KINGDOM of HEAVEN

A SERIES IN THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

Community Group Material
Matthew 15:1-20
Week of 25th February

Religion, Tradition and the Commandments of God



WARMUP

Start your small group with a game such as UNO. Take a minute to agree on the basic rules. Then play a few rounds. At the end of each round the winner gets to make up a new rule.

Quick questions

Did any of you consult the rules put out by the manufacturer? Were there any differences between the way people in your group usually play the game and the original instructions?

Assuming that not everyone in your group grew up in the same family, were there differences in how people thought the game should be played?

What did you think about adding in rules as the game progressed? Were they useful to the flow of the game? Did they just cause more barriers and complications? Do you think these should be added to the official rules?

Leader preparation:

- Read through the passage and look over pages 11-13 of the notes
- Take some time to contemplate how you respond to rules: Do you naturally follow tradition? Do you automatically rebel against authority? Do you always need to know the reason for an instruction? How does this reflect your attitude to God's rules?
- Pray for your group members. Remember any prayer needs they have. Pray that they will be reminded that "*There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor" James 4:12*

Read Matthew 15:1-20

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Group time

Under Law

- What authority did the Pharisees depend on to define the way to "live right"? (v2) Did they believe that their rules made them righteous or unrighteous?

Righteousness: the quality of being right in the eyes of God, including character (nature), conscience (attitude), conduct (action), and command (word)

- What authority did Jesus refer to as the source of rules for living? Would this define the Pharisees as righteous or unrighteous?
- Read Isaiah 33:22, 1Tim. 1: 8-9, Galatians 3:21-26
  - What is the purpose of God's laws?
  - Is it possible for us to follow God's laws to make us pure?
  - What hope is there for us then?
- Read verses 7-9: Have you ever encountered someone who is a hypocrite? What made you call them that?
- What are some things that we as Christians can do "with our lips" even when our hearts are distant?
- What is something you could do to be more intentional about making sure that your lips are authentic in demonstrating what you believe in your heart?

Hypocrite: *a person who puts on a false appearance of virtue or religion; a person who acts in contradiction to his or her stated beliefs*

Prayer:

James 4:6 reminds us that God can deal with sin, but that pride and arrogance cut us off from Him.

"But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: God opposes the proud but shows favour to the humble."

In your group, share anything that may give the outward appearance of godliness in your life, but that is not a true reflection of your heart. Spend time praying together for God to forgive you, pour out his grace on you, and grow your heart to be able to worship him sincerely in every aspect of your life.