



November 19th, 2017 Discussion Guide

Questions Jesus Asked: “Why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition?”

Matthew 15:1-20

Introduction

Jesus rarely asked questions out of curiosity – there wasn't much that he didn't already know so inquiries were often indictments as opposed to information gathering. Such was the case in the event recorded by Matthew in chapter 15 of his history. The question Jesus asks in verse 3 hits home with us on many levels. Are we ever guilty of majoring in minors while ignoring the things that really matter to God?

Discussion Questions

1. What are “the rules” around your home – things that must always happen, or must never happen. *No burping at the dinner table, the toilet paper must come off the back of the roll and not the front, only Skippy peanut butter will do* – stuff like that. What are some of your most treasured traditions as a family? How do you react if for some reason one of those traditions is not or cannot be observed?
2. Mark 7:1-4 opens by offering background information on hygienic practices among Jews in the 1st Century, the practices that Jesus bypassed and thus offended the Pharisees. Hand washing before serving in the Tabernacle was commanded in the law of Moses in Exodus 30: 17-21 – but it makes no mention of washing before eating. Are there commands in the New Testament scriptures that we may have taken further than God ever intended?
3. Read Matthew 15:1-20. Do you think Jesus purposely failed to wash his hands in order to engage the Pharisees in this debate? Jesus offered an example of the way the Pharisees allowed their tradition to violate a clear command of God. Do you feel that there are any equivalents to this example in our present-day practices? In our private or church life, are there any traditions that are carefully observed that might prevent us from following the will of Christ in our lives?



4. What if one Sunday we decided to cancel services, and instead encouraged everyone to stay home and interact with God as a family. Or what if we canceled services in order to go feed homeless people downtown and pray with them? What if we encouraged our entire church to forego buying Christmas presents of any kind, and instead collected the money we saved and sent it overseas to drill water wells for impoverished villages? Can you think of other traditional practices that might be traded in for things that God might find very pleasing?

5. Jesus was distressed when the religious rulers “majored in minors.” The leaders were careful about getting dirt off their hands, but didn’t recognize or were unconcerned about the “dirt” in their hearts and minds. Can you think of any ways that we perhaps knowingly or unknowingly “major in minors” today?

Moving Forward: *Check your heart; check your life. Are there things that you expect from others that you cannot hold to yourself? There are things that should be expected in the life of one who claims to be a follower of Jesus Christ, and those are found in Scripture. But are you adding anything else? Do you find yourself criticizing those or looking down upon those who don’t live up to your traditional views which may or may not be biblical? Does loyalty to traditions ever prevent us from moving forward as a church? Compare your spiritual expectations to the teachings of Christ and see if you have added or subtracted or worse yet ignored anything you shouldn’t have.*