

## The Story of Jesus

### Part 17: What does God care about?

Mark 7:1-23 - [watch online](#)

#### **SUMMARY:**

What does God actually care about? How can we ever know for sure? When we find the answer we discover what life is truly about.

#### **MAIN IDEAS:**

[01:08] When we care about something we assume God cares about it too.

[01:42] When we discover the true heart of Jesus we discover what God truly cares about.

[09:33] Religious rules and traditions can often be used to control and conform.

[10:52] Jesus refused to conform to other people's religious and social expectations.

[12:06] How we love is more important than the rules and traditions we make up for ourselves.

[16:27] Rules and traditions can never change our heart.

[17:54] A heart shaped and molded by Jesus' love doesn't need rules and traditions

[23:35] When our hearts are transformed by Jesus we begin to care about what God cares about.

#### **INVITATION:**

[22:15] Memorize and Pray Psalm 51:10

[22:35] Ask: What does Jesus' love look like?

#### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. What do you think are some common assumptions people make about what God cares about? What assumptions have you made?
2. Why do you think humans tend to be drawn to rules and traditions?
3. Have you ever seen someone prioritize rules and traditions over people? What was the result?
4. Read Galatians 5:16-25. What are some practical steps we can take this week to allow our hearts to be shaped by and in Jesus' love?
5. How can your group pray with you this week?

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#### **TRANSCRIPT:**

**IN:** What does God actually care about? Is there really any way to know for sure? There is and when we find it we find what life is truly about. We discover what God actually cares about in the Story of Jesus. So let's talk about it together.

**WE:** If there is a God... What do you think God cares about?

Does He care about...

- Whether someone leans conservative or liberal?
- How we dress?
- If we stand for the pledge of allegiance?
- Does he care about gender roles?
- Whether someone agrees more with capitalism, socialism, or communism?

Now maybe he does care about these...

BUT- if I asked... Do YOU care about these things... would the answers be any different?

B/c here's what's interesting... When we care about something we assume God cares about it too.

- Well of course God cares about these things... and agrees with me. They are important!

And if God cares about it like we do then everyone else should care about it and agree with us...right?

**Now for sure there ARE things God cares about...** but what are they and how do we get inline with those?

- How do we know we haven't just painted a picture in our minds of a God we want?
- How do we know we aren't using God to justify our own positions/opinions?

The answer is in the Story of Jesus...

When we discover the true heart of Jesus we discover what God truly cares about.

To see how this works we have to look at a pretty interesting scene from Jesus' life...

B/c 1st century Jews, especially religious leaders, thought they knew what God cared about too...

And one of the main things they believed God cared about was washing their hands before they ate and eating only certain foods with those washed hands...

Might seem weird to us, but as we look at this idea and what Jesus says about it we'll discover his true heart and what God truly wants...

**GOD: V. 1** More news of what Jesus has been doing has reached the religious bigshots in Jerusalem.

- About 100 miles... 30 hrs of travel.

Not the first time they've investigated.

- Accused him of casting out demons by the power of satan
- Already a plot to find some way to kill Jesus
- And now he is getting more and more popular... So they need to keep up their investigations...

**V. 2-5** We think, "Ah gross! Yeah, Jesus wash your hands and your dishes!! You're nasty."

Sure it's good hygiene, but why do these Pharisees make the trip out to investigate Jesus and all they seem to care about is whether they are washing or not?

- I would think they'd ask more about the KOG he said he's bringing
- The miracles
- Anything other than washing hands

One of the best questions we can ask of the BW's is WHY.

So why? B/c this isn't about simple hygiene...

To really understand what's going on here we are going to need to do a bit of a history lesson...

**BACKGROUND:**

In 587 BC Babylon, led by Nebuchadnezzar II, conquered the kingdom of Judah and destroyed Jerusalem.

According to the Jewish Scriptures, God had warned the people this was coming. They had broken their agreement/covenant with him that he had given them through Moses.

**- Ex. 19:3-6**

- "Follow the instructions and Law I give you and I will make you my special people and I will be your God and I give you peace and security in your own land."
- Begins w/ the big 10 commandments
- But also many others including circumcision/purity laws/food laws.

