



## Sermon Overview

Ecclesiastics 3 tells us that God has put eternity in man's hearts. To deal with this spiritual reality, we (all people) find our way to some type of faith, system of belief, or simple self-determinism to make sense of life. Throughout God's redemptive history, people have taken God's word as a tool for the manipulation of life's circumstances. And, ultimately, in an attempt to control God. It is this scenario we see playing out in Mark 7:1-23. Over generations, the Pharisees have made heart-commandments like, "love God with all your heart" into hundreds of regulations that stress the outward conformity of external behaviors. This gave the impression that the law is manageable and can be fulfilled by the power of our own will.

Jesus shows us the law cannot be fulfilled outside perfection of the heart — pointing to himself as God in the flesh and savior of our imperfections and desire to be in control.

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## Getting Started

1. Think through some of the ways religious traditions can interfere with spiritual growth in Christ. What is the difference? Are all traditions bad?

## Starting with God

2. The Old Testament "clean laws" use dirt to symbolize sin. Why is this a good metaphor? In what way does sin do to the soul that filth does to a body?

3. In an effort (at least at first) to protect people from breaking the law, religious leaders drew up specific moral guidelines for their faith community that went beyond those laid down in the scripture. What are the dangers in doing this?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. In verses 14-23, what does Jesus tell us is the *real* uncleanness?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Review verse 19. How can Jesus just “declare all foods clean”? Is He just writing off a large portion of scripture? (See also: Matthew 5:17-18)

### **Living God's Word**

6. What are some ways we can “add” to God's law today?

### **Prayer**

*Father God,  
Please give me a heart that desires to please you more than myself or anyone else. Liberate me  
from my preferences and comforts that I may grow in my discipleship with you and others.  
Amen.*