

Our new mission statement is: *Building Bridges to Connect Everyone to the Dynamic Life in Christ*. But what does being connected and living that life look like and feel like? This spring we will be going through the Book of Mark to discover what it means to live the **Dynamic Life in Christ**. These discussion guides will follow along with the sermon series by using passages from the book of Mark.

These guides will be organized using the acronym HEAR as a way to teach people to read the Bible. HEAR stands for **H**ighlight the passage, **E**xplain the passage, **A**pply the passage, and **R**espond to the passage.

Each week, there will be a page to print off for each member of your group. The printed sheet will have the Bible passage you'll discuss and some questions in the margins to guide them in examining those verses.

Additionally, there will be a leader's guide that will give you helpful notes on the passage (i.e. background information and definitions) as well as discussion questions to lead your group. These don't need to be printed for each member of your group.

These guides are designed to be discussed BEFORE the sermon, so the group can discuss the passage before the pastor shares his insights. However, they can just as easily be used after the weekend message.

Our hope is these tools will (a) help your group members learn to study/read their Bibles outside of the group and (b) give you a helpful outline for facilitating the group discussion. If you have comments or questions about the discussion guides, we'd love to hear your constructive feedback. Send your feedback to us at groups@foresthill.org.

How to Use This Discussion Guide

- Print off the "Life Group Member Guide" for each member of your group – or email it to them in advance.
- Use the summary statement for each week to quickly understand the text's theme. You can use that as a reference point to help guide your discussion or bring it back if your group begins to get off topic.
- Use the prayer prompt at the end of each guide to help you close in prayer.

Additionally, here are some tips and guidelines to help you lead these discussions:

1. **Choose the questions that best fit your group and your time constraints.** There are a lot of questions in this guide and your group may not be able to discuss them all. That's okay! You don't have to ask all of them. Before your group begins, choose the questions that are most likely to help your group understand what God is saying in the text and how to apply it to their lives.
2. **Prepare for your group time by reading the passages and the notes in a study Bible.** A good study Bible can give you some insights into the passages and how they connect to the whole book or the whole story of the Bible.
3. **Begin every group meeting with prayer.** We can only understand and apply God's Word with the help of the Holy Spirit. So, invite the Spirit to open your hearts and minds to what He says to His people.
4. **Keep the conversation focused on Scripture as much as possible.** Some people may want to bring in their opinions or continually refer to what the teaching pastor said during his message. This is helpful in small doses, but the goal of this discussion guide is to help you determine what God is saying in His Word. Encourage the group to continue to return to the Scripture. One way to do that is by saying, "That's a great insight! Where do you see that in the Scripture we're studying?"
5. **Encourage participation, but don't let anyone dominate.** Encourage everyone to share insights, ask questions, and read aloud. But don't allow any one person – even yourself, the leader – to monopolize the time. Some people are just unaware of themselves and how much they speak, so gently encourage them to listen and make space for others to talk.
6. **Help your group members to be specific in the application of Scripture.** It is easy to generalize when we talk about the Bible and how to apply it. So ask your group members specific questions – for example, "What part of the world do you sense God wants you to pray for? How will you do that? How will you make that a habit?"

We pray that you will hear God speak through Scripture and that His Spirit will move you to obey Him. The Word of God – the Bible – lets us know the God who loves us and saves us. May this discussion guide help you and your Life Group to become more immersed in His Word.

Date of Sermon: May 10, 2020

Topic of Sermon: Clean and Unclean

Main Passage: Mark 7:14-23

BEFORE your group meeting:

- Look up the main passage in a study Bible and read the study notes
- Print off or send the “Group Member Guide” (page 4) for your group members
- Review the “Group Member Guide” for yourself
- Have enough pens for each group member.

Topic of Life Group Meeting: Clean and Unclean: Jesus reveals righteousness comes from the heart

Icebreakers (optional)

- What is the difference between religion and relationship? Where do we see religion in the world today? Where do we see relationship in the Gospel?

Leader’s Note: Introduce the next part of the group meeting. You can read this introduction or put it in your own words:

“Today, we’re going to spend a few minutes studying the focal passage on our own before we discuss it as a group. I’ve printed out a copy of the Bible passage for you. There are some questions in the margins to help you. Spend most of your time on the Highlight and Explain questions. Feel free to mark up, underline or highlight the passage. I’m going to give us about 5 minutes to do this. Let me begin by praying that God will open our minds and hearts to His Word.”

When you come back together, use the questions below to guide the discussion.

HIGHLIGHT the Passage

- What key ideas, words or phrases stood out to you from the passage today? What is the significance of those?
- Did this passage raise any questions for you?
- How would you summarize this passage in your own words? Would anyone else add or emphasize something to that summary?

EXPLAIN the Passage

Note: It may be helpful to review 7:1-13 to see the context of this story. The Pharisees were a very devout and religious group, adhering to stringent ritual customs. Their law delineated between clean and unclean objects and areas.