The people, however, didn't hold up their end of the agreement...

As the years went by they began simply going through the motions of temple sacrifices and whatnot

- But the strong abused the weak
- The poor, widow, orphan and foreigner were neglected

They thought as long as they kept the outward religious rules/rituals/routines, God didn't really care about whatever else they did...

God warned them through his spokespeople (Prophets) (**Isaiah 29:2-4;13**)...

- Didn't listen

So God let Babylon destroy Jerusalem, the temple, and take many of the people into exile.

Then, as the prophets also promised, Babylon was destroyed by the Persians

- And in 538 Cyrus the Great let the Jewish people return to Jerusalem

They rebuilt the temple and city but in the next centuries they were conquered by the Greeks and later the Romans.

And in that period the religious leaders started thinking...

- If all of this started b/c our ancestors didn't keep their end of the deal with God...
- Let's make sure as many of us as possible follow God's laws. So he will bless our nation.
- In fact, let's really make sure we don't even get close to accidentally breaking them and make extra rules that keep us from getting anywhere near breaking the Law.

Example: the only rule about washing hands referred to priests making themselves ritually pure by washing before offering sacrifices which they would then eat.

- But, if God wanted priests to be pure and wash before sacrifices then it would be even better if everyone washed before eating anything...

After a while the cultural pressure was...

- If you cared about your nation and your people you would follow these extra regulations/traditions and be a good Jew.
- If you break them you are unclean... excluded from public worship and social interaction.
- For your own good and the good of the nation.

Trying to control the peoples' behavior so they would conform to what they thought a good Jew would do to make God give them their nation back.

**Religious rules and traditions can often be used to control and conform.**

These rules and **regulations** and traditions became a burden to people who could never fully measure up.

- People were labeled as unclean and outcasts... and if bad things happen to you it's probably b/c you aren't keeping the rules.
- In order to be accepted people had to start faking perfection
- And those that were closest to meeting the standard became proud and arrogant.

Religion/tradition was placed above the person for the good of the nation.

And so in the Pharisees' minds, Jesus was undermining everything they have been trying to do... Undoing their efforts to make Israel pure.

- "We'll never get these Romans out, we'll never get God to bless our nation if we don't stay as pure as possible."
- "Jesus, don't you care about your country? Don't you care about keeping our religion/nation pure?"

**BUT- Jesus refused to conform to other people's religious and social expectations.**

Jesus- "You know what I care about?"

- The people of our country...
- I don't care about your made up religious rules/traditions...
- I care that the hearts of people are shaped and formed by God's heart of love

**v. 6-8** By trying to avoid the consequences their ancestors faced 600 yrs earlier they had actually become guilty of the exact same thing...

They thought going through the motions of religion, following the rules, some that weren't even from God was what God wanted from them...

- But they had missed the point of God's law... to point them to his true heart... PEOPLE.

Instead they had alienated, and burdened, and even abused the people God loved.

- They missed the whole point
- **How we love is more important than the rules and traditions we make up for ourselves.**

The point of the law/commandments wasn't the rituals... the rituals were signposts pointing to what really mattered; the heart...

- Knowing and loving God... expressed through love of others.

Then Jesus gives an example...

**V. 9-13** They had made a loophole in one of the big 10 commandments...

"If I vow my belongings to God... then I don't have to honor my father and mother and take care of them b/c then that would be breaking an oath and God wouldn't want me to do that would he?"

- Lawyers' trick... manipulating the law to justify their behavior and wicked hearts.

And somehow convinced themselves that if something was dedicated to the use of God... they still got to use it... b/c they were living for God somehow...

And Jesus is using this example as an indictment of their entire social and religious system.

Pharisees said Jesus was undermining the social structure.

Jesus has turned it around and is showing they are undermining not only the structure of the family but the covenant between God and Israel.

They got so concerned about saving/restoring their nation they forgot the point of their nation... to represent God to the world.

- To be his holy nation a kingdom of priests... showing people the way to know the true God.
- To discover his true love for them.

Instead of seeing their religion/politics/traditions through the lens of God they began seeing God through the lens of their religion/politics/traditions

- We modern Americans have never done that though have we?

