The Ministry of Jesus According to Mark

Lesson 4: Looking on the Inside

**Lessons in this series:** [1](http://www.teensundayschool.com/346/lesson/serving-with-compassion.php) [2](http://www.teensundayschool.com/349/lesson/getting-them-to-jesus.php) [3](http://www.teensundayschool.com/351/lesson/moved-by-the-power.php) **4**[5](http://www.teensundayschool.com/355/lesson/who-is-he-to-you.php) [6](http://www.teensundayschool.com/356/lesson/who-is-the-greatest.php) [7](http://www.teensundayschool.com/359/lesson/giving-it-all.php) [8](http://www.teensundayschool.com/360/lesson/the-greatest-commandment.php) [9](http://www.teensundayschool.com/361/lesson/the-betrayal-of-jesus.php) [10](http://www.teensundayschool.com/362/lesson/the-story-ends-with-you.php)

LESSON OBJECTIVES

Goals

1. To educate students about Jesus' ministry according to Mark  
2. To expose the lie that an outward performance of faith is good enough  
3. To inspire students to have a deep, internal devotion to following Jesus

Topics

Behavior, Choices, Deception, Discernment, Hypocrisy, Peer Pressure, Righteousness

Scripture Memorization

Mark 7:15

OPENING PRAYER (5 to 10 minutes)

GROUP BUILDING (10 minutes)

**Flying Toilet Paper (Game)**

Flying Toilet Paper

Some people are full of hot air, this game uncovers who they are.

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| Topics:  Cooperation, Teamwork, Just for Fun  Materials:  Toilet Paper  Duration:  Approximately 10 minutes | Toilet Paper |

What you will do:

Give every student one square of toilet paper. Challenge them to keep their square floating in the air for as long as possible just by blowing on it. They can also blow on other people's squares to try to knock them out of the air.

Alternatively, split students into groups of 3 or 4. Give each group a square and the same objective. Watch as teams work out ways to play both offense and defense.   
  
Award the winner(s) the remaining toilet paper.

**Discussion Questions:**1. Was it easier to keep your square up in the air working as an individual or working as a team? Why?  
2. Did you spend more time trying to knock down other squares or trying to keep yours up?  
3. Which task was most rewarding, either in a good or bad way?

GETTING STARTED (10 minutes)

• Have you ever been tricked?   
• What happened? How did you feel?  
• Have you ever tricked someone with a practical joke?  
• Have you ever had a practical joke go really wrong?

Today we're going to study a passage of Scripture that begins with some jealous religious leaders trying to trick Jesus. The stage is set in Mark 7:1-5.  
  
**Read Mark 7:1-5**

What happens next is Jesus' response to this event. Let's check it out.

DIGGING IN (30 minutes)

**Read Mark 7:6-13**

**Discussion Questions:**1. Who was Jesus talking to in this passage? *(Religious leaders)*2. Which prophet does Jesus quote? *(Isaiah)*3. What does He call the Jewish leaders? *(Hypocrites)*4. Which do you think is more important—external obedience or inward devotion? Why do you think that way?  
  
The key to Jesus' words here are found in verse 8. The issue was not that they had traditions, but that they placed more importance on those traditions than they did upon God's commandments. Any time our preferences trump the authority of God, that's a problem!

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| **CORBAN**  ***If it comes up, here is an explanation about “Corban”.***The example Jesus gives requires some brief explanation, since it refers to a practice that is unfamiliar to us. The practice Jesus refers to was a tradition that allowed a man to set aside a portion of what he owned as “Corban.”  A son or daughter could avoid their obligation to their parents by saying that the money they would have given their parents is dedicated to God. The sinister nature of this practice is seen especially in the fact that this commitment was not binding. A person could say the money was “Corban” and wait until the parents died, and then change their mind and then use the money for themselves. |

**Read Mark 7:14-16**

**Discussion Questions:**1. Who was Jesus talking to in this passage? *(The crowd)*2. Does Jesus have as much to say to the crowd as He did the religious leaders? Why not? *(No. The religous leaders taught people more about their traditions than they did about God's commandments.)*3. What's the main point of Jesus' message in this passage? *(That it's not what goes in a person that makes them unclean, but what comes out.)*4. What in particular is the source of the cleanness or the uncleanness of the person? *(The heart)*

To a Jewish audience, this would have been shocking. Their completely religious observance centered on observing laws—many of which had to do with external signs of faith. Again, Jesus isn't condemning these laws, but pointing out the basic truth that you all learned when you were young—it's what's on the inside that counts.

**Read Mark 7:17-23**

**Discussion Questions:**1. Who was Jesus talking to in this passage? *(His disciples)*2. What did the disciples ask for and need? *(More explanation)*3. Why do you think they waited until they were alone to ask for it?  
4. What do you notice about Jesus' list of sins? *(They go from external to internal. This is the only list of sins Jesus issues in the Gospels)*

Again, Jesus asserts that it is what is on the inside of a person that counts.

MAKING IT REAL (10 minutes)

This warning Jesus issues to His disciples can serve as a warning to us as well. It is much easier to focus on external obedience than on inward devotion. It's easier to see, measure, and do. But God's desire for us is not that we look good for others. The Lord doesn't want us just to put on a good face for those in the church (or even those outside the church). He is not just looking for a change in our actions for a time, but a change in our character. He wants to change who we are from the **inside out**.

**General Discussion:**  
• Who are some of the most religious people you know?  
• How can you tell they are religious?  
• Do you find yourself considering people “good Christians” based on what they do or how they act?   
• When you think about your own relationship with Jesus, do you base it more on your actions or your being?  
• Why is it easier to base it on how we act? How can we begin to change that way of thinking?

Get in some pairs or groups of three. I want you to write down all the ways we can look religious (going to church, reading our Bible, etc.). Take a few minutes to come up with as many as you can.

*(Give students 3-4 minutes for this activity. Then pool all their answers together to form one large list.)*

**General Discussion:**• Are any of these things bad?  
• Are any of these things wrong?  
• What should our motivation be for doing these things? (Inward devotion to Jesus, not obligation)

Being a Christian means allowing God's Holy Spirit to change us from within. If we are truly disciples of Christ, we will find ourselves making the outward changes because we want to, not because we have to.

CLOSING PRAYER (5 to 10 minutes)

There may be some things you need to come clean about. Anything anyone wants to share with the group?

*(As students share, select another student to pray for each need.)*