

Small Group Guide: "All Shook Up"

Mark 7:1-30

Opening Prayer

Begin with Psalm 139:23-24: *"Search me, God, and know my heart. Test me and know my concerns. See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the everlasting way."*

Icebreaker

Share a family tradition you grew up with. What made it meaningful? Has it ever felt more like an obligation than something from the heart?

Key Takeaways

1. **At their best, religious traditions reflect the reality of a heart near to God.**
 2. **At their worst, religious traditions mask the reality of a heart far from God.**
 3. **Jesus is not fooled by clean hands or by our labels. Jesus sees the heart.**
 4. **Discipleship means I can trust Jesus with whatever is living in my heart.**
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Discussion Questions

Understanding the Text

1. **Read Mark 7:1-13.** What was the real issue Jesus had with the Pharisees? Was it the hand-washing itself or something deeper?
2. Why do you think Jesus used such strong language, calling them "hypocrites"? What was he trying to expose?
3. **Read Mark 7:14-23.** How does Jesus redefine what makes someone "clean" or "unclean"? Why was this revolutionary for his first-century audience?

The Syrophenician Woman (Mark 7:24-30)

4. Why do you think Mark placed this story immediately after Jesus' teaching about clean and unclean?
 5. Jesus' response to the woman seems harsh at first. What was he actually doing? What was revealed when he "shook her up" by his uncharacteristic response?
 6. Compare the Pharisees' response to being challenged with the woman's response. What does this teach us about humility and faith?
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Going Deeper

Personal Reflection

7. **The water bottle illustration:** When life "shakes you up," what tends to come out? Patience or anger? Trust or anxiety? Grace or bitterness?
8. Are there areas in your spiritual life where you're more focused on outward appearances than heart transformation? (Examples: church attendance, Bible reading as a checklist, prayer as ritual)
9. What "labels" have you carried—either ones you've given yourself or ones others have put on you? How might those labels keep you from bringing your true self to Jesus?

Traditions and Religion

10. What traditions or religious practices are meaningful in your spiritual life? How do they point you toward God?
 11. Have you ever experienced a time when religious activity became more about performance than genuine worship? What happened?
 12. How can we distinguish between helpful spiritual disciplines and empty religious performance?
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Practical Application

This Week's Challenge

Choose one of the following to practice this week:

Option 1: The Honest Prayer

Pray Psalm 139:23-24 each morning this week. Journal what God brings to your attention. Don't justify or explain it away—just acknowledge it and ask God to work on it.

Option 2: The Tradition Audit

List your regular spiritual practices (prayer, Bible reading, church attendance, etc.). For each one, honestly ask: "Does this draw my heart closer to God, or has it become routine/obligation?"

Option 3: Bring It to Jesus

Identify one thing you've been hiding, justifying, or blaming on circumstances. Bring it to Jesus in prayer or share it with a trusted Christian friend. Practice trusting Jesus with what's really inside.

Option 4: Remove a Label

If you've been carrying a label (from your past, from others, from yourself), write it down and then write Ephesians 1:7-8 over it: "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace."

Group Discussion: Real Talk

Create a safe space: Remind the group that what's shared stays in the group.

- Is there something God has been "shaking up" in your life recently? What's been revealed?
 - Where do you need God's cleansing and transformation right now?
 - How can we pray for one another this week?
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Closing Reflection

Read together: Ephesians 1:7-8

"In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace that he richly poured out on us with all wisdom and understanding."

Remember:

- Jesus already knows what's inside you
 - He's not asking you to hide it
 - He wants to heal it, cleanse it, and transform it
 - You can trust him with the real you
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Closing Prayer

Pray for one another, specifically asking God to:

- Reveal any areas of hypocrisy or performance in our spiritual lives
 - Give us courage to bring our true selves to Jesus
 - Transform our hearts from the inside out
 - Help us trust Him with what's really living inside
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For Further Study

- Mark 7:1-30 (the full passage)
- Psalm 139 (God's complete knowledge of us)
- Jeremiah 17:9-10 (the heart is deceitful)
- Ezekiel 36:26 (God gives us a new heart)
- Matthew 15:1-20 (Matthew's account of the same teaching)
- Matthew 23 (Jesus confronts religious hypocrisy)