



Campus Group Discussion Resource

Jesus Interaction Mark 7

Artificial Spirituality

As usual, spend some time praying for God's illumination as you study His word together.

1. What are your thoughts about "artificial intelligence" and chat GPT? Where is it helpful? Where is it troublesome? What does the word "artificial" mean?
2. What is "Artificial Spirituality"? How would you define the word "Hypocrisy"?
3. Review this definition of a Pharisee: *The Pharisees formed the largest and most influential religious-political party in New Testament times. They are consistently depicted in the Gospels as antagonists or opponents of Jesus Christ and the early Christians. The name "Pharisee" means "separated one." The Pharisees separated themselves from society to study and teach the law, but they also separated themselves from the common people because they considered them religiously unclean.* (learnreligions.com).
Who would you liken them to in today's culture? Describe your first encounter with legalism in the church.
4. What unwritten rules have you been aware of either in sports, at home, at work, or in the neighbourhood? What are some spiritual practices we have that are more cultural than Biblical. For example, is it right to dress up for church? Is it right to remove your hat when praying? Why should we never add anything to scripture?
5. Are any of you control freaks? If so, how does that affect your family and friends? Imagine if all of our church leaders were Pharisaical and control freaks. How would that affect our church culture? How would this affect the accomplishment of our mission?
6. Read through Mark 7:1-23. As you do, count how many criticisms Jesus makes of this group. Do you feel he is being overly harsh?
7. Reflect on this statement: *The Pharisees shunned those who had problems with alcohol and shunned people with sexual problems, they shunned those who were having marital difficulty, they shunned young people who were experimenting and rebelling, they shunned those who were dishonest with money and had questionable business practices. And along comes Jesus who acts just the opposite. He hung out with people who struggled with addiction, he welcomed those with confusing sexual problems, he showed compassion to people who had messed up marriages and showed special concern for those who had given in to temptation and even committed adultery. He accepted teens and young people who were rebellious, he invited himself to dinner at Zacchaeus' house,*

a crooked tax collector and shady business man. The Pharisees hated Jesus for this because it went against all of their traditions of being separate from the world. They focused on externals, Jesus focused on the heart.

8. Reflect on this quote from Chuck Swindol - *“The neighborhood bar is possibly the best counterfeit there is to the fellowship Christ wants to give his church. It’s an imitation, dispensing liquor instead of grace, escape rather than reality, but it is a permissive, accepting and inclusive fellowship. It is unshockable. It is democratic. You can tell people secrets and they usually don’t tell others or even want to. The bar flourishes not because most people are alcoholics, but because God has put into the human heart the desire to know someone else, and be known by someone else, to love and be loved, and so many seek a counterfeit at the price of a few beers. “With all my heart I believe that Christ wants His Church to be a fellowship where people can come in and say, ‘I’m sunk!’ ‘I’m beat!’ ‘I’ve had it!’*
9. Review and reflect upon these ideas of why Jesus hates Artificial Spirituality
 - Legalism is a subtle form of idolatry.
 - Hypocrisy of God’s people keeps others from finding true salvation and freedom in Christ
 - Jesus cares more about what is happening in our hearts than our outward displays of spirituality.
10. Review and discuss the following list.

The Dirty Dozen - You may be a Pharisee if...

- You make a special effort to be in church on Sunday’s but rarely think of God the rest of the week.
 - You see worship as an event rather than a lifestyle.
 - You are known more for what you are against than what you are for.
 - You tend to minimize certain sins in your life because you are doing pretty good in other areas.
 - You think in terms of black and whites and not grey.
 - You read the Bible to substantiate your convictions, not to be shaped into God’s image.
 - You believe church outsiders should conform to a certain lifestyle before they are accepted at church.
 - You never invite non-Christians into your home or to church outreach events.
 - All of your Christian friends look, think and act just like you do.
 - When someone tries to rebuke you, or challenges your point of view, you get angry and offended.
 - Your behavior changes depending on your environment.
 - Your external actions exist to cover up an internal unrighteousness.
11. What have you found helpful in keeping you from being like a Pharisee?

12. Reflect on the following quote. What do you like about it?

“The gospel is this: We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope.”

Tim Keller

13. Someone said - *The heart of the problem is the problem of the heart, but the solution is found in Jesus.* What did they mean by this?

14. Reflect on Psalm 139:23-24. What spiritual practices have you found helpful in maintaining authenticity in your faith.

Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

As usual, close your meeting by spending time in prayer. Start with a few minutes of silent prayer where each of you can ask God to search your heart. Then pray for a spiritual authenticity for your group and for our church.