

Matthew 15:1-39 - *Through Jesus God Provides*

Section 1: 15:1-9 – Jesus Provides a Response

In these particular verses we see Jesus challenging and condemning the Pharisees. They have placed their traditions (personal preferences) equal to and even above Scripture. As important and meaningful as traditions can be to us, they are never equal to Scripture. Often time conflict can tell us which is more important to us: tradition (personal desire) or Scripture.

Conflict is unavoidable in life. Here we see Jesus facing conflict with the Pharisees once again. Jesus gives us a simple yet profound way to react to conflict: always respond with Scripture. Jesus has established a clear pattern of this for us to see. In this particular conflict Jesus quotes one of the ten commandments and then takes it a step further by quoting Exodus 21:17.

After Jesus responds with Scripture, He harshly condemns them by calling them hypocrites. We must remember that any time we put personal preferences or traditions above Scripture it angers God. God's Word is the supreme authority in our lives and should never be subject to any human desire, experience or word.

Jesus further condemns them by revealing that Isaiah 29:13 applies to them. This along with Matthew 7:21-23 are some of the scariest verses in Scripture. These verses remind us that there are people who show up to church, sing during worship, lead Bible studies and are active members yet they are not children of God. We need to make sure Scripture is defining who we are and what we do. Not our family, our experiences, our location, our emotions or the like.

Through Jesus we now know how to respond to conflict, challenge and hardship: with Scripture.

Discussion Questions

- ❖ How do you handle conflict?
- ❖ Do you have "traditions" that you are unwilling to compromise on?
- ❖ Should Scripture always supersede our desires?
- ❖ Do your actions prove that Scripture is your number one resource for dealing with life? Why or why not?

Section 2: 15:10-20 – Jesus Provides Understanding

Our culture seems to care more about the outward appearance than the inward personality. Because of social media your outward appearance can make you an internet star. You could become an influencer. But as powerful as one's outward appearance seems to have in our culture...ultimately, the inward person will have the greatest impact on your close personal relationships. For example: have you ever said something and as the words were coming out of your mouth you were thinking..."oh no"? Our words have power to influence the people around us. For good or for bad. And in the relationships that truly matter, your inward person matters far more than your outward appearance.

It appears the Pharisees were more concerned with outward appearance rather than the inward heart. Why does the heart matter more to Jesus? Because out of the heart comes evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, sexual immoralities, thefts, false testimonies, slander and the like. God has previously warned us about the heart in Jeremiah 17:9: - *The heart is more deceitful than anything else, and incurable—who can understand it? (CSB)*

Through Jesus we can now understand what is truly important: our inward heart condition.

Discussion Questions

- ❖ Do you spend more time on your outward appearance or inward personality?
- ❖ How are you currently trying to become more like Christ?
- ❖ How can your heart (personal desires) be dangerous?

- ❖ Do your actions show that you trust your emotions or Scripture more? How?

Section 3: 15:21-28 – Jesus Provides Mercy

As Jesus was walking along a woman came begging for mercy. It's interesting that the woman used the word mercy, considering it means undeserved favor. For example, mercy is giving someone a reward when they deserve a punishment. This means that the Canaanite woman understood her position before Jesus.

Characteristics of the Canaanite Woman

1. Repentant: she had turned from following the pagan religion of the Canaanites and called Jesus Lord.
2. Reverent & Humble: she continually called Jesus Lord and asked for mercy. She was not demanding but sincerely making a request. She also knelt before Him.
3. Persistent: she continued after Jesus even when there seem to be no response. The disciples wanted her to be sent away.

Jesus had come to save His people from their sins. The disciples and Pharisees believed the Messiah to be one that would save the nation of Israel. But Jesus has come to establish salvation for all people groups. We see this on display with the story of this Canaanite woman. The Israelites hated the Canaanites. So, it makes sense that the disciples wanted to send the woman away. But Jesus not only talks with her, but offers her the same gifts He has been giving the Israelites. No doubt this would have caught the disciples off guard. Why did Jesus recognize her faith? Why did Jesus cast out the demon? Because God wants to be known by all people. God is not some hidden deity that is unknowable. Through Jesus we have been provided mercy, so that, we can know our heavenly Father personally.

Jeremiah 29:13 - ***“You will seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart. (CSB)***

Romans 10:11-13 - ***“For the Scripture says, Everyone who believes on him will not be put to shame, ¹²since there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, because the same Lord of all richly blesses all who call on him. ¹³For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. (CSB)***

Discussion Questions

- ❖ What role does mercy play in your life?
- ❖ Can you describe your life with the words: repentant, reverent, humble, persistent? Why or why not?
- ❖ Are you seeking to know God?

Section 4: 15:29-39 – Jesus Provides Compassion

When Jesus looks at His creation, He feels compassion. The root meaning of compassion is to feel sorrow for one's condition. Jesus is grieved by our lowly condition brought on by sin. Ultimately, Jesus came to remove the stain of sin and give us an eternal inheritance in which sin will never touch our lives again. This was stated at the beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry in Matthew 1:21:

“She will give birth to a son, and you are to name him Jesus, because He will save his people from their sins.” (CSB)

Jesus showed compassion by teaching, giving mercy, showing grace, healing, restoring and feeding. Jesus' acts of compassion were always pointing people to the eternal hope that we have in the gospel. He was giving the people a taste of what is to come in the Kingdom of God.

Discussion Questions

- ❖ When was the last time you showed someone compassion?
- ❖ Are you a compassionate person?

God, through Jesus, provides a response, understanding, mercy and compassion. Jesus is sufficient.