## Discussion Guide for Mark 7:9 -37
## By: Pastor Tim Dodson, October 21st 2026

## Part 1: Tradition vs. God's Word (Mark 7:9–13)

Focuses on Jesus confronting the Pharisees for using human traditions to bypass God's direct commands (specifically regarding honoring parents via the "Corban" loophole).

- **Observation:** What specific example does Jesus use to show how the Pharisees "set aside the commandment of God"? What was the practical result of their tradition on aging parents?

- **Interpretation:** Jesus says they "nullify the word of God by your tradition." How can a religious tradition—even one that seems noble or spiritual—accidently work *against* God's actual commands?

- **Application:** What are some modern "traditions" or cultural Christian norms we practice today that might accidentally overshadow or conflict with loving God and loving our neighbors?

## Part 2: What Defiles a Person (Mark 7:14–23)

Focuses on Jesus shifting the definition of purity from external rituals (clean foods, washed hands) to internal reality (the condition of the heart).

- **Observation:** According to Jesus in verses 21–22, where do evil thoughts and behaviors originate? List a few of the specific things He mentions.

- **Interpretation:** In verse 19, Mark adds the parenthetical note, *"In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean."* Why was this a revolutionary concept for a Jewish audience at that time?

- **Application:** It is often easier to focus on external behaviors (what we wear, watch, or consume) than internal heart attitudes. Which of the internal conditions Jesus lists do you find hardest to guard your heart against?

## Part 3: The Faith of a Gentile Woman (Mark 7:24–30

Focuses on a Syrophoenician woman who begs Jesus to heal her daughter, engaging in a sharp but faithful dialogue with Him.

- **Observation:** What is the woman's background, and what is her request? How does she respond to Jesus' challenging statement about "the children's bread" and "the dogs"?

- **Interpretation:** Jesus' response to her sounds harsh to modern ears. Looking at the context of His mission (to the Jews first, then the Gentiles), how does the woman's response demonstrate deep faith and humility?

- **Application:** The woman didn't argue for her own worthiness; she argued based on Jesus' abundance (that even the "crumbs" are enough). How does her approach change the way you bring your own desperate prayers to God?

## Part 4: Healing of a Deaf and Mute Man (Mark 7:31–37)

Focuses on Jesus traveling through Gentile territory (the Decapolis) and intimately healing a man who could not hear or speak.

- **Observation:** Notice the physical actions Jesus takes in verses 33–34 (taking him aside, touching his ears/tongue, spitting, looking up to heaven, sighing). Why do you think Jesus used such a deeply personal, physical process for this specific healing?

- **Interpretation:** The crowd exclaims, *"He has done everything well."* How does this miracle connect back to Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah (like Isaiah 35:5–6)?

- **Application:** Jesus took the man "aside from the crowd, privately" to minister to him. When has Jesus taken you "aside" from the noise of life to do a healing or restorative work in your heart?

## COMMENTARY

**7:9, 10** Jesus singled out an example of how **tradition** had made void the law **of God**. One of the Ten Commandments demanded that children **honor** their parents (which included caring for them in their need). The **death** penalty was decreed for anyone who spoke evil of his **father or mother**.

**7:11–13 But** a Jewish **tradition** had arisen known as **Corban**, which meant "given" or "dedicated." Suppose that certain Jewish parents were in great need. Their son had money to care for them, but didn't want to do it. All he had to do was say "Corban," implying that his money was dedicated **to God** or the temple. This relieved him of any further responsibility to support his

parents. He might keep the money indefinitely and use it in business. Whether it ever was turned over to the temple was not important. Kelly remarks:

> The leaders had devised the scheme to secure property for religious purposes and to quiet persons from all trouble of conscience about the Word of God.… It was God Who called on man to honour his parents, and Who denounced all slight done to them. Yet here were men violating, under cloak of religion, both these commandments of God! This tradition of saying 'Corban,' the Lord treats not only as a wrong done to the parents, but as a rebellious act against the express commandment of God.

**7:14–16** Beginning at verse 14, the Lord made the revolutionary pronouncement that it was not what goes into a man's mouth that defiles him (such as food eaten with unwashed hands) but what comes out of man (such as traditions that set aside God's Word).

**7:17–19** Even the **disciples** were mystified by this. Brought up under the teachings of the OT, they had always considered that certain foods like pork, rabbit, and shrimp were unclean and would defile them. Jesus now plainly stated that man was not defiled by what went into him. In a sense, this signaled the end of the legal dispensation.

**7:20–23** It's what **comes out of** one's heart that defiles a person: **evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness**. In the context, the thought is that human tradition should be listed here too. The tradition of Corban was tantamount to murder. Parents could die of starvation before this wicked vow could be broken.

