

Simply Jesus

The Life and Ministry of God's Son

Lesson 10

Introduction

The religious leaders were becoming increasingly concerned about Jesus, seeing Him as a threat to their power and influence among the people. Several times in the gospels, we see the spiritual ruling body (Sanhedrin) sending a delegation to Jesus to question and discredit Him in the eyes of the people. Matthew (15:1–20) and Mark (7:1–23) write about one of these groups that traveled the eighty miles from Jerusalem to confront Jesus about why His disciples did not keep the traditional Jewish practices, such as ceremonial hand washing. The confrontation was between officials dressed in their fine robes, hurling condescending words at Jesus, who in turn was infuriated that their teachings hid the love, grace and mercy of God behind ceremonial hand-washing and external pot cleansing. Hurling accusations at Jesus about His disciples, He called them hypocrites for laying aside the Word of God to hold to the traditions of men.

From there Jesus traveled to Tyre and Sidon and around the Sea of Galilee, where He again healed the multitudes and fed another four thousand people, not only to meet their need, but to broaden the understanding and experience of the disciples still very much enrolled in the Lord's school of obedience. Mark draws our attention to a Gentile woman (a descendent of the Canaanites), who was considered an outcast by the society in which she lived. Jesus would heal her daughter in response to her persistent faith.

Next we come to a series of lessons where Jesus tells His disciples that although He is very compassionate and loving in nurturing their spiritual understanding to maturity, they must each come to a point where their learning is lived out in daily life. Jesus is never in a hurry to teach a lesson or illustration, but He looks for evidence that the lessons are not only being taught but caught and applied in practical ways. Why? Because there ultimately comes a time when each of Jesus' followers must make an informed decision—a deliberate choice to take up their cross and follow Him!

Did you know

The disciples' hope and expectation of their Messiah was unlike God's plan. The Jews had always been taught that He would come as a political ruler who would set the Jews free and restore Israel to its place of world prominence once again. They were looking for a political figure that had an agenda and power to dominate crowds. But the Jesus in their midst wasn't interested in the power of politics. He came to minister to individuals and address their personal needs. He didn't talk about a government takeover, He talked about a spiritual makeover; about heaven and hell; about spiritual blindness and that He was the True Light come into the world to show them the way to everlasting life!

Open your Bible and lesson each day by beginning with a word of prayer.

Up Close ~

The chart below represents a reader's guide to the contents of this week's lesson. The topical teachings and/or events covered are followed by the primary scriptural text as well as the supportive parallel passages. You will be able to receive and grasp a well-rounded picture of the story narrative in the Gospel harmony by reading every passage. However, using the bolded text as your point of reference (your anchor text) will allow you to determine the facts, lessons, and personal applications necessary to formulate your own conclusions.

<u>Teaching / Event</u>	<u>Scripture Text</u>	<u>Parallel Passages</u>
Jesus Teaches about Purity	Mark 7:1–23	Matthew 15:1–20
Jesus' Ministry Beyond Galilee:		
Healing Many: Gentile Woman's Daughter	Matthew 15:21–31	Mark 7:24–30
Feeding Four Thousand	Matthew 15:32–39	Mark 8:1–10
Jesus Resumes Ministry in Galilee:	Matthew 16	
Warning Against False Teaching	Matthew 16:5–12	Mark 8:11–21
Receiving Peter's Confession	Matthew 16:13–20	Mark 8:27–30; Luke 9:18–20
Predicting His Death and Resurrection	Matthew 16:21–23	Mark 8:31–33; Luke 9:21–22
Challenging His Disciples	Matthew 16:24–27	Mark 8:34–38; Luke 9:23–26

First Impressions: Group Discussion

Reflect for a moment on the passages you have just read.

Respond by recording your first impressions from your initial reading of the text. Be prepared to share one of your impressions with your discussion group.

Heartbeat: Matthew 16:24-25 NKJV (Memory verse)

(Write it out once in the space below. **Practice it each time** you open your lesson.)

Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.'

Part One: _____

Mark 7:1–23 Jesus Teaches About Inner Purity

The act of ceremonial hand-washing was a part of God’s law (Exodus 30:17–21). There was a bronze laver placed between the Old Testament tabernacle of meeting and the sacred altar that was used for washing the priests’ hands and feet prior to performing their sacred duties before the Lord. But over time, oral tradition by men extended this requirement to include all devout Jews before praying and eating; thus making it in addition to God’s law. Eventually, there were laws for everything—so many that the common people didn’t concern themselves with keeping them, only the religious leaders in order not to be defiled in their own minds. When Jesus was confronted by these leaders, He set the record straight for everyone. In His words we find a life lesson about inner purity for all.

1. In verses 6–9, Jesus quotes the prophet Isaiah. Sum up the meaning here in your own words. How did Jesus refer to them?
 - a. What had become the priority of these religious leaders?
 - b. How had this priority affected their worship of God?

A *hypocrite* is someone who makes a judgment from under a cover. It refers to putting on a *mask of holiness* to appear to be something or someone other than who you really are.

2. In speaking to the multitudes (vv. 14–16), what does Jesus say?

3. Later, when alone with the disciples, they asked to reveal what He meant (vv. 17–23). He went on to disclose the meaning of the parable.
 - a. What does *not* defile a person? vv. 18–19

 - b. What *does* defile him? v. 20

The Bible teaches that the human heart is desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9); no one can truly know what they might be capable of given their circumstances and opportunity.

- c. What are some of the things Jesus says that truly defile a person? vv. 21–22

4. Look up the references below and note the instruction to you . . .
 - a. Proverbs 4:23

- b. Proverbs 27:19

- c. Personal: What are *you* currently doing to practice “heart” diligence?

- d. What does *your* heart reveal to others about you?