So what's the alternative? How do we avoid the same pitfalls? What do we do instead?

To explain Jesus takes it a step further... **V. 14-23**

The implications of this are... Huge

The food laws are something that had set Jews apart as God's chosen people for 1500 years.

And Jesus is basically saying... "These regulations and traditions you are so proud of, that you say sets you apart and makes you better than the other people of the world? "

- They have served their purpose and are over now.

The point was never that you ate differently, the point was that you were to BE different to show the world who God really is... to love each other and the world the way he loves you.

What God always truly wanted was your heart. Is it in tune with God's heart or not?

Food doesn't defile you... what defiles you is the evil that comes out of your heart.

**Rules and traditions can never change our heart.**

- But they can and often do... deaded our hearts to the true heart and voice of God.

**TRANSITION:**

And the story stops there. Seems like Jesus leaves us hanging...

- But if that's what defiles us, what do we do to fix it?
- If it's not obeying rules following the right traditions what is it?

Great Question...

Mark was designed to be read in one sitting... As we continue the story Jesus will teach that something better than the Law of Moses has come... HIM

He will tell his disciples, "I am bringing a new covenant. Agreement not just between the Jews and God but between God and all of humanity."

It'll no longer be about the rules and traditions you follow... It is now about WHO you follow."

B/c he can do what religious law never could.... Change our hearts... a heart shaped and molded by his love.

And **a heart shaped and molded by Jesus' love doesn't need rules and traditions**... it will do what is right b/c it is following Jesus.

But if you only care about the right actions/traditions then you will constantly be defiled from what comes out of your unchanged heart.

**3 CIRCLES**

**GOD'S DESIGN:** God originally designed a world where everything worked together in harmony. Made humanity to fully and wholly know him and love him and enjoy his love.

But humanity rejected him... refused to live in his love and wanted to rule ourselves- **SIN**.

And SIN leads to what we see around us and in us... **BROKENNESS**.

And when we realize we are broken we try to find out way out

- Religious rules
- Relationships
- Success
- Numbing w/ entertainment or substances
- Etc.

But none of it works... and it breaks God's heart. He knows we need something or better someone to fix the brokenness.

**Jesus said he was that someone...** B/c of his love for us... God came in human flesh (Jesus) and lived the perfect design he had planned in the beginning. Showing us what humanity is meant to be...

Then he took the ultimate consequences of our brokenness, death, on himself on the cross.

But he didn't stay dead... he conquered death itself and conquered the power of Sin over us by rising again.

Providing the way for us to be restored to God and our true humanity.

We are **restored by repenting and pledging allegiance to Jesus...** turning away from our efforts to fix our brokenness and turning to Jesus and trusting him to restore us. Trusting him as the king of our lives now and forever.

And when we are restored we rediscover who we were always meant to be.. **We discover and pursue God's design for our lives.**

No rules, traditions, or food will do it.

Only Jesus can take a human heart and all the brokenness that gushes out and restore it and give it new life.

The question we have to ask is... what is stopping us from making the step of trust?

Maybe it's time for you to take that step... to stop trying to fix your own brokenness and give your allegiance and trust to Jesus to make you whole and new.

And maybe you have taken that step... if so.. It doesn't stop there... continue to allow Jesus to shape your heart...

When our hearts are shaped by Jesus we discover his design for the rest of our lives...

- how we vote, budget, interact, dream, work are shaped by him not our own prejudices/wants/fears.

**Invitation: Memorize and Pray Psalm 51:10** "Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit in me."

**Ask: What does Jesus' love look like?**

Invite him to transform your heart and your thinking. Day by day... thought by thought.

**WE:** So what does God care about? Not rules, customs, rituals, traditions...

He cares about you, and everyone else around you... He cares that our hearts are molded and shaped in his love.

B/c that is the best way to be human... it is the only way to experience the KOG and the full/abundant life he offers everyone.

When we allow our hearts to be shaped by Jesus we can stop worrying about trying to figure out what is right and wrong for ourselves hoping it works out...

When our hearts are transformed by Jesus we simply get to follow Jesus and do what his love tells us to do.

When our hearts are transformed by Jesus we begin to care about what God cares about.