

# Inside Out



## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Mark 7, Isa. 29:13, Exod. 20:12, Mark 8:11–21.*

**Memory Text:** “There is nothing that enters a man from outside which can defile him; but the things which come out of him, those are the things that defile a man’ ” (*Mark 7:15, NKJV*).

**T**his week's study is Mark 7 and the first half of Mark 8. At the beginning of Mark 7, Jesus stirs up controversy by His rejection of religious tradition. However, He does it in a way that is strikingly supportive of something deeply relevant to Christian life today.

Jesus then presents a riddle that opens the door to a true understanding of what faith is really about.

After this He goes to Tyre and Sidon and has an encounter with a woman who was the only person in the Gospels to win an argument with Jesus. His encounter with her is unusual, and underneath it there are a few secret communications the woman picked up on. And because of her faith, Jesus granted her request.

Mark 7, with another healing, reveals the important truth that, however impressive miracles can be, they alone are often not enough to open hearts to truth. After all, what good did the miracles do for the religious leaders who were bent on rejecting Jesus?

In Mark 8 the study looks at the significance of bread as a symbol of teachings and traditions. These stories contain great lessons about the meaning and practice of religious life.

\* Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, August 10.

## Human Traditions Versus God's Commands

**Read** Mark 7:1–13. What relevant truths are presented here?

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One can imagine children studying this passage in Sabbath School and coming home to tell their mothers that they do not have to wash their hands before eating because Jesus said so. However, this story is not about hygiene.

In Jesus' day, many people in that land were very concerned with ritual purity. During the time between the testaments, the idea of washing hands in order to remain ritually pure was extended to common people, even though these rules originally applied only to the priests in the Old Testament (*Exod. 30:17–21*). It is in keeping with this concept that the religious leaders complain to Jesus about His disciples.

Jesus does not directly answer the question asked of Him. Instead, He defends His disciples in a two-pronged response. First, He quotes Isaiah's strong words rebuking a nation that honors God in word but whose heart is far from Him (*Isa. 29:13*). The quotation from Isaiah continues with the condemnation of putting human traditions in the place of divine commands.

The second part of Jesus' reply plays off the Isaiah quotation. The Lord cites the command of God to honor one's parents (*Exod. 20:12*)—that is, to take care of them in their old age—and contrasts this with a religious tradition where one could give something to God (a gift, *corban*), use it for oneself, but deny its use to elderly parents in need. One can just imagine the encounter: "I am sorry, father. I would love to help you, but I gave the money to the temple."

It is this type of hypocrisy that Jesus attacks uncompromisingly. They have placed human tradition above the Word of God and, in so doing, have sinned.

So what was the answer to the Pharisees' question? The response of Jesus implies that He does not find convincing their insistence on hand purification as necessary to be in accordance with the will of God. Instead, His response clearly supports the commandments of the Law over against human tradition. (*See also Mark 1:44; Mark 7:10, 11; Mark 10:3–8; and Mark 12:26, 29–31.*)

**Might we have some "traditions" that perhaps conflict with the principles of God's law? If so, what might they be?**

## Clean Hands or Clean Heart?

**Read** Mark 7:14–19. What did Jesus mean by the riddle in Mark 7:15?

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Jesus' words in this passage have been a conundrum for many as they ponder their relationship to the teachings of Leviticus 11 regarding clean and unclean foods. Is Jesus doing away with such distinctions? Are Seventh-day Adventists mistaken in teaching that church members who eat meat are to eat it only from the clean-animal list?

First, it would be odd for Jesus suddenly to dismiss Mosaic instructions in Mark 7:14–19 when He had just defended Moses against tradition in Mark 7:6–13. Second, the very tradition that the Pharisees were promoting does not have a basis in Old Testament teaching; the food laws, in contrast, do. Third, what Mark 7:19 means when it says that Jesus cleanses all food is not that the food laws are abolished but instead that the tradition of touch contamination that the Pharisees had made was invalid. This, for example, is that false notion that if you could be contaminated by coming in contact with Gentiles, then you also could be contaminated through contact with food that they had touched.

**Read** Mark 7:20–23. What did Jesus say causes contamination of a person?

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In Mark 7:19, Jesus notes that food does not go into the heart but into the stomach and then passes out through the intestinal tract. But in Mark 7:21–23, He notes that evil comes from inside the heart, from the center of who a person is. He presents a list of vices that start from evil thoughts but then end in evil actions.

When the reference to the fifth commandment in Mark 7:10 is included with the vice list, every commandment of the second table of the Decalogue is there. Further, Jesus refers to vain worship, in Mark 7:7, the breaking of what is at the heart of the first four commands of the Decalogue. Thus, Jesus stands as a defender of the Law of God throughout this passage.

**You might have the right theology, but who fully and ultimately has your heart?**

## Crumbs for the Dogs

**Read** Mark 7:24–30. What important lessons are found in this story?

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Following on the heels of the challenging passage in yesterday's study, the story in this passage also raises troubling questions. Why does Jesus respond so harshly to this woman, in so many words calling her a dog?