Part Two: _____

Matthew 15:21–31 Jesus Heals the Gentile Woman's Daughter

In order to temporarily evade the strong opposition of the Pharisees, Jesus chose to withdraw into the Gentile region of Tyre and Sidon on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, just to the north of Israel. There He found a woman that had heard about His healing miracles and was in need of one herself.

1. What did this woman call Jesus that revealed her acceptance of Him as the Messiah?
2. For what specific reason did the woman approach Jesus?

She continued to follow after Jesus, shouting, "Have mercy on me!" But the disciples were annoyed with her and urged Him to tell her to leave them alone. Jesus would indeed heal her daughter but not to make her stop asking; rather He had another lesson to teach.

3. At first, Jesus did not answer her. When He finally did, what did He say to her?
4. What did she next add to her plea for help?
 - a. What was His next reply?

The Lord's words to her were not meant to be harsh or uncaring. His intention all along was to draw out from her a declaration of her faith.

Remarkably, this Gentile woman understood what even the disciples didn't: all the Jews didn't accept Him; some Gentiles did, and surely she could be allowed some of those "crumbs" that the Jews didn't want! After all, what she really only need was one small crumb—the healing of her daughter.

5. Delighted by her bold exclamation of faith, what does Jesus say and do? v. 28

Selah . . . (Pause and think about it.)

Do *you* realize the bounty of blessings that are yours in Christ just for the asking? Or do you find that too often you are willing to settle for just a crumb or two? He's waiting for you to ask . . .

Part Three: _____

Matthew 16:1–27 Jesus Resumes His Ministry in Galilee Lessons for the Disciples

Matthew records (15:30–31) that as great multitudes came seeking a touch, Jesus healed them. “The multitude marveled when they saw the mute speaking, the maimed made whole, the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel.” Having been with Him for three days and having nothing to eat, He had compassion on them, feeding another four thousand people. It was another opportunity to meet the need of the moment while taking the disciples further in their walk of faith.

Again the Pharisees came, this time to demand a sign from Jesus to again challenge His authority. He would use the occasion to teach His disciples about the danger of the yeast (or leaven) of the Pharisees and Sadducees. The point being that just a small amount of wrong teaching was enough to lead a nation astray.

It was also time for the disciples to begin to truly perceive who Jesus was. After the miracles, the teachings, the discussions alone with Him, He wanted them to conclude that He was their Messiah, the Son of God. As they walked toward the city, Jesus asked His disciples what they had heard from the people regarding His identity: “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?”

1. What did the disciples tell Him?
 - a. When Jesus asked, “Who do you say that I am?” who spoke up, what did he say?
 - b. From whom did Peter receive this revelation?

Jesus gave Simon Peter a new name and role among the disciples. “You are Peter—Greek for *Petros*—meaning *Rock*—and upon this rock I will build my church.” Peter’s individual authority would later become clear in the Book of Acts as he became the spokesman for the disciples and the early church. But the intent of Jesus’ words in these verses conveys that He is the chief Cornerstone and it is upon this “rock”—Greek *Petra*—that Jesus would build His church. All the powers of hell would not prevail against it! The “keys to the kingdom of heaven” represent the authority given to present the gospel message, bringing people into the kingdom. They also represent the role of stewardship in carrying out God’s plan.

From that time, Jesus began to lay out His plans to go to Jerusalem and that He would suffer and die and be raised the third day. This next lesson would be a hard one for Peter personally. No sooner did Jesus predict what was shortly to take place that Peter rebuked (corrected) His Lord: “Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to you!”

2. Peter was unknowingly trying to circumvent God’s plan; to what spirit did Jesus say Peter was yielding?

During one of the wilderness temptations, Satan had offered Jesus greatness without dying. Peter's rebuke of Jesus was saying the same thing. In attempting to protect Jesus, Peter was yielding to Satan's methods—a dangerous trap! Jesus strongly rebuked Peter that God's plan included the suffering and death of the Messiah and Jesus would fulfill His mission as planned!

- a. Personal: Can you think of a time when you might have tried to subvert God's plan for *you*? Did you perhaps tell Him that you had a better way? Or did you maybe take steps to go your own way? Would you take a moment out right now and confess it to Him and ask for His forgiveness?

From here on, we will now see Jesus speak directly and plainly to the disciples about His death and resurrection, preparing them for what would soon take place.

3. In verses 24–27, in speaking about the Christian life, what does Jesus say His followers must do?
 - a. v. 24:

 - b. v. 25:

The person who seeks to “save” his or her life by satisfying their goals and desires apart from God will “lose” their life. Meaning, the abundance God intends for His people here on earth and the eternal life that is to follow. In contrast, those who are willing to “give up” their life to know Jesus Christ as their Savior will actually find true life now and in the hereafter. It is only when we turn over our lives to Him that we discover our true purpose.

What is the value of a person's soul? In verse 26, Jesus asks what it would profit for a person to gain the whole world—everything it has to offer—if it meant losing eternal life with God? Whatever a person attains or accomplishes on earth is temporary; it cannot be exchanged for eternity. If we follow Jesus now, we will live an abundant life here and follow Him afterward into eternity! The sacrifice of denying oneself now will not go unrewarded. He will come again and reward each one according to their deeds.

Selah . . . (Pause and think about it.)

What has it cost you personally to follow Jesus Christ? Consider what you have gained now and what you stand to gain in Heaven. Will you thank Him today? (Please record your thoughts.)

Behold & Be Transformed

What did you see as you beheld God's Son?

How does beholding (looking upon) Him, motivate you to change your thoughts, habit, attitude, speech or actions?

Pause . . . What is the most significant lesson you have learned this week?

Ponder . . . How will you put it into practice?

Pray . . . Write out your prayer and be specific.
