

Small Group Discussion Guide

Mark 7:1-13

“Scripture Alone”

Based on Sunday's
Sermon 2/1/2026

Background

Mark's telling of the story strongly suggests that the Pharisees and scribes had arrived with a mission to trap Jesus. We last saw the Pharisees in a Galilean synagogue, where Jesus defied their rules against healing on the Sabbath (3:1–6). Afterward, they “went out and immediately began conspiring with the Herodians against Him, as to how they might destroy Him” (3:6).¹

This was an official question from an official delegation from Jerusalem. They were theological “hitmen” sent to nail Jesus.²

The word **Corban** is a Hebrew term that means “devoted to God” and referred to offerings of money or material goods that had been pledged to God... A tradition arose allowing people to declare their possessions “Corban,” thereby promising that they would eventually use their resources for sacred purposes. Even if a man's parents asked him for financial support, he was forbidden from using anything he had declared to be “devoted to God” in order to help them. The rabbinic system thus provided adult children with a loophole by which they did not have to assist their aged or needy parents and yet could still appear to be loyal worshipers who gave generously to God.³

Discussion Questions

Getting Started

1. What are some “traditions” that you enjoy and are what I would call “keepers,” either in your family or your church? What are some “traditions” that you would be fine if they changed?

Observation

2. Read Mark 7:1-13. What did the disciples do that the Pharisees and scribes were criticizing (1-5)?
3. What contrast does Jesus draw between God's command and human tradition (6-8)?

¹ Charles R. Swindoll, *Mark*, Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary (Tyndale House Publishers, 2018), 182.

² R. Kent Hughes, *Mark: Jesus, Servant and Savior*, vol. 1, Preaching the Word (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1989), 165.

³ John MacArthur, *Mark 1–8*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2015), 346.

4. How does Jesus characterize the Pharisee's hearts in His quotation from Isaiah?
5. What example does Jesus use to show how tradition can nullify God's word (9-13)? (See 1 Timothy 5:8)

Interpretation

6. Why was the focus upon the washing of hands by the disciples wrong? What were the Pharisees missing? (Reread Mark 6:53-56)
7. Why is "Corban" such a good example of forsaking God's Word for traditions of men?
8. Read Psalm 119:97-104. Summarize in your own words what this passage says and how it helps explain the point that Jesus is making in Mark 7:1-13.

Application

9. How can we guard against the legalism that comes from putting man's traditions before God's commands?
10. Name a tradition in your life that is conforming to this world and use God's Word to instead be transformed to be more like Christ. (See Romans 12:1-2) (Example: Attending church, but not having a heart to truly worship, not listening and applying God's commands throughout the week, just checking the box)