

Leader Guide



Speaker: Brandon Bradley

Series: Failing Forward

Title: Scandalized by the Wrong Thing

Primary Texts: Mark 7:1-23

Big Idea: We often get scandalized by the wrong thing—by what disrupts the outside—while Jesus is scandalized by surface religion that leaves the heart untouched. The problem isn't what gets on you; it's what comes out of you.

Sermon Outline

1. Intro – When the Teacher Sounds Wrong Before They Sound Wise

- Mr. Miyagi, Yoda, Socrates, Viktor Frankl, the Bishop in *Les Mis*: mentors who disrupt categories before things click.
- Students have to say: *"I think I'm misunderstanding you... what do you mean?"*
- Jesus does this in Mark 7: *"Nothing outside a person can defile them..."* (7:14–15).
- His line sounds reckless, maybe blasphemous—but He's actually aiming at the heart, not just the surface.

2. "Surface-Deep" Religion vs. the Heart

- The problem of living **surface-deep**: manageable rules, visible habits, reputation, being with the "right" people.
- Church culture can reinforce an **unspoken scorecard** of what "good Christians" look like. But surface religion **leaves the inside untouched**: envy, anger, lust, pride, deceit still flow out of us into tone, words, reactions, relationships.
- Two scandals:
 - We get scandalized by external disruptions (what people eat, how they worship, style, "unclean hands").
 - Jesus is scandalized by **surface religion**—clean-looking lives with hearts far from God and harmful to people.

3. Walking Through Mark 7: What Scandalizes Jesus

- **"Your disciples aren't clean" (7:1–5):**
 - Pharisees see the disciples eating with ceremonially "unclean" hands—this is about identity and boundaries, not hygiene.
 - Pressure: *"Follow the system. Maintain the standards. Protect purity."*

- **Jesus exposes the real scandal (7:6–13):**
 - Quotes Isaiah: *“These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me...”*
 - Corban example: religious language used to dodge honoring parents; tradition as a loophole to avoid obedience and love.
 - Summary: *“You’re scandalized by my disciples’ hands; I’m scandalized by your hearts.”*
- **The spiritual explosion (7:14–15):**
 - *“Nothing outside a person can defile them... it is what comes out...”*
 - He isn’t dismantling holiness; He’s exposing **counterfeit holiness**: you can polish the outside, keep traditions, and still have a heart far from God, harming people.
 - **“The problem isn’t what gets on you—it’s what comes out of you.”**
- **The “What are you talking about, Jesus?” moment (7:17–23):**
 - Jesus explains that food goes to the stomach, not the heart.
 - List of sins flowing from within: sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance, folly.
 - **“The fruit of your life is revealing the truth about your heart.”**

4. From Fragile Holiness to Missional Holiness

- This teaching stands right before Jesus moves into Gentile territory—it fuels mission, not retreat.
- If holiness is about avoiding “unclean” people/places, you’ll hide, label, and protect yourself.
- Jesus shows holiness is not fragile: the issue is not contamination by contact but **transformation of the heart**.
- External religion can **polish behavior**; only Jesus can **purify the source**.

5. From Surface Clean to Whole Hearts (Application + Practice)

- Our danger: fighting symptoms while the disease remains—obsessing over reputation, habits, rules, traditions, while relationships keep breaking from what comes out of us.
- Jesus: *“You’re trying to clean the wrong direction.”* Real change starts **inside**.
- **Three responses:**
 - **Repent** of being scandalized by the wrong thing—prioritizing appearing clean over becoming whole.
 - **Pay attention to your fruit**—what comes out of you in speech, reactions, cravings, choices.
 - **Trace fruit to root and bring it to Jesus**—practices that train you for change, not just inspire for a moment.
- **Mark 7 Fruit Change Plan:**
 - *Daily (10 minutes)* – Examen + 4-line journal:
 - The fruit I saw
 - The root I suspect

- Confession prayer
 - Tomorrow's practice
 - *Weekly* – Confession + repair: bring one pattern into the light; if your fruit harmed someone, make it right.
 - *Plan + accountability* – “When ____ happens, I usually _____. This week, by God’s help, I will _____.” Invite others to help you live it.
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Discussion Guide

HEART – “This Is Me”

