

# 7

## *Jesus Corrects*



*What are some social customs or traditions you were taught to follow?*

**QUESTION 1**

#BSFLjesus

*Jesus calls us to a higher standard.*



## THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

Oil plays an important part in our lives and our economy. Just try driving your car this week without oil and gas in the tank. You can't!

While oil serves us well, it can also be the source of great problems. The worst accidental oil spill in the world occurred in 2010 in the Gulf of Mexico when the Deepwater Horizon drilling rig exploded. Over 200 million gallons of oil coated 572 miles of beaches and wildlife. Marine life was killed, and hundreds of birds became coated with the thick oil and died.<sup>3</sup>

Traditions are like oil. Both are good, but we don't want them coating things they have no business coating. Sometimes we can let traditions and social customs coat and choke out other areas of life. Many religious traditions have value, but when they cover up and hide the commands and the grace of God, it's like an oil spill in our hearts.

Just as clean-up crews work swiftly to clean up an environmental disaster, Jesus stepped in with the gospel. He rebuked and corrected the thinking of the religious leaders, whose traditions created a spiritual disaster.

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# WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

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## Mark 7:5-8 (CSB)

**<sup>5</sup> So the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, “Why don’t your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders, instead of eating bread with ceremonially unclean hands?” <sup>6</sup> He answered them, “Isaiah prophesied correctly about you hypocrites, as it is written: This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. <sup>7</sup> They worship me in vain, teaching as doctrines human commands. <sup>8</sup> Abandoning the command of God, you hold on to human tradition.”**

What we know as the Old Testament was known to the Jewish people as the *Tanakh* (their Hebrew Bible). It was divided into three parts: the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. It is all God’s Word, but the first portion—also called the *Torah*—held a special place in the hearts of the Jewish people. In the Torah, God provided the prescription for how His people were to live. It contains the Books of Genesis through Deuteronomy, and is referenced in other parts of the Old Testament simply as “the Law.”

As rabbis taught the Torah, many saw fit to supplement it with additions. Sometimes these additions would be simple things such as insights and comments on certain passages. At other times, however, the rabbis would add more laws around the ones God gave so that they would be sure not to violate one of His commands.

For example, God’s command about the Sabbath says, “You must not do any work—you, your son or daughter, your male or female servant, your livestock, or the resident alien who is within your city gates” (Exodus 20:10). The purpose for this command was to set aside time for worship, spiritual reflection, and physical rest in order to be rejuvenated for the work week ahead.

To ensure they obeyed this beneficial command, the rabbis went into detail trying to determine what constituted “work.” They identified actions such as drawing water from a well, slaughtering animals to feed the family, or picking barley from a field as “work.” Consequently, they determined such actions were

***What are some factors that cause modern Christians to neglect God’s commands?***

### QUESTION 2

punishable offenses. The original intent of the Sabbath—resting and re-focusing on the Creator—was replaced with a legalistic set of rules that went far beyond the purpose of the command.

The Jews had no stricter enforcers of these added rules and regulations than the Pharisees. So when they saw Jesus' disciples "eating bread with ceremonially unclean hands," (v. 5) they were quick to point it out to Jesus. Their intent was not to correct an error but to discredit Jesus.

Jesus, of course, saw the motivation of their hearts and responded with ultimate wisdom. He quoted Isaiah 29:13 and then punctuated the truth from God's Word by calling them "hypocrites." Hypocrites were Greek actors who played roles on stage but wore masks to hide who they really were. And these Pharisees acted a deeply religious role but hid their dark, prideful hearts. Outward acts of piety without inwardly God-centered motivations are empty, like actions done by people putting on a play.

In their prideful zeal to keep their own oral traditions, the Pharisees neglected the true purpose and intent of God's commands. Obedience to God begins with humility, and that begins in our hearts.

### Mark 7:9-13 (CSB)

**<sup>9</sup> He also said to them, "You have a fine way of invalidating God's command in order to set up your tradition! <sup>10</sup> For Moses said: Honor your father and your mother; and Whoever speaks evil of father or mother must be put to death. <sup>11</sup> But you say, 'If anyone tells his father or mother: Whatever benefit you might have received from me is *corban*'" (that is, an offering devoted to God), <sup>12</sup>"you no longer let him do anything for his father or mother. <sup>13</sup> You nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many other similar things."**

The Pharisees had hoped to discredit Jesus, but Jesus turned the tables on them and discredited their own actions. In verses 9-13, He showed how they also twisted God's Word.

In verse 10, Jesus mentioned two commands tied to parents:

- » "Honor your father and your mother" (Exodus 20:12).
- » "Whoever curses his father or his mother must be put to death" (21:17).

***What sorts of things might tempt people to twist God's commands?***

### QUESTION 3

To understand how the religious leaders twisted these commands, let's look at the rabbinical practice of corban. Corban referred to a gift dedicated to God; it was a serious vow in which a person devoted property or money to God. It couldn't be given to anyone else. The Pharisees created a loophole, though. In order to appear righteous, a Pharisee might declare everything he had as corban—designated for use by God. But he might not give it to God at that very moment—he could still use it for himself!—but he essentially put it on reserve for future use in the temple.

