Matthew 15

When He had called the multitude to Himself, He said to them, “Hear and understand: Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.”

Matthew 15:10-11

PRAYER: Father, teach me to not transgress your commandments because of traditions, help me to beseech you in prayer with great faith and find myself at your feet as I study Matthew 15.

Journal your prayer here:

PREVIEW: In Matthew 15, we’ll see the scribes and Pharisee as blind guides leading their followers into a ditch. We will also see a Canaanite woman demonstrate great faith as she beseeches Jesus for the deliverance of her daughter. We also see many healed and filled as Jesus continues in His ministry.

Matthew 15 Outline:

Debate Over Tradition - Read Matthew 15:1-20

Jesus Heals the Gentile Woman’s Daughter - Read Matthew 15:21-28

Jesus Heals Many - Read Matthew 15:29-31

Jesus Feeds 4,000 - Read Matthew 15:32-39
PREPARE: Get ready to learn the importance of knowing what God’s commandments are versus man’s traditions, to learn an important lesson about our hearts, to see a Gentile woman pursue Jesus for her greatest need, and to see Jesus heal many as they lay at His feet.

**Debate Over Tradition - Read Matthew 15:1-20**

Matthew 15:1-20 (NKJV)

1 Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying,

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

3 He answered and said to them, “Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?

4 For God commanded, saying, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.’

5 But you say, ‘Whoever says to his father or mother, “Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God”—

6 then he need not honor his father or mother.’ Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition.

7 Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying:

8 ‘These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me.

9 And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’”

10 When He had called the multitude to Himself, He said to them, “Hear and understand:
11 Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.”

12 Then His disciples came and said to Him, “Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?”

13 But He answered and said, “Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted.

14 Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch.”

15 Then Peter answered and said to Him, “Explain this parable to us.”

16 So Jesus said, “Are you also still without understanding?

17 Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated?

18 But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man.

19 For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.

20 These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man.”

1. The Jewish oral traditions were written and studied and became known as the Mishnah. One of these traditions dealt with the washing of hands before and during meals. What did the scribes and Pharisees say that Jesus’ disciples transgressed (v. 2)?
2. The word transgress means to violate a command or law. How did the scribes and Pharisee say Jesus’ disciples transgressed the oral tradition (v. 2)?

3. Jesus responds to the scribes and Pharisees’ accusations with an accusation of His own. What did Jesus say the scribes and Pharisees were guilty of transgressing (v. 3)?

4. How were the scribes and Pharisees guilty of this transgression (vv. 5-6)? (See also Mark 7:9-13)

5. What did Jesus say the result of the scribes and Pharisees transgression of the commandment of God to, “Honor your father and mother,” was (v. 6)?

6. PRODUCE: The scribes and Pharisees made God’s commandments of no effect by justifying their disobedience through their oral traditions. What are ways we as Christians justify our disobedience to God’s commandments?
7. PROCEED: The scribes and Pharisees had traditions that made God’s commandments, “of no effect.” Share with the group some modern day traditions that also make God’s commandments, “of no effect.”

8. Jesus calls the scribes and Pharisees, “Hypocrites!” (v.7). It’s easy to say you love God, “draw near to Me with their mouth” (v.8), but Jesus said that loving Him is obeying His commandments (John 14:15, 21, 23). How does the quote from Isaiah describe the heart and worship of those who don’t actually keep the commandments of God (vv.8-9)?

10. PROPOUND: Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men (v. 9b) is a very dangerous spiritually. Why? (See Colossians 2:20-23, Titus 1:10-16)

11. PRACTICE: It is important to obey God’s commands and not excuse your disobedience because of a tradition. How are we to be diligent in discerning what is a commandment of man that is being taught as doctrine and what is truly a commandment of God? (See Acts 17:11)
12. What was the response of the scribes and Pharisees to Jesus’ response about His disciples not washing their hands according to the oral traditions (v. 12)? (See also Matthew 11:6, Isaiah 8:14-15, Romans 9:32, and 1 Peter 2:8.)

