

# **WEEKLY GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE**

**Week of Sunday February 15, 2026**

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## INTRODUCTION

In **Mark 7:1–23**, Jesus is not trying to make people more “religious,” more rule-keeping, or more focused on appearances—He’s exposing what religion can hide. He’s inviting us into a deeper kind of transformation that starts in the heart, not on the hands. Most of us feel the tension of wanting to blame the “bumps” in life—stress, people, pressure, culture—when something ugly spills out of us. But Jesus lovingly brings us back to the real issue: what’s happening inside us. Tonight, we’re asking God to help us see our hearts clearly and respond with repentance, dependence, wise boundaries, and community so we can actually change.

### **Main Passage:**

Mark 7:14–23

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

# The Spill Test!

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### READ ALOUD

Mark 7:14–23

### DISCUSS

**Opening Question:** When life “bumps” you, what tends to spill out of you most often—words, tone, attitude, withdrawal, blame, control?

- In Mark 7, what were the Pharisees most concerned about, and what does Jesus reveal they were missing?
- Jesus says, “Nothing that goes into a person from the outside can defile them... but the things that come out...” (Mark 7:15). What do you think is hard about accepting that?
- The sermon compared the heart to what’s inside a cup when it spills. What “spill” have you seen in your own life recently that revealed something deeper going on?
- Look at Jesus’ list in Mark 7:21–22. Which one (or two) feel most like a mirror for you right now, and why?
- The sermon connected certain sins to deeper heart issues (like self-protection, loneliness, insecurity/scarcity, fear of people, pride/control). Which heart-level driver do you recognize in yourself most often?
- Why do you think “behavior modification” alone usually fails? What’s the difference between trying harder and depending on Jesus?

### DISCUSS & APPLY

- What's one external thing you've been tempted to blame for what's coming out of you lately? What would it look like to own your heart instead?
- The sermon emphasized rapid repentance. What tends to keep you from repenting quickly, shame, pride, defensiveness, fear, excuses, something else?
- What "inputs" most fuel what you're already struggling with (content, conversations, social media, isolation, certain relationships, rhythms)? What boundary could help?
- If transformation grows in community, what makes it hard to be honest with others, and what would make it safer or more possible?

### RESPOND

- **Spill test:** When you got "bumped" recently, what spilled out? What does that reveal about your heart right now? What's one step of repentance you'll take this week?
- **Cut the fuel:** What's one input you need to guard more wisely this week? What's one boundary you'll set to protect your heart?
- **Stay in community:** Who's one trusted person you can be honest with this week? What's one sentence you can say to start that conversation?

### PRAY

Take a moment and ask Jesus to show you what's in your heart and what's been spilling out lately. Confess where you've blamed the outside instead of owning what's within. Ask for rapid repentance, wise boundaries, and courage to stay honest in community. End by thanking Him for grace and asking Him to keep making you new this week.

## QUESTIONS FOR FAMILIES

Mark 7:14–23

- What does Jesus say really makes someone “unclean”, something outside us, or something inside us?
- Can you name one thing from Jesus’ list (Mark 7:21–22) and talk about what it looks like in real life?
- What does it mean to “guard your heart”? What are some ways we can do that as a family this week?
- When we mess up, what should we do next, hide it, blame others, or talk to Jesus about it?

*For younger children:* Help them practice this simple rhythm—listen to Jesus, tell the truth, and ask for help when you mess up.

*For older kids or students:* Connect it to real life “booths/nets”: Ask, “What’s one thing that fuels what you struggle with—apps, shows, friends, pressure, comparison, fear, identity?” Then talk about one boundary and one trusted person they can be honest with.

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## BIBLE READING PLAN (OPTIONAL)

**Scripture to read as you pray this week:**

- Day 1: Mark 8:1–10
- Day 2: Mark 8:11–21
- Day 3: Mark 8:22–30
- Day 4: Mark 8:31–38
- Day 5: Mark 8:34–38

## What's Going On?

Mark 7 shows a major clash between Jesus and religious leaders over **tradition vs. God's Word** and **external cleanliness vs. heart transformation**. The Pharisees treated “uncleanness” like something you catch from the outside—people, places, objects—so they built layers of rules to protect themselves. Jesus flips the entire framework: the deepest problem isn't outside us; it's within us, and it shows up in what comes out of our mouths and lives.

This passage exposes that spiritual life isn't about managing appearances—it's about surrendering the heart to Jesus, the only One who can truly cleanse and renew.

## A Bit of Background

The handwashing issue in Mark 7 wasn't mainly about hygiene—it was about **ceremonial purity**, shaped by extra traditions that developed around the law. Those traditions were meant to mark people as “clean,” but they often became a way to measure spirituality by outward performance.

Jesus quotes Isaiah to confront a painful reality: it's possible to honor God with words and still have a heart far from Him. In that world, “unclean” labels separated people and kept many at a distance; Jesus' teaching tears down the illusion that purity is achieved through rituals and exposes the real battlefield—what the heart loves, trusts, and worships.