

28.56 Jesus and Pharisees (Matthew 15:1–20; Mark 7:1–23)

✓ “Check” it out: opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows
[. . .] indicates a remark to the teacher, not the student. It also indicates answers to questions.

Visuals and Tools:

- Pictures and/or visual aids found at the end of this lesson. Please give credit to the sources of pictures.
- Check also “Activities” and “Handwork” below for additional suggested items.
- Very few visual aids are available for this story/sermon; therefore, three-dimensional figures might be useful. (See photo at the end of this lesson.) However, for this text several verses are illustrated as found below.

Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach: (Print on card stock or cut out the words and glue to card stock.)

- *Pharisees*: law- and tradition-keeping Jewish leaders
- *Jewish traditions*: It was “supposed that when Moses was on Mount Sinai two sets of laws were delivered to him: one, they said, was recorded, and is that contained in the Old Testament; the other was handed down from father to son, and kept uncorrupted to their day. They believed that Moses, before he died, delivered this law to Joshua; they to the Judges; they to the prophets; so that it was kept pure until it was recorded in the Talmuds. In these books these pretended laws are now contained. They are exceedingly numerous and very trifling. They are, however, regarded by the Jews as more important than either Moses or the prophets” (Barnes, <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/barnes/matthew/15.htm>).
- *hypocrite*: someone who is inconsistent in his beliefs
- *Corban*: a gift, usually meant to be a gift devoted solely to God
- *to defile*: to pollute, corrupt, or make sinful
- *parable*: a story with a spiritual meaning; often a parable was not easily interpreted

Scripture: (ESV)

Matthew 15:1 Then Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, 2 “Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat.” 3 He answered them, “And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? 4 For God commanded, ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and, ‘Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.’ 5 But you say, ‘If anyone tells his father or his mother, What you would have gained from me is given to God [Corban], 6 he need not honor his father.’ So for the sake of your tradition you have made void the word of God. 7 You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said:

8 “‘This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; 9 in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’”

10 And he called the people to him and said to them, “Hear and understand: 11 it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth; this defiles a person.” 12 Then the disciples came and said to him, “Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?” 13 He answered, “Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up. 14 Let them alone; they are blind guides. And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit.” 15 But Peter said to him, “Explain the parable to us.” 16 And he said, “Are you also still without understanding? 17 Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and is expelled? 18 But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. 19 For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. 20 These are what defile a person. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone.”

Mark 7:1 Now when the Pharisees gathered to him, with some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem, 2 they saw that some of his disciples ate with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed. 3 (For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands properly, holding to the tradition of the elders, 4 and when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other traditions that they observe, such as the washing of cups and pots and copper vessels and dining couches.) 5 And the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, “Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?” 6 And he said to them, “Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written,

“‘This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; 7 in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’ 8 You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men.”

9 And he said to them, “You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition! 10 For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.’ 11 But you say, ‘If a man tells his father or his mother, Whatever you would have gained from me is Corban’ (that is, given to God)— 12 then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother, 13 thus making void the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And many such things you do.”

14 And he called the people to him again and said to them, “Hear me, all of you, and understand: 15 There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him.” 17 And when he had entered the house and left the people, his disciples asked him about the parable. 18 And he said to them, “Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, 19 since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?” (Thus he declared all foods clean.) 20 And he said, “What comes out of a person is what defiles him. 21 For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, 22 coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. 23 All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.”

Introduction/Review:

In Capernaum Jesus had given His Bread of Life message, called a *discourse*. In this discourse Jesus had made it very clear that He is God. He made statements about Himself that no one else could dare to say— things like, “I am the Bread of God from heaven that gives life to the world; he who comes to Me will never hunger or thirst; all who believe in Me have eternal life; I will raise up believers in the last day; I will ascend to heaven; the words I speak are spirit and life.”

Jesus was saying more and more of this type of thing, and He continued to do signs to authenticate the truth of His words. The response of the people was varied. Some believed. Other followers stopped walking with Him; they were not true disciples.

Story:

Tradition

The response of the Pharisees to Jesus was consistent: they hated Him and tried to catch Him in some suspected error. Even while Jesus was in the vicinity of Capernaum, the Pharisees and scribes came all the way from Jerusalem. [Locate on map.] They noticed that Jesus did not correct His disciples for not keeping a certain tradition—the hand-washing ritual, “for the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands *properly*, holding to the tradition of the elders” (Mark 7:3, emphasis added).

