

Small Group Discussion Guide

Mark 7:14-23

“Heart Disease”

Based on Sunday's
Sermon 2/15/2026

Background

The *Mishnah*, a compilation of Jewish oral laws made at the end of the second century a.d., says, “Tradition is a fence around the law.” Tradition, as the Jews saw it, protected God’s Holy Word and assisted his people in keeping it.

This fencing of the Law probably began well enough, but as the years passed it produced some famous absurdities. For example, in an effort to protect the Sabbath from being broken through inadvertent labor, the devout were given an amazing list of prohibitions—fences. For example, looking in the mirror was forbidden, because if you looked into the mirror on the Sabbath day and saw a gray hair, you might be tempted to pull it out and thus perform work on the Sabbath.¹

Dr. Vincent Taylor says: “In laying down the principle that uncleanness comes from within, and not from without, [Jesus’ pronouncement] stated a truth, uncommon in contemporary Judaism, which was destined to free Christianity from the bondage of legalism.” William Barclay calls this “well-nigh the most revolutionary passage in the New Testament.² What Jesus taught in this passage is radical stuff, especially if you think that humankind is intrinsically good. Last week we read Jeremiah 17:9, “The heart is deceitful about all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?” (NIV) This study’s goal is to make sure we all know the cure for spiritual heart disease.

Discussion Questions

Getting Started

1. If someone could look into your heart like a window, what do you think they would see? Share one thing you’re happy that someone can see and one thing you’d like to work on.

Observation

2. Read Mark 7:14-23. Based on the background information above, put into your own words the difficulty the crowd and the disciples had understanding Jesus’ teaching on defilement.

¹ R. Kent Hughes, *Mark: Jesus, Servant and Savior*, vol. 1, Preaching the Word (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1989), 162–163.

² Ibid, 166.

3. What are the symptoms of a spiritually diseased heart? (21-23)
4. Compare the list of evil things to the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:1-17.

Interpretation

5. What is the cure for spiritual heart disease? (See Acts 15:6-9)
6. Read Ephesians 2:1-7. How does this passage describe the change that takes place within us when we are saved?
7. There are 13 evil things listed that defile someone from within, from the heart. Compare what comes out of the heart filled with the Spirit of Christ in Galatians 5:22-23.
8. Why is it so important that we understand this principle of what really defiles us?

Application

9. Only God can see our hearts (1 Samuel 16:7), but if others could see your heart, would they see one that has been transformed by the cleansing power of Christ, or one that needs to be cleansed?
10. We all need a heart check-up from time to time. Where is your heart when it comes to Christ? How about relationships with others? What areas of your heart are you yet to yield to the Spirit's control? Any sins to confess to God? Is my heart wholly devoted to Christ? These are important questions for all of us to ask.

Prayer List: