
Clean Hearts for Christ

Children's Sermon: Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

Actions speak louder than words...and pure intentions speak louder than outer actions! Children are accustomed to following rules or going along with traditions, even if they often don't quite understand the meaning behind them.

However, it is important to recognize that in our Christian lives, heart intent matters. God cares about what's inside of us, more than the details of what we look like or do outwardly. This message focuses on that "clean hearts" element, which we see addressed in the encounter Jesus had with criticizing Pharisees in Mark 7. Use cleaning elements as a starter to discuss the importance of being spiritually steadfast and inwardly clean.

Law/Gospel Theme: We sometimes get caught up in details of rules and regulations. We care about what others think or how we might appear, when none of it really matters. The message that Jesus tried to share with the Pharisees and disciples was that He came not to abolish, but to fulfill the law. He wasn't breaking the stringent Jewish rules just to be a rebel; rather, He wanted to show that the attitudes of our hearts matter more. Jesus came to give new life so that we don't need to worry about rules. His blood cleans our hearts, far more than any sort of rule-following or ceremonial washing ever could.

Optional Materials: Various cleaning products (soap, hand sanitizer, dish soap, Lysol spray, shampoo, etc.)

Bible Passage: Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

Message Note: As with most messages, the details of how you choose to communicate this are adaptable and should cater to timing as well as to your audience and student needs.

More Teaching Ideas:

- Watch the video teaching example of this [children's sermon](#) and [Bible craft idea demonstration](#) on the [Ministry-To-Children](#) YouTube channel.
- Compare another [Sunday School Lesson on Clean Hearts from Mark 7](#)



Clean Hearts (Mark 7:1-23) Children's Sermon

Greet the children, and have several examples of cleaning supplies on hand...

Hello, children of God!

We have come to realize how important it is to keep things clean, right? We make sure to wash our hands and sanitize surfaces, because we want to keep germs away. Well, I have several items here that you might use to clean. Let's see if you can identify them. What might I use this product for? (*Hold up different types of cleaning products, inviting students to describe their purposes. Examples could include hand soap, dish soap, laundry soap, sanitizer, or body wash.*) Each of these items will be useful for me in different ways, depending on what and how I need to clean. But which of these things will help me be clean *inside*? Will any of these products be able to wash my sinful heart? If I swallow some soap, will that do the trick? No, of course not! And you should never EVER put cleaning products in your mouth...

So what can I rely on to clean me up on the inside? Well, we know that Jesus does that! Did you know that there were people who got angry at Jesus about washing hands? It's true! You see, the Pharisees and church leaders had a lot of special rules about things. In fact, outside of the Ten Commandments, they added hundreds of special rules and regulations about how they should live and do things. One of the things they had a lot of rules about was washing. They wanted people to wash their hands and pots and everything in just a certain special ceremonial way. The purpose of this wasn't even to be clean, really. The rule was just in place to make people say they followed the rule! They criticized Jesus and His disciples for not following their special rules. They said He wasn't clean because He ate with hands that hadn't been properly washed, and He was going to be dirty and sinful if He didn't follow their specific rules. They were concerned and focused on what Jesus did not do, rather than recognizing who He was and noticing the amazing things that He did do!

So Jesus explained to them that life was not about following rules or doing things in just a specific certain way. Things that we eat cannot make us sinful, but things that we do. Jesus tried to communicate that the attitudes of our hearts are more important than the words that we say or the rules that we have. Washing hands in just the right way wasn't going to truly impact how the Pharisees followed God. Jesus turned the criticism back onto the Pharisees by pointing out how they were so upset about the rules that they failed to consider the reason for the rules. They didn't follow God with their hearts.

It might seem silly to us to get so worked up over the method of washing things. However, we can easily become distracted by the wrong thing. For instance, in church we might be concerned with the way people are dressed, or the order that we have our services, or what kind of juice we serve for snacks afterwards...we can become focused on these details, and forget what the most important things are. It's more important to recognize that we come to worship, to put our hearts and minds on Jesus. He is the center of our faith.

And that's the really good news! Jesus came to transform what we rely on. The temple leaders were worried over following all of the rules and doing things just right to make themselves look good. They thought they could somehow be closer to God if they stuck to the law. Jesus gave Himself for us, so that even when we make mistakes and don't keep all of the rules just right, we have forgiveness. His blood cleanses us from our sinful thoughts and behaviors. He helps us to have faith and believe in that truth to give us new hope and peace.

So, of course, we still wash our hands and make sure we clean things on the outside. But we can realize that the most important kind of cleanliness is how we become clean inwardly. Christ has washed us inside and made us new. Whether at church, home, or school, we give thanks to Him for that and focus on Him for all we have and who we are.

Let's say a prayer to thank God for cleaning us on the inside:

Prayer:

(Have kids repeat each line)

Dear God,

Thank you for cleaning our hearts

Help us remember to put our hope in you

And not in outward things

You are the most important thing to focus on

Thank you for your love

We love you, God!

In Jesus name, Amen!

Bible Verses/story to Reference:

Now when the Pharisees gathered to him, with some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem, 2 they saw that some of his disciples ate with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed. 3 (For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands properly, holding to the tradition of the elders, 4 and when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other traditions that they observe, such as the washing of cups and pots and copper vessels and dining couches.) 5 And the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, “Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?” 6 And he said to them, “Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written,

“This people honors me with their lips,

but their heart is far from me;

7 in vain do they worship me,

teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’

8 You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men.”

And he called the people to him again and said to them, “Hear me, all of you, and understand: 15 There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him.”

For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, 22 coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. 23 All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.” -Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23



Thank you for downloading these free materials. Our team is grateful for your trust and pray that God will bless your ministry.

This resource was prepared by [Kristin Schmidt](#) (pictured right). She serves at the Epiphany Lutheran Church in Castle Rock, CO. She has shared her teaching gifts through *Ministry-To-Children* since 2014 and now serves as our lead curriculum writer.



Every week she writes new [Sunday School lessons](#), [Bible crafts](#), and [children's sermons](#).

Kristin has a professional background in elementary and pre-school education. A graduate of Biola University, she holds a Master of Education and will receive the Master of Theology degree from Concordia University, Irvine, California, in May 2020. Kristin grew up in southern California and lived the past 10 years in Georgia. She is a long-distance runner and voracious reader.

My name is Tony Kummer (pictured below). I started Ministry-To-Children.com in 2007 as a free resource for anyone sharing Jesus with kids. It is my personal honor to share these resources with churches around the world.



[Reader donations](#) and your support at [The Sunday School Store](#) fund these free materials. Please keep us in mind when you are choosing your next children's ministry curriculum.

If you enjoy our material, be sure to [sign-up for my free email newsletter](#) called "Sunday School Works!" Every Tuesday, I send the latest new lessons, crafts, and coloring pages in print-friendly format to make your lesson planning easy.

May God continue to bless your ministry!

Tony Kummer