



**Sermon Discussion Guide**  
*Series: Prep Time, Wk4: Cleanse*  
**March 15, 2026**

 **Big Idea** True cleansing & belonging does not come from following human religious rules or outward traditions, but from the inner transformation & forgiveness that we open ourselves up to via relationship with Jesus.

 **Icebreaker** What is a small "rule" or "tradition" you grew up with that everyone treated as extremely important? Did you ever learn the family history of it? Do you continue it today? Does, or doesn't, it really matter & why?

 **Discussion Questions**

1. Read **Mark 7:1–5**. With what kind of attitude & heart posture did the Pharisees question Jesus because His disciples were not following the ceremonial handwashing traditions. Why do you think people often focus on visible behaviors instead of the condition of the heart? Today, what are some examples of where you see this tendency to focus on the visible behaviors instead of the condition of the heart?
2. Read **Mark 7:5-13**. What did the sermon emphasize faces suffering due to the traditions of humans that miss the *heart* of the law? The Pharisees missed the *heart* of the law but hit, and were mostly concerned with, the *what* of the law? Why is this dangerous and less than helpful to one's faith journey?
3. What are examples of "barriers to belonging" (ill-suited & unnecessary expectations or traditions) that you have experienced (in church, school, work, or elsewhere), that made you, or others, feel like outsiders? What did that feel like to you, or to others, do you think?
4. Traditions or rules are, in & of themselves, not problems. But those which override God's commands to love and care for others, are problems. Fill in the following blanks: *The law of I \_\_\_\_ supersedes our t \_\_\_\_*. So, can you think of examples where rules or traditions ("the way things have always been done") can, truthfully, help people experience God's love and His desire for their belonging with Him?
5. Read **Mark 7:14-23**. According to Jesus, where does what defile a person come from? What practices help us to deal with the source of that which defiles us?
6. Read **Matthew 23:25-26**. Fill in the following blanks: *Jesus offers to c \_\_\_\_ us from the in \_\_\_\_ out*. What does it require from us if He offers this? What blocks people from taking, or hinders them from living into & from, this simple fact?

 **Concluding Question**

One of the final points from the sermon was: *Confession is the deep spiritual work of admitting our brokenness and shortcomings, while still being accepted by those around us*. Is there an area of your life where you need to bring something into the light with a trusted friend, mentor, or group this week? What might help you take that step?

 **Prayer**

As people approach the final week leading up to the deadline for them to express their desire to be Baptized on 4/12/26, pray that doubt nor fear would hold them back from taking this step of obedience within their faith journey. Pray as they follow Jesus into the waters of Baptism that they would experience His grace.