
Clean Hearts for Jesus

Sunday School Lesson from Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23



Wash your hands! It's an important admonition and one that children are used to hearing. In this lesson, they'll learn of a time when Jesus was criticized for not washing His hands...only it wasn't about germs in His case. The story touches on Jewish traditions and customs, and how they distracted people from recognizing and understanding who

Jesus was and how He came to heal. Unfortunately, sometimes we let rules and traditions get in the way of our worship. We can remind our students (and ourselves) to focus on God and keep the main thing the main thing! We can allow Him to clean our hearts (and still remember to wash our hands).

Lesson focus: The focus of this lesson is on keeping Christ at the center of all we do, and recognizing that He is the one who frees us from sin and cleans us on the inside. We are easily distracted by routine and, but recognize that traditions don't cover what we need most. Instead of worrying about rules and regulations, we can relax in the blessed recognition that Jesus provides all we need.

Passage: Mark 7:1-8, 14-23

Target Audience: Kindergarten-6th grade

Materials Needed: Construction paper, markers, stickers, scissors, tape/glue, box or container, soap, pipe cleaners, decorations (all optional, depending which activities you choose to use).

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](#)

Game Ideas and Lesson Introduction

Lesson Opening: This lesson involves washing hands, following rules, and focusing on traditions. Open with an activity or conversation surrounding such elements. To get started, select from one of the following openers, or select another of your own choosing!

- Scrub up selection...look at a “panel” of soap choices, and consider the merits of each one. Which soap smells the best? Has the best foam? Does it matter what kind of soap we use?
- Glove up relay: Have students line up and take turns racing across the room to put on a pair of latex gloves and return to tag the next teammate in line. Continue until all students have gone.
- Slippery fun...challenge students to accomplish basic tasks like writing their names or opening a package...BUT do so with hands that are “lubed up” with un-rinsed soap!
- What are the rules and reasons? Consider rules and regulations that exist in various places. Consider procedures for church, school, and home. What are the routines and rituals we follow? Why?
- Look at a church bulletin or newsletter. Contemplate why certain practices are followed, and which might be just for the sake of tradition.

Transition into the Scripture study component and explain that we will be looking at a Bible passage that talks about rules and traditions. In this story, some people got distracted and missed out on recognizing what Jesus offered them. It’s fine to be clean on the outside, and it’s fine to have traditions...but we don’t want those things to become more important than God.

Ask: What are some traditions or customs you have (in family, church, etc.)? What would happen if you did not follow one of your usual traditions?

Sunday School Lesson (Mark 7:1-8, 14-23) Clean Hearts

Bible Lesson:

Use whatever translation best suits you and your audience. You could act out the conversation elements of this story, or simply read the verses and pause to explain and consider what is going on within the context of the Pharisees and Jesus.

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.) -Mark 7:1-4

Remind (or explain to) students that Pharisees were religious leaders who did not get along well with Jesus. They made a whole bunch of rules to add to God's commandments, and they acted like they were better than other people because they followed those special rules. These people had special techniques for washing hands, not to be clean from germs, but to be "ceremonially clean" in their own eyes. They were focused on outer behaviors, but their hearts didn't always follow along...

Ask: What does God care most about? How do we know what He wants us to focus on?

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." -Mark 7:5-8

Jesus did not always follow the specific rules the Pharisees had made. This wasn't because He was trying to be ornery or blatantly disobedient. But He recognized what was more important. Jesus knew that the Pharisees were talking about important things, but their hearts were not genuine. They weren't following rules to actually follow God, but to make themselves look good.

Ask: Do we have any rules that get people upset, even if there's not a great reason for them? How can we make sure our hearts and intentions are in the right place?

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." 17 And when he had entered the house and left the people, his disciples asked him about the parable. 18 And he said to them, "Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, 19 since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?" (Thus he declared all foods clean.) - Mark 7:14-19

This can be a little confusing...explain that what Jesus was saying was that we are all sinful, not because of ceremonial foods or washings but because of the things we say and do. The Jews thought certain things were not "clean" to eat, but Jesus emphasized what goes into our bodies is not as significant as our attitudes and actions.

Ask: What are some things we might say or do that could be considered "unclean"?

And he said, "What comes out of a person is what defiles him. 21 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 7:20-23

The depth with which you discuss these things will vary according to age group. Of course, younger children might not understand all terms here, and can simply talk about ways they might disobey or do things they shouldn't.

Ask: What reassurance do we have when we do make mistakes and sin?

The wonderful hope that we have is that we know we have grace and forgiveness in Jesus. We make mistakes and sin, yes, and we certainly don't follow all of the rules like the Pharisees. But Jesus came to take care of that. His blood covers our sins and washes us on the inside, much better than any soap and

water outer washing could do. The Pharisees missed out on that. They were so busy trying to make themselves closer to God that they missed the fact that God was right there with them! We don't have to miss that, though. Remind students that God promises to love us and be with us always. We can love Him and trust him no matter what. That's great "heart hygiene"!