One of the great lessons in this passage is that we must constantly test all teaching and all tradition by the Word of God, obeying what is of God and rejecting what is of men. At first a man may teach and preach a clear, scriptural message, gaining acceptance among Bible-believing people. Having gained this acceptance, he begins to add some human teaching. His devoted followers who have come to feel that he can do no wrong follow him blindly, even if his message blunts the sharp edge of the Word or waters down its clear meaning.

It was thus that the scribes and Pharisees had gained authority as teachers of the Word. But they were now nullifying the intent of the Word. The Lord Jesus had to warn the people that it is the Word that accredits men, not men who accredit the Word. The great touchstone must always be, "What does the Word say?"

### R. A Gentile Blessed for Her Faith (7:24–30)

**7:24, 25** In the preceding incident Jesus showed that all foods are clean. Here He demonstrates that Gentiles are no longer common or unclean. Jesus now traveled northwest **to the region of Tyre and Sidon**, also known as Syro-Phoenecia. He tried to enter **a house** incognito, but His fame had preceded Him and His presence was soon known. A Gentile **woman** came to Him, asking for help for her demon-possessed **daughter**.

**7:26** We emphasize the fact that she was **a Greek**, not a Jew. The Jews, God's chosen people, occupied a place of distinct privilege with God. He had made wonderful covenants with them, committed the Scriptures to them, and dwelt with them in the tabernacle, and later in the

temple. By contrast, the Gentiles were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenants of promise, without Christ, without hope, without God in the world (Eph. 2:11, 12). The Lord Jesus came primarily to the nation of Israel. He presented Himself as King to that nation. The gospel was first preached to the house of Israel. It is important to see this in order to understand His dealings with the **Syro-Phoenician** woman. When she asked **Him to cast the demon out of her daughter**, He seemed to rebuff her.

**7:27 Jesus said** that **the children** (Israelites) should **be filled first**, and that it was not proper **to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs** (Gentiles). His answer was not a refusal. He said, **"Let the children be filled first."** This might sound harsh. Actually it was a test of her repentance and faith. His ministry at that time was directed primarily to the Jews. As a Gentile, she had no claim on Him or His benefits. Would she acknowledge this truth?

**7:28** She did, saying in effect, **"Yes, Lord**. I am only a little Gentile dog. But I notice that puppies have a way of eating **crumbs** that children drop **under the table**. That's all I ask for—some crumbs left over from your ministry to the Jews!"

**7:29, 30** This faith was remarkable. The Lord rewarded it instantly by healing the girl at a distance. When the woman went home, her **daughter** was fully recovered.

### S. A Deaf Mute Healed (7:31–37)

**7:31, 32** From the Mediterranean coast, our Lord returned to the east coast of **the Sea of Galilee**—the area known as **Decapolis**. There an incident took place that is recorded only in Mark's Gospel. Interested friends **brought to Him one who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech**. Maybe this **impediment** was caused by a physical deformity or by the fact that, never hearing sounds clearly, he could not reproduce them correctly. At any rate, he pictures the sinner, deaf to the voice of God and therefore unable to speak to others about Him.

| *THE FIVE THOUSAND* | *THE FOUR THOUSAND* |
|---|---|
| 1. The people were Jews (see John 6:14, 15). | 1. The people were probably Gentiles (they lived in Decapolis). |
| 2. The multitude had been with Jesus one day (6:35). | 2. This crowd had been with Him three days (8:2). |
| 3. Jesus used five loaves and two fish (Matt. 14:17). | 3. He used seven loaves and a few small fish (8:5, 7). |
| 4. Five thousand men, plus women and children were fed (Matt. 14:21). | 4. Four thousand men, plus women and children were fed (Matt. 15:38). |
| 5. The surplus filled twelve hand baskets (Matt. 14:20). | 5. The surplus filled seven wicker baskets or hampers (8:8). |

**7:33, 34** Jesus first **took** the man **aside** privately. He **put His fingers in his ears, and He spat and touched his** tongue, thus by a sort of sign language telling the man that He was about to open his ears and unloose his tongue. Next Jesus looked **up to heaven**, indicating that His power was from God. His sigh expressed His grief over the suffering which sin has brought on mankind. Finally He said **"Ephphatha,"** the Aramaic word for **"Be opened."**

**7:35, 36** The man obtained normal hearing and speech **immediately**. The Lord asked the people not to publicize the miracle, but they disregarded His instructions. Disobedience can never be justified, no matter how well-meaning the persons might be.

**7:37** The spectators **were astonished** by His wonderful works. They said, **"He has done all things well. He makes both the deaf to hear and the mute to speak."** They did not know the truth of what they said. Had they lived on this side of Calvary, they would have said it with even deeper conviction and feeling.

> And since our souls have learned His love,
> What mercies has He made us prove,
> Mercies which all our praise excel;
> Our Jesus hath done all things well.
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> —*Samuel Medley*[1]

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