

Heavy Duty

**Preparation for Sunday, January 27, 2013
"Tradition or God's Word?"**

Monday - Tuesday

1. Follow Scripture – Read Matthew 15:1-6

- Based on what you read in these verses, what was the major complaint of the Pharisees?
- Why was the washing of hands such a big deal? Was that the real issue? Why or why not?
- How would you describe Jesus' response to the Pharisees? Was He being too harsh? Why or why not?
- Where does the command in verse 4 come from? (Exodus 20; The Ten Commandments)
- Why did Jesus use that as a point of contact and discussion?
- Are all non-biblical church traditions wrong? How do you decide? (Suggest that it crosses the line into sin when we start suggesting it is a sin NOT to follow the non-biblical tradition. For example, one particular denomination believes that singing in church is not to be accompanied by instrumentation. That, in itself, is not a big deal. However, in this denomination, for some churches, it is considered a sin to play instruments in the church building. This has become a tradition of the denomination with no basis in Scripture.)
- What were some of the religious traditions you remember from growing up?
- If you were not raised in church, what are some possible religious traditions that can turn people off to church?

We can often find ourselves so wrapped up in tradition that we become nothing more than religious hypocrites. One of the top reasons those who don't go to church give for not going to church is that "the church is full of hypocrites." This is not a new problem however; let's continue reading this story.

Wednesday - Thursday

2. Avoid Hypocrisy – Read Matthew 15:7-9

- Why did Jesus call the Pharisees hypocrites? What does that mean?
- How does the statement from Isaiah describe the Pharisees?
- What does it mean to honor Jesus with our lips but not with our hearts?
- When do you find it easiest to honor God with your lips and your heart?
- When do you find it the most difficult? Why?
- What does it mean to worship God in vain? Why would it be in vain to only honor God with one's lips, rather than with one's whole heart?
- How many of your words each day are uttered in prayer?
- How many of your words honor, glorify, and point to God?
- How many of your words are about you?

- How many of your words tear down, criticize, curse, hurt, or blame?

It may be that during this quiet time, you realized you have some darkness in your heart that is expressed in the words you use. In our final point today, we're going to look at how our hearts can be cleansed.

Friday - Saturday

3. Clean Your Heart – Read Matthew 15:10-11, 17-20

- What is your understanding of "defilement" in Jesus' time
- What did Jesus mean in verses 10-11?
- What was Jesus' point in verse 17? (That it isn't what you eat, or even how you eat it, that makes you unclean).
- A lot of the sinful attitudes Jesus mentioned in verse 19 seem to start with the eyes (such as adultery or sexual immorality) or the mouth (such as false testimonies and blasphemies). Why would Jesus say they come from the heart?
- How do these verses apply to us today?
- What are some examples of things that make us unclean, or contaminate us spiritually—those things that lead us to sin?
- Where do you see these types of things in media and in society?

Additional Reading for this week:

1. The Tradition of the Elders
2. Tradition of the Elders
3. First Century Elders
4. Ritual Washing of First Century Palestine
5. The Pharisees