Pray: Say a prayer of thanksgiving to God for cleaning our hearts and providing grace. Ask for His help in keeping the most important things at the center of focus.

Craft Suggestions: Develop some crafty creations that remind kids of the importance of hygiene, inside and out! Here are a few ideas:

- "Clean up box" container for hand washing items.
- Soap carving (using plastic knives)
- "Clean Hands and hearts" Hanging decoration (sign for a bathroom or sink)
- Decorated hand towel
- Homemade bath salts

Verses or Captions to Consider... (Mark 7:1-15)

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." -Mark 7:14-15

Wash your hands! And say your prayers...God is with us and He cares!

Wash your hands, say your prayers, germs and Jesus are everywhere!

Clean hands and cleaner hearts!

Be Clean...outside and in!

Box of cleaning...

Craft one: “Clean Up Box”

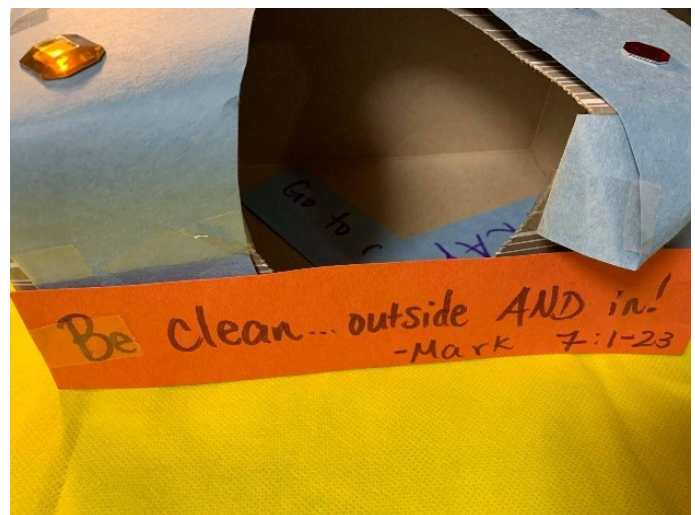
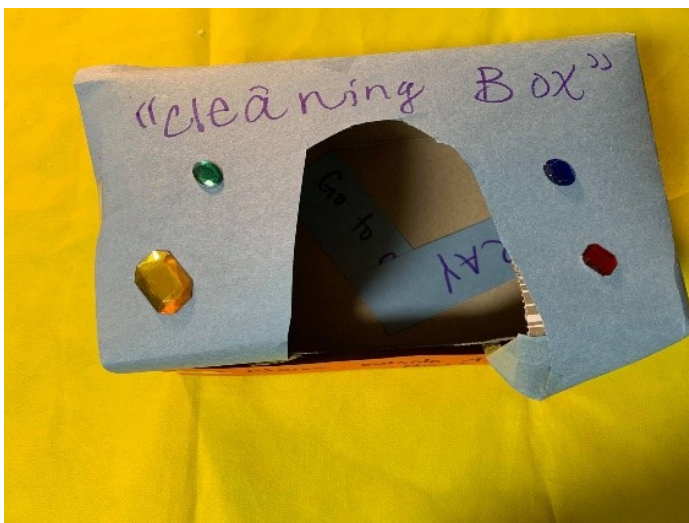
You will need:

- Construction paper or cardstock
- Glue, tape, or staples
- Scissors
- Markers, crayons, etc.
- Box or container of some sort
- Other decorations (jewels, stickers, etc.)



Procedure:

1. Cover the box/container with construction paper, cardstock, or wrapping paper.
2. Decorate the box with labels and verses.
3. Add decorative elements as desired.
4. Use the “clean up box” to store and hold cleaning products such as soap and hand sanitizer.
5. Place paper strips in the box with words or phrases to remember how to pursue a “clean heart.”



Craft Two: “Clean Hands and Hearts Reminder”

You will need:

- Ribbon/yarn/string
- Pipe cleaners (optional)
- Stickers/decorations
- Markers/crayons
- Cardstock/paper
- Glue
- Scissors
- Hole punch
- Captions/verses



Procedure:

1. Cut paper or cardstock into a heart shape.
2. Trace a hand (child's hand) on another sheet of paper, and cut it out as well.
3. Add captions to both papers, recounting the importance of washing hands and having clean intentions and heart attitudes.
4. Hole punch each shape. Place a pipe cleaner or ribbon through them.
5. Hang the decoration in a bathroom or near a sink as a pleasant reminder to “wash up”, inside and out!





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.



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May God continue to bless your ministry!

Tony Kummer