A Bible commentator tells us, “They regarded external purity as of much more importance than the purity of the heart. They had many foolish rules about it respecting the quantity of water that was to be used, the way in which it should be applied, the number of times it should be changed, the number of those that might wash at a time, *etc.*” (Barnes, <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/barnes/matthew/15.htm>).

✓ Apparently, some of the disciples regarded this tradition as silly and didn’t follow it. Therefore, the

Pharisees, considering tradition to be equal with Scripture, asked: “Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat.”

Hypocrisy

Jesus did not respond with a mild answer. Rather, He retorted, “Isaiah prophesied of you hypocrites very well when he wrote, ‘This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. They worship me in vain (for nothing), teaching as doctrines (God’s truths) the commandments of men.’ That’s what Isaiah said, and that’s what you do: you leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men. You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition!” Handwashing, therefore, was a tradition, not a doctrine. But Jesus was concerned about even more important doctrines they had traded off for tradition.

He said, “For example, Moses said, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and he also said, ‘Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die [Leviticus 20:8].’ But you have a way *not* to honor your father and mother. ✓When your parents are old and in need of your help, you follow the tradition of the Jews by saying to your parents, ‘I cannot give you any help, for my ✓extra money is Corban—it’s given to God and cannot be used to help you.’ Thus, you substitute your tradition for the clear command in the Word of God. Many such things you do.”

A parable

Then Jesus called the people to him again and said to them, “Hear me, all of you, and understand: Nothing outside a person that you put into him by mouth—✓like a little dirt on the hand as one eats one’s food—can defile him, but the things that come out of a person’s mouth defile him.”

At this point Jesus and His disciples left the people and entered a house. Inside the house, the disciples, ✓perhaps still not free of their long-held high regard for the Pharisees, asked Jesus, “Do you know the Pharisees were offended when they heard You talking?”

Jesus answered, “Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up.”

Let’s stop and look at this statement for a moment. It’s another proclamation to go along with those made in the Bread of Life discourse. Stated in a negative way, “Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up” corresponds to “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him” (John 6:44) and the positive, “All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out” (John 6:37). An added dimension comes in the new statement: Those not called will be rooted up—destroyed—just as a rooted up plant cannot live.

Was Jesus concerned about what the Pharisees thought? No! They were not given to Him, and they were proving it by being against Him. “Let them alone,” Jesus said. “They are blind guides leading blind people. If the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit. ✓They refuse to believe on Me; they all will perish.”

The short parable Jesus had given was this: “Nothing that goes into the mouth defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth; this defiles a person.” Jesus had prefaced the parable with this admonition: “Hear and understand.” Well, the disciples had *not* understood; so Peter asked Jesus to explain.

“Are you *also*, like the Pharisees, without understanding?” asked Jesus. “Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him since it does not enter his heart—the spiritual part of him—but enters his stomach and is expelled from his body? Rather, what comes out of a person—out of his heart—that is what defiles him. Listen to a list of the things that show a person to be defiled; these are things that come out of a defiled heart: evil thoughts, immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone.”

Oh, what good teaching Jesus gives us! It may not agree with popular opinion, but it is right because it comes from the God Man.

Lessons from this lesson:

- Mark 7:19 adds the comment, “Thus he declared all foods clean.” Here Jesus informs us that dietary restrictions are removed under the New Covenant.
- We must be careful not to treat our own traditions as equal with Scripture.
- External religion is worthless; true devotion to Jesus Christ is right and good.
- Keep your heart right, for “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks” (Luke 6:45).
- Honor to parents continues throughout their lives and after their deaths.

Activities:

- Play dough: hands; heart
- Discuss some instances in which students might equate traditions with Scripture. Examples: girls should never wear slacks; it’s wrong for men to grow beards; some holiday traditions, particularly at Christmas, overshadow Biblical truth. Be aware that Scripture *does* set precedent for things like modesty and honoring the Lord’s Day. We are not free to do all we wish but always to bring glory to God.
- In a safe area, blindfold students who will lead other blindfolded students. Discuss that this demonstrates how false teachers lead people astray.
- Review questions: (Game: Attach a paper hand with fingers folded down to a stiff paper or cardstock. If a student answers a question correctly, [s]he straightens out a finger, beginning with the little finger and going in order. Use two hands if playing with teams.)
 1. What question did the Pharisees and scribes ask Jesus? [Why do your disciples not wash their hands, breaking the traditions of the fathers?]
 2. Jesus responded with one of the Ten Commandments. Which one was it? [Number 5—Honor your father and your mother.]
 3. Fill in the blank of this Old Testament Scripture. “Whoever reviles father or mother must surely _____.” [Die.]
 4. What is Corban? [Saying something is devoted to God so that resources might not be used for another cause like helping parents.]
 5. Fill in the blanks from Isaiah. “This people honors me with their _____, but their _____ is far from me.” [Lips; heart.]
 6. What was Jesus’ parable? [Nothing that goes into the mouth defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth defiles a person.]
 7. How does something coming out of the mouth defile a person? [The origin is the heart full of sin; when it comes out of the mouth, the person is defiled.]
 8. The disciples were concerned about what regarding the Pharisees? [That the Pharisees were offended by Jesus’ teaching.]
 9. To what did Jesus liken the Pharisees? [Blind leaders of the blind.]
 10. What happens when false teachers lead others astray? [They all are condemned.]

Handwork:

- Trace hands or draw a heart on a piece of paper. On the hands or heart write, “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks” (Luke 6:45).

Memory Verse:

- Luke 6:45—The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

Pharisees

Jewish traditions

hypocrite

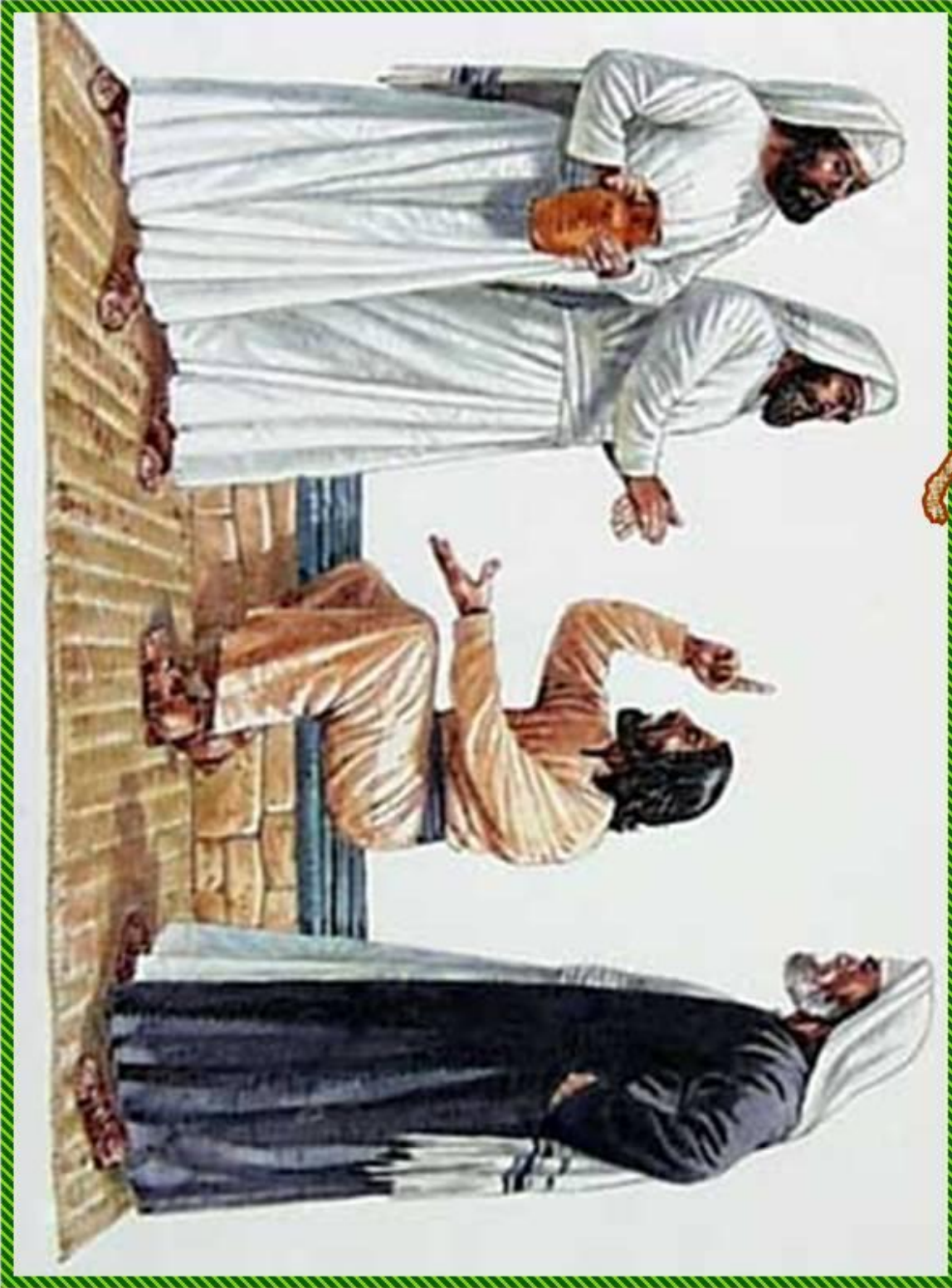
Corban

to defile

parable

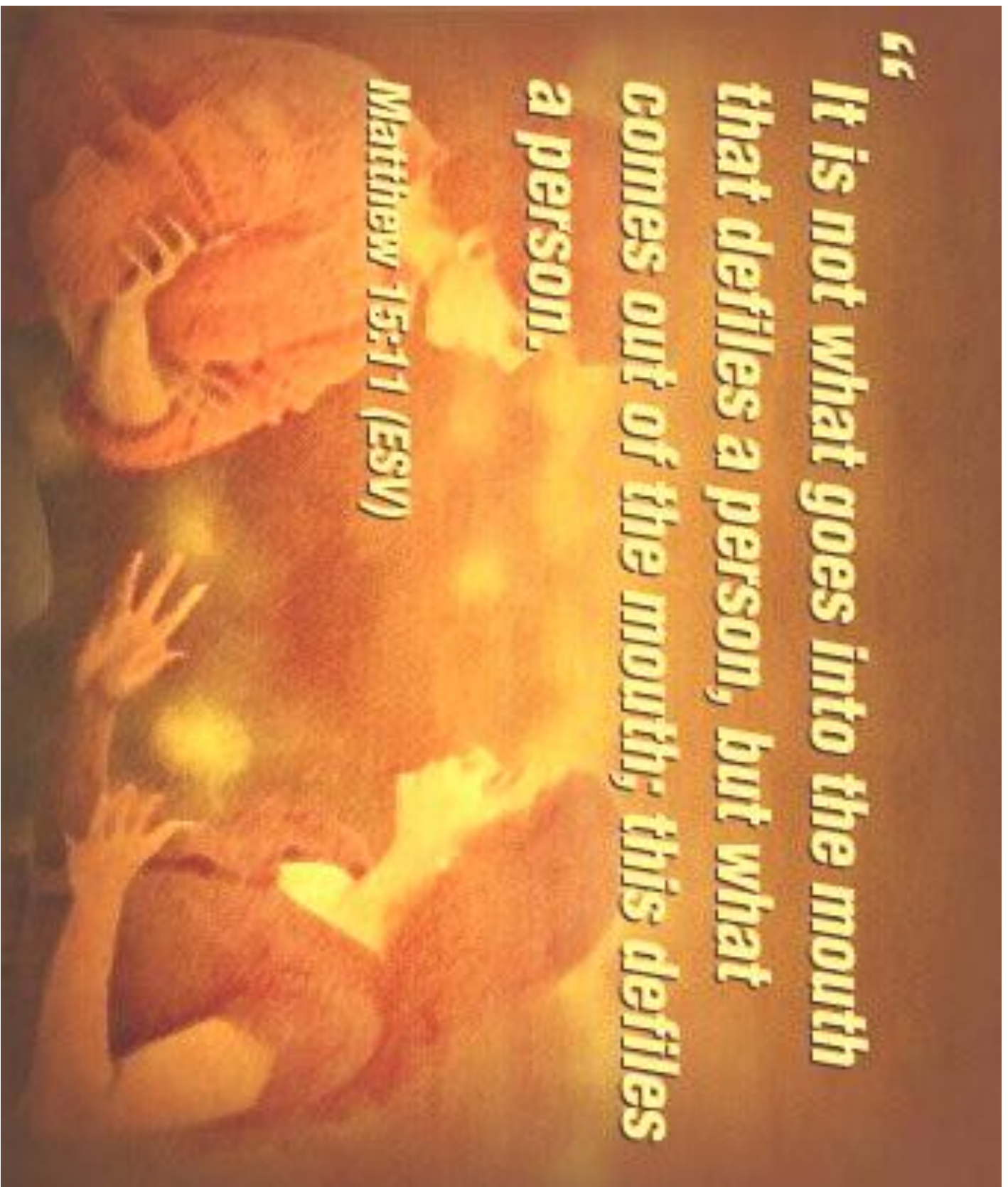
TRUTH OR TRADITION

TRUTH



**“ It is not what goes into the mouth
that defiles a person, but what
comes out of the mouth; this defiles
a person.**

Matthew 15:11 (ESV)





adultery

murder

evil thoughts

**Sexual
immorality**

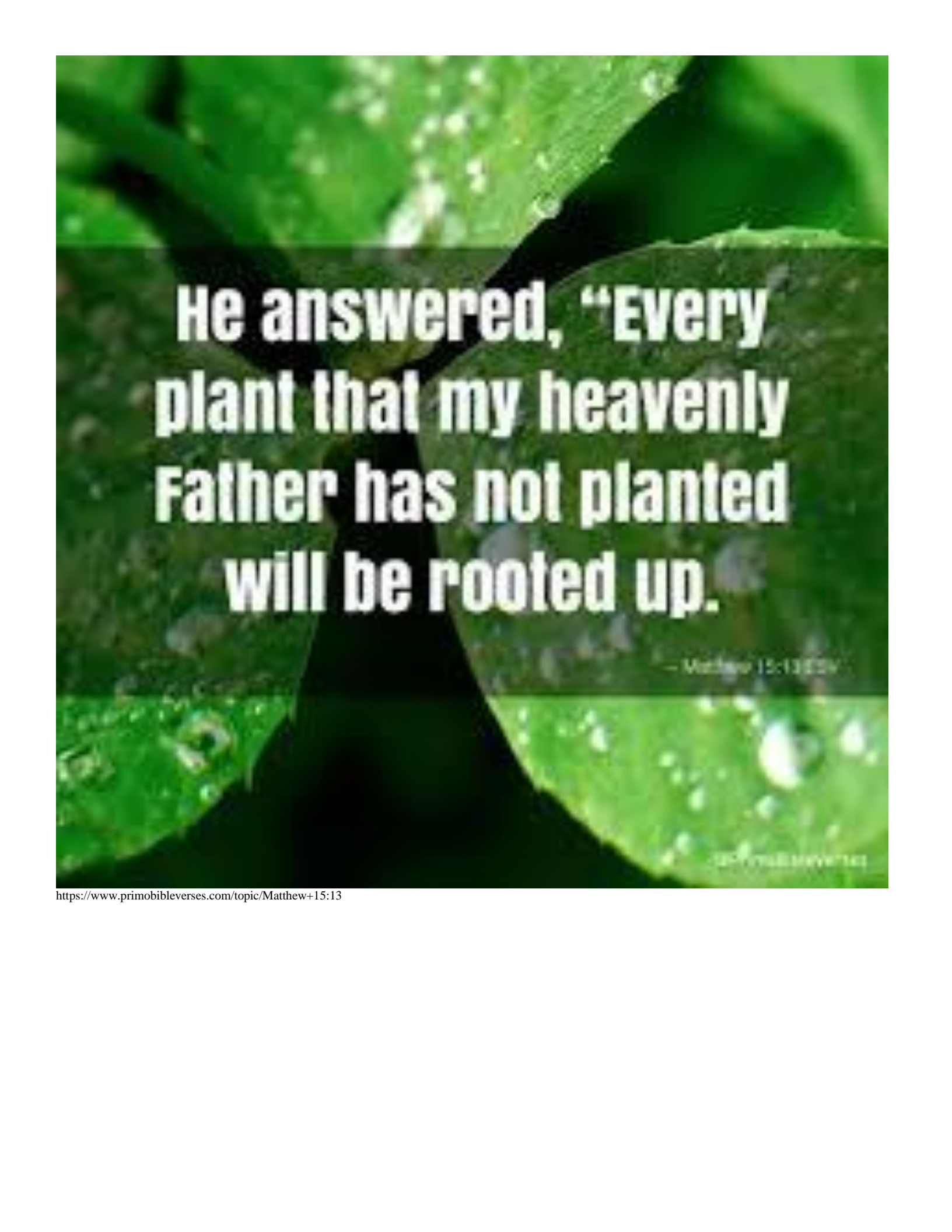
**For out
of the
heart
come**

theft

false testimony

slander

**These are what make
a man unclean...**

A close-up photograph of several vibrant green leaves. The leaves are covered in numerous clear water droplets of varying sizes, which catch the light and create a sparkling effect. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green, making the foreground leaves stand out. The overall mood is fresh and natural.

**He answered, “Every
plant that my heavenly
Father has not planted
will be rooted up.**

— Matthew 15:13 (ESV)

©2017 PrimalBible.com