The Pharisees used this as a loophole to skirt obligations they had to other people, namely their parents. In a modern context, it would be like a person who has \$10,000 in a savings account. He declares that he is devoting the money to God, but only later, so that he can still use it for the present time. One day his parents admit they are struggling financially and need some help. Their son responds, "I'm sorry, but I have no money to give you!" His commitment with his money is not so that God can have it, but so that he doesn't have to give it to anyone else.

The result of this kind of hypocrisy is a catastrophe. By twisting the meaning of the Scripture, Jesus said, the Pharisees "nullify the word of God" (v. 13). To nullify something renders it useless, and that is a serious action indeed against God's Word.



**Mark 7:14-15 (CSB)**

***How would you summarize Jesus' teaching in verses 14-15?***

**QUESTION 4**

**<sup>14</sup> Summoning the crowd again, he told them, "Listen to me, all of you, and understand: <sup>15</sup> Nothing that goes into a person from outside can defile him but the things that come out of a person are what defile him."**

Jesus had been speaking directly to the Pharisees and scribes, exposing the corruption and defilement in their religious system. Jesus now turned to the larger crowd gathered to help them see the greater principle that applies to all of us.

This whole conversation began when the religious leaders had confronted Jesus because His disciples had dirty hands. But Jesus turned it around and showed that these same Pharisees and scribes had dirty hearts. Because the Pharisees wanted to talk about defilement, Jesus would talk about defilement. Anything defiled was considered common, impure, desecrated, or unclean. It turned out the Pharisees' accusation—that not washing hands made a person unclean—was not defilement at all. Jesus made this clear: "Nothing that goes into a person from outside can defile him but the things that come out of a person are what defile him" (v. 15).

Essentially, the Pharisees were taking measures to appear clean on the outside, but they remained defiled on the inside. Physical actions can only affect physical things. Washing with water might fix physical "corruption," like dirty hands, but outward practices like rituals and ceremonies cannot cleanse us on the inside. Sin comes from what is already residing in our hearts—and that calls for an inward, spiritual solution.

Jesus calls us to a higher standard than mere human or religious practices. We can do things that look good or religious, but nothing good inherently lives in us. We become clean on the inside when we allow Christ to transform us. He makes us righteous in Him. "He made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

***How does this passage reveal the difference between the teachings of Jesus and “religious” behavior?***

**QUESTION 5**

## IN CHRIST ALONE



***When you think about 2 Corinthians 5:21, what captures your attention? Describe, list, or sketch your response below.***

“He made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God”  
(2 Corinthians 5:21).

## LIVE IT OUT

How will you respond to this passage?

- » **Evaluate your daily life.** On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being “never” and 10 being “always”), how often are you influenced by religious behaviors instead of Jesus’ teachings? Ask God for wisdom and the ability to focus more on Jesus and His teachings.
- » **Commit to study.** The only way to root yourself in Jesus’ truth is to read the Bible regularly. Starting today, spend fifteen minutes reading the Bible. Begin in the Gospel of Mark. Set aside time each day and soon you’ll see a big change in your understanding of Jesus and His teachings.
- » **Prioritize God’s Word.** As a group, collect donations to purchase Bibles for the purpose of giving one to guests and new group members who may not have one. This demonstrates the priority your group places on God’s Word and the focus of your gathering.



The Bible has much to say about the pollution and corruption that coats our hearts. Unlike an oil spill, you cannot see it, smell it, or measure it. **Thankfully, Jesus confronts our sin and offers us righteousness that’s only found in Him.**

*My thoughts*





## ATTRIBUTES OF GOD: HE IS TRIUNE

BY JEN WILKIN

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with all of you” (2 Corinthians 13:13, HCSB).

As a Bible teacher, I sometimes get my thoughts tangled in a very public way, with humbling results. Once, as I was in the middle of making a point about Christians not holding animosity toward one another, I invented (and used with vigor) the term “animositorious”—you know, the adjective form of “animosity.” It was a word I coined in a moment of necessity to clarify a truth. Strangely, it hasn’t entered into general usage.

The word “triune” is also a term formed out of necessity to clarify a truth, combining the Latin words for “three” and “one.” It isn’t in the Bible. It’s a word coined to articulate a truth that is both undeniably present

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in the Bible and foundational to our understanding of God: He is one in essence, but three in person. Father, Son, and Spirit exist eternally as distinct persons sharing essential sameness. They are simultaneously and eternally three and one. And though the word “triune” has certainly entered into general usage, it is an attribute of God that is notoriously hard to wrap our heads around.

I can't explain every nuance of what makes the Trinity the Trinity, but what I do know inspires worship. By its nature, the Trinity is bent on relationship—first, with themselves and second, with us.

*We are created in the image of a relational God to be relational beings.*

Though humans know times of loneliness, God has never been lonely. For all eternity, the Father, Son, and Spirit have existed in perfect communion, perfect community. Loneliness is a foreign concept to the Godhead. So it makes sense that those created in His image would find loneliness painful. We are intended for communion with God and community with others. It makes sense that the creation is not pronounced “very good” until the man is no longer alone. We are created in the image of a relational God to be relational beings—to need God and to need each other.