He does not openly explain, but two characteristics in His response to her suggest what He is teaching. In Mark 7:27, He says that the children should be fed "first." If there is a "first," it seems logical that there would be a "second." The other characteristic is that Jesus uses a diminutive form of the word "dog," not meaning puppies but rather, in context, dogs allowed inside the house in contrast to street dogs. The woman picks up on these two markers in her response to Jesus, which helps explain her response.

The woman's response is rather pointed. She replies: "Lord, yet even the . . . dogs under the table eat from the children's crumbs" (*Mark 7:28, NKJV*).

How did this woman come up with this response to Jesus? Certainly the love for her daughter drove her forward. But Jesus also encouraged her. He said "first," implying there could be a "second." Furthermore, He implied she was a dog under the table. Just as the dog was in the house under the table, so she was at Jesus' feet pleading for her daughter. So, she claimed a dog's right to the food that fell on the floor.

The woman's response reveals her faith. Calling the mighty miracle of healing her daughter from a distance a "crumb" indicated both that Jesus' power was especially great (if such a miracle were a crumb, what would a whole loaf be?) and that granting her request was a small matter for Him. Jesus was moved and granted her request.

"By His dealings with her, He has shown that she who has been regarded as an outcast from Israel is no longer an alien, but a child in God's household. As a child it is her privilege to share in the Father's gifts."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 401.

**Why is prejudice against other races and nationalities contrary to the teaching of Jesus? How can we seek to be purged of this evil?**

## Tongue-tied

**Read** Mark 7:31–37. Who was brought to Jesus, and what did Jesus do for him?

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Jesus did not take the shortest distance to return to Galilee from the region of Tyre and Sidon. It seems Jesus went north from the area of Tyre, up through the region of Sidon, then inland and down through the area northeast of the Sea of Galilee, finally arriving near the sea itself. It was a circuitous route, likely with additional time for Him to teach His disciples.

The text does not indicate exactly who brought the man to Jesus, but his problem was plain enough—he could not hear and had difficulty speaking. Loss of hearing isolates people from their surroundings, and profound deafness can make it challenging to learn how to speak. This man’s problem may have been longstanding.

Jesus understands the man’s predicament and takes him aside privately. The Lord’s manner of healing the man is curious, particularly for modern readers. He puts His fingers in the man’s ears, spits, touches his tongue and sighs. Jesus touches the affected parts of the man that He will heal, but why the sigh? “He sighed at thought of the ears that would not be open to the truth, the tongues that refused to acknowledge the Redeemer.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 404.

Jesus miraculously restored the man’s hearing and enabled him to speak clearly. His sigh illustrates the limits that God has placed upon Himself in regard to the free choice of humanity. He will not force the will. All humans are free to choose whom they will have lead their life—the Prince of Life or the prince of darkness. Jesus could open deaf ears but would not force unbelieving hearts to acknowledge His messiahship.

This brief story also illustrates what God can do for those who willingly turn to Him. Perhaps you have experienced reticence at sharing your faith, feeling tongue-tied regarding just what to say. This miracle offers encouragement that the Lord Jesus can open your ears to be sensitive to others’ needs and share a ready word to lift them on their journey.

**What do you do with the gifts you have been given regarding hearing and speaking (for they are gifts)? How are you using them?**

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## Watch Out for Bad Bread

**Read** Mark 8:11–13. What approach by the Pharisees deeply disappointed Jesus?

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Why not demonstrate His divine power and convince these cavaliers? The problem goes back to the end of Mark 3, where Jesus speaks of the sin against the Holy Spirit. If one's ears are shut and eyes are closed, another miracle, even a sign from heaven, will not convince. It would just be dismissed like everything before. Even miracles are not enough to convince those determined not to believe.

**Read** Mark 8:14–21. What had the disciples forgotten, and what point did Jesus make from this?

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Jesus takes the opportunity to warn the disciples against the “leaven” of the Pharisees and Herod (*Mark 8:15*), meaning their teachings (*compare with Matt. 16:12*).

But the disciples misunderstand and think that Jesus is talking about avoiding buying literal bread. As is typical when the disciples misunderstand, Jesus gives them instruction. The Lord asks a series of questions, the first several rhetorical in nature, expressing His disappointment that they have not understood His mission. His words are reminiscent of what He says in Mark 4:10–12 about outsiders who do not understand. His strong words are meant to wake the disciples from their spiritual lethargy.

In Mark 8:19, 20, He asks simple factual questions about how many baskets of fragments they had taken up after He fed the 5,000 (*Mark 6:30–44*) and also the 4,000 (*Mark 8:1–10*), which are meant to illustrate that they should have understood by now that mere limitation of resources is no barrier for the Lord's Messiah. His final question in Mark 8:21 is rhetorical once again: “ ‘Do you not yet understand?’ ” (*ESV*). After all, look at all that they have seen and experienced already with Jesus.

**How can we learn to keep our hearts and minds open to the reality of God and to His love? Dwell on all the evidence that we have been given for God and for His love. At times, though, why does it seem so easy to doubt?**

**Further Thought:** Read Ellen G. White, “Tradition,” pp. 395–398; “Barriers Broken Down,” pp. 399–403; “The True Sign,” pp. 404–409, in *The Desire of Ages*.

