "hypocrite" gained the negative connotation of pretense, duplicity, or insincerity.

In the Bible the negative meaning prevails. Often hypocrisy refers to evil or to sin in general, not pretense in particular. In the Old Testament, "hypocrite" was used by the King James Version whereas later translations (e.g. RSV, NIV) often use "godless" or "ungodly" (Job 8:13; Job 15:34-35 ; Job 17:8 ; Isaiah 9:17 ; Isaiah 33:14 , etc.).

This “godless” person was totally opposed to God or forgetful of God. The Hebrew word often translated “hypocrite” referred to pollution or corruption. Although the Hebrews were concerned about pretense or insincerity (Isaiah 29:13; Jeremiah 12:2), there is no one Hebrew word exactly equivalent to “hypocrisy.”

Hypocrisy in the narrower sense of playing a role is highlighted in the New Testament, especially in the teaching of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels. Jesus often called the Pharisees hypocrites because of the conflict between their external actions and internal attitudes (Matthew 15:1-9); for being more interested in human praise than in God’s reward (Matthew 7:1-5); for being more concerned about the rules for the Sabbath than a woman's physical health (Luke 13:15).

Luke noted that the religious leaders pretended to be sincere when they asked Jesus about paying tribute to Caesar (Luke 20:20). Probably the most famous discussion of hypocrisy is Matthew 23.

Hypocrisy is a concern throughout the New Testament. Although the term does not occur, it was part of the sin of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11). Paul accused Peter of hypocrisy for refusing to eat with Gentile Christians in Antioch (Galatians 2:12-13). Paul warned Timothy about hypocritical false teachers (1 Timothy 4:2). Peter included hypocrisy as one of the attitudes Christians should avoid (1 Peter 2:1).

Six times New Testament writers stress that sincerity (without hypocrisy, *anupokritos*) should characterize the Christian. Christian love (Romans 12:9; 2 Corinthians 6:6; 1 Peter 1:22), faith (1 Timothy 1:5 ; 2 Timothy 1:5), and wisdom (James 3:17) should be sincere.

3. No one plans to be hypocritical. So how do you think it happens?
Are there definable steps that move a person from sincerity to hypocrisy?

4. In Jesus’ day purity was primarily an external issue.
Jesus’ radical perspective was that purity is primarily an internal issue.
After a person receives and believes in Jesus and is born of the Spirit, what does God do to make us pure and what does he expect us to do?
Galatians 5:16-26
Ephesians 4:21-24
Philippians 2:12-13
Colossians 3:1-10

Are there other Scriptures you can think of that help our understanding of this?

5. Is there a difference between saying the Old Testament food laws no longer apply, and saying they have been fulfilled?
Explain what you understand the difference to be.

Remember Jesus did the same with the Temple in Jerusalem and the Sabbath day.

See Matthew 5:17-19.

6. What other questions do you have of this passage?

In Leviticus 11 God had specified which animals his people could eat – these were described as clean; and which animals his people couldn't eat – these were described as unclean. These laws, along with others, spelled out how a person was to relate to a holy God. Read Deuteronomy 6; 7:6-9.

So why did Jesus jump from the Pharisee's concern about ceremonial washing of . Jesus saw and understood these ceremonial washings, as being signposts that had pointed ahead to him - like the Temple and the Sabbath, that now were no longer needed because he had come.

The laws concerning food had been a signpost.

Hebrews 9:9-10 confirms: *"This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper. **10** They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings—external regulations applying until... the time of the new order."*

But this shift for his followers was not an easy one to make.

le. of Peter and him going to Cornelius.

The good news of the gospel was for the world; and step by step Jesus is preparing his followers to make this shift from a focus solely on Israel to a focus on the world. This had always been God's intent – the Jewish people were to be a light to the nations. But they had drifted far from this. But in coming, Jesus and his mission was bringing his followers back to God's plan and mission.