- What is Jesus saying in verse 15-19? How does that conflict with a system of laws and rituals to keep people clean?
- What are some things this passage reveals about people’s nature?
- Jesus pinpoints the heart as the source of sin and uncleanness. What flows from the heart? What adjective does he use to describe them?
- Is Jesus saying that it doesn’t matter at all what, how much, we eat or drink? How does the way he speaks address the heart over the mind? Who is his audience?

APPLY the Passage

- How does Jesus’ focus on the heart, on your heart, make you feel? When do you notice evil flowing from your heart?
- Are there any things that you currently consume (by mouth, eyes, or ears) that are impacting your ability to tend your heart? Why might that be?
- What truth from this passage do you need to cling to? What makes that truth significant to you?
- By God’s power, what is God calling you to change in how you think, speak, or act?

RESPOND to the Passage

- Go to God in prayer, first corporately as a group for eyes to see what he sees and to be sensitive to our own sinfulness. Then take 5-10 min to go to God privately, on your own, asking God to lead you to his dynamic life through tending your heart. Come back and share if you like.

COMMENTARY NOTES ON THE MAIN PASSAGE

7:14. Jesus begins pleading with the crowd to “Hear” and “Understand.” This is not typical of his public addresses. Usually he shares a parable or truth and ends with “he who has ears let him hear.” Jesus beginning this way in the imperative could underscore the universality and importance of what it is he was about to reveal.

7:15. “Nothing.” In the Greek, this means “Nothing” just like it does in English. Here Jesus is making an absolute: It is your heart that evil flows from, this is what makes you unclean, not whether you eat pork or seafood, vegan or keto, alcohol or none. Certainly substances and content can impact us on a physiological level and thus exacerbate or intensify the evil in our hearts.

7:16. Verse omitted from most manuscripts.

7:17. His disciples still didn’t understand. 2 probable causes. 1. They didn’t want to understand. 2. The truth Jesus was giving them was starkly contrary to the last 1000 years of Israelite history and understanding – at least – as it had conceptually been understood by the Jews in Jesus’ day.

7:18-19. Jesus explains that food goes into the stomach and pass through an individual, it does not impact their righteousness. It’s the response to food or drink (or any other input), from a person’s heart that makes a person unrighteous. Dynamic life in Christ is all about the heart, not the outward appearance. We have to see with spiritual eyes what is on the inside – our insides – our heart. Then we take that to our God who promises to deal with what we find and know our hearts even better than we do. From the mouth of God, which later would be repeated by Paul and Peter, he declares all foods as clean to eat. It’s the human heart that still needs a miracle – which would come soon enough.

7:20-23. Jesus elaborates, in case it wasn’t clear, that “all these evil things” come from the heart and its they that really defile a person. Evil thoughts are listed first, because sin always begins as a mental concept. Feelings are not sinful, what our hearts/minds do with those feelings are. Dynamic life in Christ requires a deliberate adherence, not to a system of rules made by man, but to the spiritual condition of our heart.

Life Group Member Guide

Focal Passage: Mark 7:14-23 (CSB)

Passage in Context: Mark 7:14-23 (CSB)



Bible-Reading Tip: Begin by asking God to open your eyes and hearts to His Word. In 1 Corinthians 2:6-16, Paul writes that the Spirit – who lives inside everyone who believes in Jesus – knows the depths of God and reveals Him to those who follow Jesus. So, always begin your time of reading the Bible with a prayer for Him to open your eyes and ears to what He will reveal. This doesn't mean that you will always have an emotional encounter or a special revelation, but you are acknowledging that He is that One through whom all wisdom is revealed.

¹⁴ Summoning the crowd again, he told them, “Listen to me, all of you, and understand: ¹⁵ Nothing that goes into a person from outside can defile him but the things that come out of a person are what defile him.”

¹⁷ When he went into the house away from the crowd, his disciples asked him about the parable. ¹⁸ He said to them, “Are you also as lacking in understanding? Don't you realize that nothing going into a person from the outside can defile him? ¹⁹ For it doesn't go into his heart but into the stomach and is eliminated” (thus he declared all foods clean). ²⁰ And he said, “What comes out of a person is what defiles him. ²¹ For from within, out of people's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immoralities, thefts, murders, ²² adulteries, greed, evil actions, deceit, self-indulgence, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness. ²³ All these evil things come from within and defile a person.”

HEAR Bible Reading Method

HIGHLIGHT the passage

- Underline any repeated words or key ideas you see.
- Note any questions you have about what you read.
- In 2-3 sentences, summarize what was said or what happened.

EXPLAIN the passage

- What was revealed about God? His character, desires, and/or actions?
- What was revealed about people? What we are/do or what we should be/do?

APPLY the passage

- From this reading, what truth do you need to embrace?
- By God's power, how will you THINK, SPEAK, or ACT differently based on what you read?

RESPOND to the passage

- Talk to God about what you've seen and learned in this passage.
- Ask Him to help you apply the truth to your life.