

A black and white image of a city skyline, including skyscrapers and a bridge, is shown upside down at the top of the page. The rest of the background is a plain, light color.

MATTHEW

The Upside umog Kingdom

Matthew 15

Your religion is not as important as your heart



Matthew 15:1-20

What you do matters because it reveals what is in your heart

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The Upside down Kingdom



What you do matters because it reveals what is in your heart

- Jesus encountered some Pharisees who criticized His disciples for breaking their traditions – not God’s law.
- This time it was the ritual of handwashing before meals.
- As holy people, they were not to eat unclean animals or touch unclean things.



What you do matters because it reveals what is in your heart

- If they did touch something or someone who was unclean, they were to wash themselves and their clothes thoroughly and offer a purification sacrifice at the tabernacle.
- God's law also required priests to wash their hands and feet to purify themselves before entering the tabernacle or offering sacrifices (Exodus 30:17–21).



What you do matters because it reveals what is in your heart

- Some Jewish elders developed a tradition of washing hands before and after eating, before worship, before the priestly blessing, and upon waking in the morning.
- In addition to any time you touched something unclean, returning from a cemetery, after intercourse, and other bodily functions.



What you do matters because it reveals what is in your heart

- There were even rules about what kind of water to use, how to purify the water with a specific blessing, how much water to use, how to raise and lower your hands, and exactly how to pour it.
- It said not washing your hands before meals was akin to sleeping with a prostitute.



What you do matters because it reveals what is in your heart

- Jesus showed them how adding these kinds of laws can actually conflict with the moral purpose of Scripture.
- By focusing on the letter of the law, they could miss the spirit.
- God's law gives us biblical principles to follow.



What you do matters because it reveals what is in your heart

- The Pharisees' focused on the laws instead of the principles.
- The letter instead of the spirit created an entire generation of hypocrites – people who honored God with their lips but whose hearts were far from Him (verses 8–9).
- We must take care not to do the same.



Matthew 15:21-28

Jesus' mission was to Israel, but the kingdom of God is for all

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Jesus' mission was to Israel, but the kingdom of God is for all

- In first-century culture, men usually did not speak to women, and Jews did not speak to Gentiles. This woman was a Canaanite (a Gentile) and a woman, so a Jewish man such as Jesus would have had two reasons not to talk to her.
- Also, her daughter was possessed by a demon, which made them both outcasts, even in their own Gentile city.



Jesus' mission was to Israel, but the kingdom of God is for all

- When the Israelites conquered the land, God instructed them to utterly destroy all of the tribes who lived there so that the Promised Land would hold only the people who followed Him.
- Many from the Canaanites tribes lived among them, intermarried with them, and drew them away from worshipping God alone to worship their Canaanite gods, such as Baal and Asherah.



Jesus' mission was to Israel, but the kingdom of God is for all

- Some of the Canaanites chose Israel's God over their own and became heroes of the Old Testament.
- Tamar, Rahab and Ruth were all Canaanite women who even became ancestors of Jesus.
- Matthew specifically included these four women to make a point: Jesus came not only for Jews, but for Gentiles and outcasts.



Jesus' mission was to Israel, but the kingdom of God is for all

- Jesus said His ministry was only to the lost sheep of Israel
- But when He said it wasn't right to take the children's bread and give it to dogs, He wasn't calling her a dog but instead used the word for a beloved pet.
- He was using a play on words to explain the focus of His ministry, test her faith, and teach His disciples an important lesson.



Jesus' mission was to Israel, but the kingdom of God is for all

- She showed she understood that even though she was not a child of Israel, she had value in the Master's eyes.
- She had the humility to accept whatever "crumbs" she could get and did not demand a place at the table.
- Jesus praised her for her great faith and healed her daughter instantly.



Matthew 15:29-39

Jesus also fed the 4,000 thus proving He was God

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Jesus also fed the 4,000 thus proving He was God

- This time Jesus said the crowds had been with Him for three days.
- This time they had more food (7 loaves instead of 5) and fewer people (4,000 instead of 5,000).
- Jesus supplied more than enough, but this time 7 baskets were left over instead of 12 .



Jesus also fed the 4,000 thus proving He was God

- Feeding the 5,000 happened in a Jewish region and 12 baskets of leftovers were collected, symbolic of the 12 tribes of Israel.
- This miracle took place in a Gentile region.
- Seven baskets were left over, symbolic of the seven Gentile nations, the seven nations of the Canaanites in the land before the Conquest (Deuteronomy 7:1–2; Acts 13:19).



Jesus also fed the 4,000 thus proving He was God

- This reiterates the point Jesus had made in the previous story, with the Canaanite woman who was willing to take whatever scraps fell from the table of the kingdom of God.
- In the kingdom of God, there is really no such thing as people who can only eat the scraps that fall from the table.



Jesus also fed the 4,000 thus proving He was God

- All are welcome at God's table, Jew and Gentile (Matthew 22:2–14).
- Kings and prophets will sit next to lepers and notorious women. And there is no scarcity in the kingdom of God.
- God has more than enough to serve everyone to their fullest and have even more leftover (Ephesians 3:20).

The A.R.T. of Survival



- *The A.R.T. of Survival in an age of Chaos*
- Chip Ingram - Living on the Edge
- Attitude - Resource - Theology

Three Observations

- Trials are inevitable - we live in a fallen world, we should not get comfortable with sin but are to seek God (Romans 8:20-21).
- Trials either make us or break us - crisis (tragedy & opportunity), suffering has the ability to drive people away from God or drive them to Him.
- Victims fail to move beyond asking why and remain stuck in their pain - the opposite of a survivor is a victim. Our “why” questions are normal and natural, victims get stuck in them. But we need to ask the “what” questions.

An Attitude to Embrace

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

James 1:2-4

Three What Questions

- What can I control when my world falls apart?
 - *You can't control your circumstances nor the people around you.*
- What must I do to make it through the day?
 - *We must endure. I won't give in. I won't give up.*
- What hope do I have for tomorrow?
 - *Your anchor is not in this world but in heaven.*

A Resource to Ask For

If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.

James 1:5-8

What To Do When You Are Stuck

- God's Offer: Supernatural Wisdom - this is the ability to know what to do, when to do it, and how to do it in the midst of any situation.
- Our Responsibility: We Have to Ask - James directs them to the source of wisdom and tell them to ask God for wisdom and believe they will receive it.
- God's Attitude When We Come: Open and Generous - Christians will do almost anything in their crisis to figure out what they ought to do except ask God in genuine humility for His wisdom.

A Theology to Believe

Believers in humble circumstances ought to take pride in their high position. But the rich should take pride in their humiliation—since they will pass away like a wild flower. For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich will fade away even while they go about their business. Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.

James 1:9-12

Slaying the Dragon of Discouragement

- Discouragement is about losing courage.
- When courage rises up within us, we can face the circumstances.
- Discouragement erodes all our confidence and cause us to lose heart. It convinces us that we're powerless, that nothing will change, that there's no point in even trying.
- We are to have an attitude (joyful endurance), an invaluable resource (supernatural wisdom) and a theology (divine perspective).

Hangin' Tough in Tough Times

- Get God's perspective on your circumstances - see your circumstances through the eyes of **faith**.
- Get God's perspective on your future - look at your future through the lens of **hope**. Paul says he did not lose heart (2 Corinthians 4:16) even though he had been shipwrecked, beaten, imprisoned, persecuted, and abandoned.
- Get God's perspective on your motivation - look at your motivation through the lens of **love**. The disciples, after being beaten, left "rejoicing because they have been counted worthy of suffering" (Acts 5:41).

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