“Among the followers of our Lord today, as of old, how widespread is this subtle, deceptive sin! How often our service to Christ, our communion with one another, is marred by the secret desire to exalt self! How ready the thought of self-gratulation, and the longing for human approval! It is the love of self, the desire for an easier way than God has appointed that leads to the substitution of human theories and traditions for the divine precepts. To His own disciples the warning words of Christ are spoken, ‘Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees.’

“The religion of Christ is sincerity itself. Zeal for God’s glory is the motive implanted by the Holy Spirit; and only the effectual working of the Spirit can implant this motive. Only the power of God can banish self-seeking and hypocrisy. This change is the sign of His working. When the faith we accept destroys selfishness and pretense, when it leads us to seek God’s glory and not our own, we may know that it is of the right order. ‘Father, glorify Thy name’ (*John 12:28*), was the keynote of Christ’s life, and if we follow Him, this will be the keynote of our life. He commands us to ‘walk, even as He walked;’ and ‘hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.’ 1 John 2:6, 3.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 409.

### Discussion Questions:

- 1 What Christian practices have you found that help to keep the heart clean?
- 2 Who are the “unclean” people in your community? What can you do to help draw them to the gospel?
- 3 Ponder, as a class, what you can do to foster sharing the gospel in simple ways with your neighbors.
- 4 Read Mark 8:1–10, the feeding of the 4,000. What difference does it make for the interpretation of this passage that the crowd was likely Gentile? Why shouldn’t it make any difference?
- 5 How can we diligently protect ourselves from the innate desire we all have, as fallen beings, to exalt ourselves?

## Pleading for Father's Salvation

By ANDREW MCCHESENEY

As a university student, Anush watched a Mexican film about a little boy who prayed for the conversion of his father. In the film, the boy said, "I believe that if I pray for my father every single day, he will by all means come to God." The boy prayed every day, and his father gave his heart to God.

Inspired by the story, Anush decided to pray every single day for Father to get baptized. She started praying four years before her own baptism. Two years after her baptism, she was still praying for him. She was sure that he would come to God. But when tensions began to simmer at home, she began to wonder how much longer she would have to wait.

After her baptism, Anush became very active in the Seventh-day Adventist church. She volunteered for church initiatives, sometimes receiving a small salary and other times nothing at all.

Father didn't complain because he had given Anush permission to go to church and get baptized. Armenia is a largely patriarchal society where many fathers are the decision-makers of the household.

But Father wanted the best for his daughter, and he couldn't understand why she was working for so little.

"The church is using you," he said. "You are talented, and they are using you without giving you what you deserve."

Anush began to sense tensions whenever she was at home, and she didn't like it. Whenever she was invited to participate in a church program, she asked Father for permission. Father allowed her to go but complained every time.

Anush decided to have a heart-to-heart talk with God.

"God, I know that Father will come to You, but I'm so tired," she said. "I'm giving You two options: either he comes to You or he comes to You."

Afterward, she told Mother, "Today, I'm praying earnestly to God. Join with me. We don't want this situation to continue. We want Father to go to church with us."

In Armenia, many mothers and children go to church without their husbands and fathers. Many families are comfortable with the arrangement as long as the men allow the mothers and children to go without persecution. But Anush was no longer happy with such an arrangement. She wanted Father to go to church, too.

Mother agreed to pray. Anush's hopes soared. She was sure that God would change Father's heart. She was confident it could happen at any time.

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*Part of last quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering went to open a center of influence for families like Anush's in Yerevan, Armenia. Thank you for helping spread the gospel with your offerings. Next week: Father forbids Anush and Mother from going to church.*



# THE BOOK OF MARK FOR CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIANS

A DEVOTIONAL  
COMMENTARY



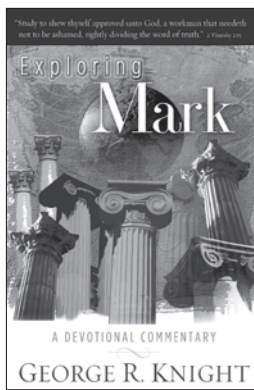
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# A STORY TO TELL



## Two options for sharing the mission story about Destiny in Sabbath School:

**Option No. 1:** Open the *Children's Mission* quarterly and show a photo of Destiny as you tell the story of how she was adopted by a Seventh-day Adventist family in Trinidad and Tobago. Give the children an image of Trinidad and Tobago's flag, printed in the quarterly, to color as they listen.

**Option No. 2:** Make Destiny's story come alive with photos of her, Trinidad and Tobago, and a mission map with Thirteenth Sabbath projects. At the end of the story, show a short video of Destiny singing praises to God.

## How will you share the mission story next Sabbath?

Learn more in the *Children's Mission* quarterly ([bit.ly/childrensmisson](http://bit.ly/childrensmisson)) and the youth and adult *Mission* quarterly ([bit.ly/adultmission](http://bit.ly/adultmission)).



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