



**Kingdom Value**

*The Danger of Defilement*

Matthew 15:1-20

How to Prepare

Begin preparing by reading the full passage a few times. Then answer the questions for yourself. Then think about how your Small Group might answer them. Try re-wording the questions to fit you and your Small Group. Don't feel tied down to the discussion guide, just be sure to discuss the main point of the text in your conversations.

Resources-

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/uprooting-sensibility>

<https://www.gotquestions.org/what-comes-out-of-the-mouth-this-defiles.html>

<https://learn.ligonier.org/devotionals/heart-of-the-problem>

Sermon Outline:

Matthew 15:1-20

1. Jesus Identifies Defiled Worship. Vv.1-11
2. Jesus Condemns Defiled Determination. Vv. 12-14
3. Jesus Diagnoses Defiled Hearts. Vv. 15-20

**Matthew 15:1-20**

But their heart is far away from Me.

**Tradition and Commandment**

1 Then some Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said,

2 "Why do Your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread."

3 And He answered and said to them, "Why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?

4 For God said, 'Honor your father and mother,' and, 'He who speaks evil of father or mother is to be put to death.'

5 But you say, 'Whoever says to his father or mother, "Whatever I have that would help you has been given to God,"

6 he is not to honor his father or his mother.' And by this you invalidated the word of God for the sake of your tradition.

7 You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you:

8 'This people honors Me with their lips,

9 'But in vain do they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.'"

10 After Jesus called the crowd to Him, He said to them, "Hear and understand.

11 It is not what enters into the mouth that defiles the man, but what proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man."

12 Then the disciples came and said to Him, "Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this statement?"

13 But He answered and said, "Every plant which My heavenly Father did not plant shall be uprooted.

14 Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit."

**The Heart of Man**

15 Peter said to Him, "Explain the parable to us."

16 Jesus said, "Are you still lacking in understanding also?



## Scripture (New American Standard Bible 1995)

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- 17 Do you not understand that everything that goes into the mouth passes into the stomach, and is eliminated
- 18 But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man.
- 19 For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders.
- 20 These are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man."

# Discussion Questions

**Ask a volunteer to read Matthew 15:1-20.**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Here is a question or two to help introduce the topic and jump-start discussion.

**1. This passage challenges us to look beyond outward appearances and focus on the condition of our hearts. What was one thing you took away while considering these things?**

## **UNDERSTANDING AND APPLICATION**

These questions should help your Small Group dig deeper into the text and then apply it to your lives today.

### **1. Jesus Identifies Defiled Worship. Vv.1-11**

**2. What were the Pharisees' and Scribes' traditions that were mentioned in this text, and how did their traditions miss the point of God's expectations (specifically His commands for ritual purity and honoring one's parents)? What did these traditions expose about who their worship was really about?**

**3. What does the quote from Isaiah and the parable about food indicate is the real problem Jesus is addressing in the Pharisees? Why does doing the right thing for the wrong reason defile one's worship?**

**4. What are some ways people defile their worship today? What should we do if we find that we are doing certain things for the wrong reasons?**

## **II. Jesus Condemns Defiled Determination. Vv. 12-14**

**5. When the disciples told Jesus that the Pharisees were offended, how did he respond? What did His response reveal about why the Pharisees were offended?**

**6. Why were the Pharisees blind guides, and what would be the result of following them? What does determination in self-centered worship (or any other kind of sin) reveal about us (1 John 1:6-10), and where does it ultimately lead us?**

**7. How do people who belong to God respond when confronted with their sin?**

## **III. Jesus Diagnoses Defiled Hearts. Vv. 15-20**

**8. What does Jesus say is the source of defilement? Based on this diagnosis, who is defiled, and what has to happen to be pure?**

**9. How does Jesus purify our hearts and make us new? What should we do when we sense our old, sinful self-centeredness creeping up within us?**

**10. What are some ways we can monitor our hearts spiritually? How does the church play a part in spiritual heart monitoring?**

## Commentary (from ESV Study Bible)

**Matt. 13:54–16:20** The Identity of the Messiah Revealed. This section marks a major new emphasis in Matthew's narrative as Jesus' messianic identity is increasingly clarified.

**Matt. 15:1–39** Teacher of the Word of God and Compassionate Healer. Against the traditions of the Jewish elders (vv. 1–9), Jesus teaches on purity and impurity of the heart, showing himself to be the true teacher of God's Word (vv. 10–20) and the compassionate healer and provider for Gentiles (vv. 21–39).

**Matt. 15:1** from Jerusalem. The highest-ranking Pharisees and scribes arrive to confront Jesus.

**Matt. 15:2** tradition of the elders. Interpretations of Scripture handed down from esteemed rabbis. they do not wash their hands. Priests were required to wash their hands and feet prior to performing their duties. The Pharisees made this a matter of ceremonial purity and, in their desire to meticulously avoid any possibility of becoming unclean, applied it to all Israelites.

**Matt. 15:3** Jesus makes a clear distinction between the OT, which was the commandment of God, and the Pharisaic tradition, which consisted of merely human pronouncements.

**Matt. 15:5** Given to God reflects a technical term for a formal vow (cf. "Corban," Mark 7:11). This allowed a person to be released from other responsibilities, such as caring for aging parents.

**Matt. 15:6** The Pharisees have made void the word of God with their traditions and rulings: anyone who broke a vow (human law) in order to help needy parents (God's law) would have committed a serious transgression, according to the Pharisees.

**Matt. 15:7–9** The Pharisees are hypocrites for two reasons: (1) their actions are merely external and do not come from their hearts, and (2) their teachings are not from God but reflect human tradition (cf. vv. 2–3).

**Matt. 15:11** not what goes into . . . but what comes out. Cf. notes on Mark 7:19; 7:20–23.

**Matt. 15:13** The Pharisees have not been planted by the Father, therefore they will be rooted up.

**Matt. 15:14** blind guides. The Pharisees are both blind to their own hypocrisy and blindly leading the people astray because they cannot see the true intent of God's will in the OT.

**Matt. 15:17–20** whatever goes into the mouth. Cf. notes on Mark 7:19 and 7:20–23.