

Home Group Notes
Week of February 22, 2026
Mark 7:1-8:26

“THE CHOSEN”

Watching this TV series has put in picture what we sometimes imagine as we read the Bible. Repeatedly, the author of “Mark” has stories of “amazing” things that Jesus did and taught. This week is no exception. But there is an added scene: confrontation. Have you ever been confronted by another disciple of Jesus? How might confrontation be something that we sometimes need in community?

TIPS FOR UNDERSTANDING

The following are a few comments that might help with understanding the passage.

7:2, 9 “Defiled.” The Pharisees accused the disciples of failing to follow their man-made ritual and thus being ritually “defiled,” which meant that they were unworthy of being before God. In verse nine, Jesus pointed out that they had rejected the commandment of God and established their own traditions. Jesus then gave an example in verse ten.

7:24 Most of the people who lived in Tyre and Sidon were gentiles (not Jews).

7:27: “Dogs?” To call someone a dog was an insult. It was a common slur that the Jews used of gentiles, calling them “dogs.” To Jews, dogs were wild scavengers and not pets. However, the Gentiles did have them as pets. Jesus used a softer form of “dog,” the kind that they would have inside their house. Here, Jesus used this illustration to point out that the Messiah was to come first to the Jews and she got it. She recognized that He was the Messiah (who else could do what she had heard that He could do. So, she knew that He was speaking as the one sent to the Jews first and also understood that this could mean salvation for the gentiles. She recognized that “dogs” didn’t need to wait until the children finished because the crumbs spilled over to them. Jesus recognized her faith and healed her daughter.

7:31 Decapolis was a group of 10 cities populated mostly with gentiles.

8:14-21: “Hardened hearts.” A hard heart was the characteristic of Jesus’ opposition and Pharaoh in Exodus. It points to lack of belief in one’s heart. In this case, Jesus is fully God and the disciples, though seeing God at work, had not yet fully given themselves to belief.

8:15 The “leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod” was spiritual blindness and hardness of heart. They did not see or acknowledge Jesus’ identity, the kingdom of God, not place faith in Him.

READ THROUGH MARK 7:1 – 8:26 AND CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

Our passage begins with a rebuke of the Pharisees. What is Jesus’ main point?

According to 7:15-23, what is the real cause of defilement (i.e. making us unfit to be in God’s presence)? From what we know, what is the ‘cure’ for defilement?

The story of an unnamed gentile woman has a surprising twist. What does she understand and do that is unlike the religious leaders? How is she an illustration of the ‘cure’ for defilement? (7:24-30)

How is the healing of a gentile deaf person appropriate in this setting? (7:31-37)

Jesus' third miracle in Gentile regions was the feeding of 4,000 (8:1-9). How is the response of the gentiles (8:8) a direct contrast with the religious Pharisees (8:11-12)?

The story in 8:13-20 is central to this entire passage. Jesus' primary work was with the twelve. But here, He broke out with a series of questions, beginning with "no bread," that revealed that the disciples were acting more like a Pharisee than like the gentile woman (7:29). What was their danger?

What are the similarities of Jesus' healing miracles in 7:31-37 and 8:22-26?

How do these healing miracles reflect the issues (defects) of the religious leaders (cf. 7:6-9; 8:11-13) and sometimes even the twelve (8:18)?

What does the healing of the blind man illustrate?

DISCUSS HOW WE MIGHT APPLY WHAT WE LEARN

In this passage, we see that Jesus is compassionate (8:2) and yet urgent to confront people with the danger they face (7:18; 8:17). What dangers does He warn about? How do we see these dangers in our world? How are we, as disciples, to continue Jesus' work?

In what ways are we sometimes following the examples of the Pharisees and religious leaders? What false ideas do we sometimes follow thinking that it will make us acceptable to God? Instead, what actions and attitudes does God desire for us?

What is the evidence that we have truly 'seen' and 'heard' Jesus? We began the book of "Mark" with a call to follow Jesus as a 'disciple.' What have we learned that this means?

In this passage, we see Jesus provide truth (instruction), spiritual cleansing, food, and healing. How are we, as disciples, called to continue Jesus' work?

APPLY IT THIS WEEK

Living as a disciple of Jesus means seeing and acknowledging who He is (Son of God, Messiah, Savior, Lord) and following Him. As you walk through your week, how does believing the truth of who He is impact your ways, your decisions, and your priorities?