13. PROPOUND: What do you think Jesus meant when He said, “Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted,” (v. 13)? (See also Matthew 3:12, 13:30)


15. PROPOUND: Think about the ditch that the blind guide and his followers fall into. What do you think a ditch is a picture of? (Isaiah 9:16, Malachi 2:8, Psalm 7:14-16)

16. Peter asks Jesus to explain the parable in Matthew 15:11 (v. 15). What become of that which goes enters the mouth (v. 17)?
17. Jesus says that it is not what goes into your mouth that defiles you, rather it is what comes out of your mouth that defiles you. Where does that which comes out of your mouth come from (v. 18)? (See also Luke 6:45, James 3:6)

18. What did Jesus say comes out of the heart? (v. 19)

19. PROCLAIM: Out of a man’s heart proceeds many evil thoughts. Share with the group how those evils get into the man’s heart. (See Jeremiah 17:9, Galatians 5:19-21)

20. PROPOUND: How can you tell what is stored in your heart? (See Luke 6:45)

21. PROTECT: God made a way for us to keep our hearts, which are desperately wicked, pure. Think about what it takes to keep your heart pure. (See John 17:17, 1 John 1:8-10) Share your thoughts with the group.
Jesus Heals the Gentile Woman’s Daughter - Read Matthew 15:21-28

Matthew 15:21-28 (NKJV)

21 Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon.

22 And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed.”

23 But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, “Send her away, for she cries out after us.”

24 But He answered and said, “I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

25 Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, “Lord, help me!”

26 But He answered and said, “It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the little dogs.”

27 And she said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.”

28 Then Jesus answered and said to her, “O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.” And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

22. Jesus went to Tyre and Sidon (v. 21), the Gentile coastal region of Phoenicia where He encountered a Canaanite woman (v. 22). What does she ask Jesus for (v. 22)?
23. What was Jesus’ initial response to her (v. 23)?

24. Jesus’ disciples urge Him to send the Canaanite woman away. What reason does Jesus give for not initially addressing her pleading (v. 24)? (See also Matthew 10:5-6)

25. PROMOTE: Despite not receiving a response from Jesus and the disciples’ urging Jesus to send her away, what does the Canaanite woman do (Matthew 15:25, Mark 7:25)? How is her response something we should do in our own life and tell others to do when they experience difficult situations?

26. Jews referred to Gentiles as dogs. Jesus used the word kynarion, the word for a household dog, a pet, when saying it isn’t good to give the children’s bread to the little dogs. What was the Canaanite woman’s response to Jesus’ response (v. 27)?

27. Jesus answered the Canaanite woman by calling her, “gune” or “woman.” This word is a term of respect, it is the same word He used when He spoke of His mother. What does Jesus tell her and what is done for her (v. 28)?
Jesus Heals Many - Read Matthew 15:29-31

Matthew 15:29-31 (NKJV)

29 Jesus departed from there, skirted the Sea of Galilee, and went up on the mountain and sat down there.

30 Then great multitudes came to Him, having with them the lame, blind, mute, maimed, and many others; and they laid them down at Jesus’ feet, and He healed them.

31 So the multitude marveled when they saw the mute speaking, the maimed made whole, the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel.

28. Jesus departs the region of Tyre and Sidon and walks along (skirts) the Sea of Galilee. He goes up on a mountain and sits down. Who comes to Him and who do they bring with them (v. 30)?

29. PROPOUND: In Matthew 15:30, where are all those who need Jesus’ healing touch placed? Why is this a significant place to go when we or others in our lives need healing from Jesus? (See Mark 7:25; Luke 7:38; 8:41; 10:39)

30. What two things do the multitudes do when they see the mute speaking, the maimed made whole, the lame walking, and the blind seeing (v. 31)?
Jesus Feeds 4,000 - Read Matthew 15:32-39

Matthew 15:32-39 (NKJV)

32 Now Jesus called His disciples to Himself and said, “I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat. And I do not want to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way.”

33 Then His disciples said to Him, “Where could we get enough bread in the wilderness to fill such a great multitude?”

34 Jesus said to them, “How many loaves do you have?” And they said, “Seven, and a few little fish.”

35 So He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground.

36 And He took the seven loaves and the fish and gave thanks, broke them and gave them to His disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitude.

37 So they all ate and were filled, and they took up seven large baskets full of the fragments that were left.

38 Now those who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children.

39 And He sent away the multitude, got into the boat, and came to the region of Magdala.

31. Jesus calls His disciples to Himself to discuss the multitudes. How long had they continued with Him and what did Jesus have on them (v. 32)?
32. What dilemma did the disciple face (v. 33)?

33. How does Jesus resolve the disciple’s dilemma (vv. 34-36)?

34. The multitudes along with Jesus and His disciples all ate and were filled. Approximately how many people ate (v. 38)? How much food was left over (v. 37)? What word describes the baskets (v. 37)?

PROCESS: Review what you’ve learned in Matthew 15. Highlight what the Lord has shown you and share it with the group.

PRAY: Father, thank You for the wonderful lessons I’ve learned studying Matthew 15. Please help me to put them into practice.

Journal your prayer here: