Sunday 19th May – Connect Group Notes

## The Heart of the Matter

Mark 7: 1-23

*Please feel free to use those questions you think will be of most help.*

Responding to criticism (vv1-7)

The Pharisees were a group within Judaism that started approx. 150 BC which explains why they weren’t mentioned in the Old Testament the last book of which was written about 400 BC. Whatever good intentions they might have had at the beginning they had developed an extremely legalistic approach by the time of Christ and were very powerful within the Sanhedrin even though they were in a minority.

1. Why do you think Jesus responded so sharply to the Pharisees’ questioning of the disciples’ behaviour especially in contrast to his attitude to the Phoenician woman later on in the chapter?

2. Jesus was a Jew so was challenging leaders of his own faith. Do you think it is ever right to challenge Christian leaders? If so, on what basis? Is there anything we can learn from the way Jesus responded?

Seeing beneath the surface (v8)

3. What can we learn from the way Jesus moved from the apparent issue (being ceremonially clean) to the real issue (the relative importance of tradition and God’s commands)?

Tradition v God’s command (vv9-13)

4. What role do you think tradition has in life generally and within the church specifically? Is that good? When might adhering to tradition be a problem? Can you give any examples perhaps including a modern equivalent of Corban?

5. How do we ensure that we don’t put human tradition above God’s commands?

Being truly clean (vv14-23)

7. God looks on the inside not the outside, e.g. think of God’s call to David via Samuel. Do we make judgments based on outward appearances?

8. What picture does Jesus use to illustrate how God views whether people are clean or unclean?

9. Are we concerned too much with how other people see us rather than making sure our hearts are right?

10. How does the gospel of Jesus enable this to happen and what help does God provide to make this a daily reality?