1. **Surface-Deep Faith**
Where do you see “outside-first, surface-deep” religion in your own life—caring more about looking like a good Christian than about what’s actually going on in your heart?
2. **Scandalized by the Wrong Thing**
Can you think of a time you were more shocked or offended by someone’s *external* behavior or style than by what was coming out of your own heart in that moment (judgment, pride, contempt)?
3. **Jesus’ List in Mark 7**
When you read Jesus’ list—sexual immorality, greed, malice, deceit, envy, slander, arrogance, folly—where do you quietly think, “*That’s in me more than I want to admit*”?
How does that realization make you feel—ashamed, relieved to name it, motivated?
4. **“The Problem Isn’t What Gets On You...”**
How does the sentence, “*The problem isn’t what gets on you; it’s what comes out of you,*” land on you emotionally—do you feel relief (less fear of contamination), resistance (but what about...?), or invitation (Jesus wants to go deeper)?
5. **Letting Jesus Go for the Root**
Is there any area where you’d rather Jesus just help you manage your behavior than touch the deeper roots (fear, bitterness, insecurity, unbelief)?
What makes it scary to let Him go that deep?

HEAD – “This Is What I Need to Think About”

1. **Read Mark 7:1–23.**
 - What are the Pharisees and teachers of the law worried about?
 - How does Jesus re-locate the issue of defilement—from outside-in to inside-out?
2. **Tradition vs. God’s Command**
In the Isaiah quote and Corban example, how do you see religious tradition being used to sidestep God’s clear command to love and honor (especially parents)?
What warning does that give about how even church traditions can go wrong?

3. **Counterfeit Holiness**

In what ways is Jesus *deepening* holiness rather than loosening it?

How is “*You’re scandalized by hands; I’m scandalized by hearts*” a critique of counterfeit holiness?

4. **Fruit Reveals the Root**

Why is external, behavior-focused religion powerless to truly change us?

How does the idea that “*the fruit of your life is revealing the truth about your heart*” help explain why the same patterns keep repeating under stress or pressure?

5. **Holiness and Mission**

How does this teaching prepare the disciples (and us) to move toward “unclean” people and places with courage and compassion instead of fear and superiority?

What difference does it make to believe holiness isn’t fragile, because Jesus is after heart transformation, not isolation?

6. **Formation vs. Pretending**

How does the “Mark 7 Fruit Change Plan” (Examen, confession, repair, accountability) reflect a biblical pattern of **formation** rather than just **trying harder**?

Where do you see echoes of James 5:16, 1 John 1:7–9, or other Scriptures in this approach?

HANDS – “This Is How I Need to Act”

1. **Name One Piece of “Fruit”**

Identify one pattern that has “come out of you” recently—impatience, sarcasm, gossip, envy, defensiveness, harshness.

- What root might lie underneath it (fear, pride, resentment, exhaustion, unbelief)?
- Share it (appropriately) with the group or a trusted friend.

2. **Try the Examen This Week**

Commit to practicing the simple Examen + 4-line journal at least 3 times this week:

- *The fruit I saw today...*
- *The root I suspect...*
- *My confession/prayer...*
- *Tomorrow’s practice...*

When and where will you do this (time of day, place)?

3. **Confession + Repair**

Ask the Spirit to show you one person who has been hurt by “what came out of you.”

- What is one specific step of repair you could take this week (apology, clarification, making something right, honoring someone you’ve neglected)?

4. Write a Simple Plan

Fill in this sentence and, if you're willing, share it with someone who can gently hold you to it:

"When ____ happens, I usually _____. This week, by God's help, I will _____."

What situation will you choose, and what new response do you want to practice?

5. Group Practice: Whole Hearts Together

As a group, choose one shared practice for this month that helps you move from surface religion toward whole hearts (for example:

- starting each meeting with 5 minutes of Examen in silence,
 - building in time for honest confession and prayer,
 - or asking each week, "*What's been coming out of us, and how is Jesus meeting us there?*").
- What practice will your group commit to, and how will you keep it simple and sustainable?

6. Tie It to Our Vision

Chapel Rock's vision is to see "the whole community whole in Christ."

- What is one concrete way you can live that out this week by letting Jesus address your heart, not just your image—so that the "fruit" people taste from your life brings healing instead of harm?