



UNDERSTANDING IN THE HOUSE

Mark 7:17–23 and 9:28–29

¹⁷When He had entered a house away from the crowd, His disciples asked Him concerning the parable. ¹⁸So He said to them, “Are you thus without understanding also? Do you not perceive that whatever enters a man from outside cannot defile him, ¹⁹because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is eliminated, thus purifying all foods?”²⁰And He said, “What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. ²¹For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, ²²thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. ²³All these evil things come from within and defile a man.”

—Mark 7:17–23

²⁸And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, “Why could we not cast [the demonic spirit] out?” ²⁹So He said to them, “This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.”

—Mark 9:28–29

Read Mark 7:17–23 and 9:28–29

Many of the things that Jesus said are hard to understand at first glance. We often find ourselves leaving a passage with more questions than answers. This is not unusual, nor is it wrong. Jesus invited His listeners to think and seek to understand what He was saying. He freely answered questions, clarified His answers, and gave understanding. James 1:5 encourages us to ask God for wisdom: *If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.* Jesus actually wants us to ask for clarification and understanding. He invites us to reason and to seek to understand.

In this week's lesson, we see that it was when Jesus was alone with His disciples and away from the crowd that He clarified to them the meaning of what He taught and the way to spiritual power.

In our lives also, in order to understand the Word of God and allow it to permeate our hearts, it is necessary to spend time alone with Jesus, asking for and receiving understanding.

As you do your lesson this week, ask the Lord for intimate times alone with Him where He can gift you with the grace to understand and receive all that He wants to communicate to you.

1. From Mark 7:17–22, share your thoughts on the following words and phrases:

- a. *Entered a house away from the crowd*
- b. *His disciples asked Him concerning the parable*
- c. *Understanding*
- d. *Do you not perceive*
- e. *Defile*
- f. *Enter his heart*
- g. *Eliminated*
- h. *From within out of the heart of men*

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The heart is a metaphor for the seat of moral decision making. How a person eats (with clean or unclean hands) or what a person eats (clean or unclean food) affects only the digestive tract, so it has no bearing on the moral issues of the soul.²³

- i. *Proceed*
 - j. *Evil thoughts*
 - k. *Adulteries, fornications, murders*
 - l. *Thefts, covetousness*
 - m. *Wickedness, deceit, lewdness*
 - n. *An evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness*
2. Use Mark 7:23 to cite the lesson that Jesus was seeking to clarify.
3. According to Mark 9:28–29, what did Jesus reveal in the house concerning:
- a. The disciples' inability to cast out a demon

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Jesus listed thirteen moral problems to illustrate his point about internal defilement. The first seven are plural and indicate repeated acts. Sexual immoralities (Gk porneio) includes all illicit sexual practices outside marriage. Evil actions is a term for maliciousness. The last six evils are all singular (indicating attitudes). Envy refers to jealousy, covetousness, and a grudging attitude. The word for pride refers to exalting oneself above others. Foolishness is a lack of moral judgment.²⁴

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Prayer and fasting requires spending time with God. This results in stronger faith, and faith is what we need to deal with the enemy. Above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one (Ephesians 6:16).

- b. What is necessary for casting out demons

4. What is your greatest takeaway from Jesus conferring understanding in the house?