Of course, sin severed those relational connections in the Garden. We chose autonomy over community. But the Triune God acted (and still acts) to restore us to fellowship with Him, and thereby to others. Each member of the Trinity has a unique part to play in this salvific work.

**God the Father initiates our salvation.** He announces a plan for restoration, even while the taste of the forbidden fruit still lingers on the lips of our parents, Adam and Eve. He promises the seed of the woman who would crush the head of the serpent (Genesis 3:15). In the fullness of time, He sends the Son for our redemption. The Father determines the means of our return to fellowship.

**God the Son accomplishes our salvation.** He takes on flesh and is born of a woman. The Son, now incarnate as the God-Man, achieves salvation on our behalf. Christ lives a sinless life in our place. Christ dies the death of a criminal in our place. Christ rises from the dead as the first to conquer death, and now sits victorious at the right hand of the Father. The Son opens the way for our return to fellowship.

**God the Spirit applies our salvation.** Sent together by the Father and Son, He takes up residence in the temple of our bodies. He sanctifies us, daily applying grace to the sin that still besets us, making known to us the path of righteousness, teaching us to obey, and conforming us to the image of the Son. The Spirit ministers the grace that seals our return to fellowship.

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Why God does any of these things is a mystery of the highest order. He does not need humans to fill a relational void, or even to have an object for His

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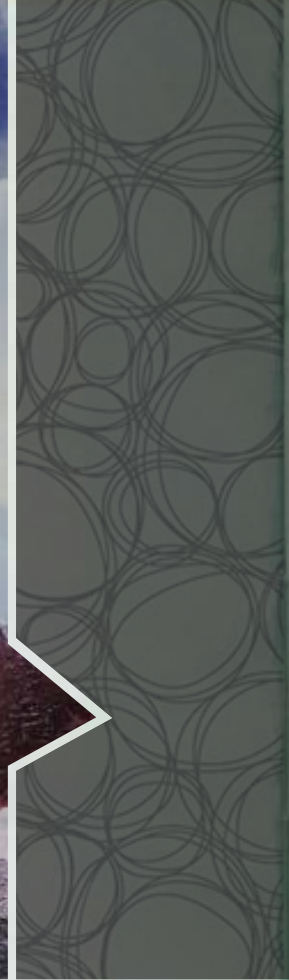
love. Though His every relational need is met in Himself, He seeks relationship with us “according to His good pleasure.” But not according to any desirable quality in us.

How astonishingly comforting to realize that He extends loving fellowship to us without needing anything in return. *Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to thy cross I cling.* And because of that cross, the Triune God invites us to participate in the joyful communion He has inhabited and will inhabit through all eternity—a communion secured for us by the by the sovereign will of the Father, the submissive obedience of the Son, and the steadfast indwelling of the Spirit.



**Jen Wilkin** is a speaker, writer, and teacher of women's Bible studies in Dallas, Texas. Her passion is to see women become articulate and committed followers of Christ, with a clear understanding of why they believe what they believe, grounded in the Word of God. She is the author of *Women in the Word: How to Study the Bible with Both our Hearts and our Minds* and *None Like Him: 10 Ways God Is Different from Us*. Her family calls The Village Church home.

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## SPIRITUAL MATURITY IS NOT A QUICK FIX

BY ROB TIMS

I was four years old and riding in the front seat (without my seat belt) when my mother pulled the car up to the drive-thru window. I quickly leaned across her lap and smiled at the lady in the window and said, “I want a cheeseburger and french fries.” She and my mother both laughed at my order because we weren’t at McDonald’s, Wendy’s, Burger King, or Backyard Burgers: we were at the bank.

Of course, my mother was also a little embarrassed. Four years of age is a little too young to be so familiar with fast-food establishments. But mothers everywhere can testify to the enticing value a fast-food restaurant brings to a family in need of a quick fix to their hunger problem.

In fact, most of the things I buy or consume offer a quick fix. I use a mobile phone because I want to have the conversation now. I have a laptop because I want to write the article now. I order drip coffee

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because I want the drink now. I choose nonstop flights because I want to get there now. The quicker I can be satisfied, the better.

*The consistent testimony of Scripture is that spiritual formation is a marathon, not a dash.*

I often take the same approach when it comes to satisfying a spiritual need. Maybe I'll be in a drought of indifference. Maybe I'll be suddenly repentant of a gross sin. Maybe I'll have the sudden urge to see my children saved. Regardless of the motive, when I become fully conscious of a spiritual problem, I demand from God a quick fix.

To be sure, God is capable of such a thing. But the consistent testimony of Scripture is that spiritual formation is a marathon, not a dash. We long for the faith of Abraham, but are we willing to wait decades for God to fulfill His promise? We long for the influence of Joseph, but are we willing to experience multiple injustices to gain it? We want to be like Moses, but are we willing to wait 80 years before God uses us in a mighty way? We want to be as fervent in our faith as Peter, but are we willing to sit at Jesus' feet for years and hear teaching that harnesses our passion?

Genuine spiritual formation is anything but a quick fix. We must be willing to experience and endure multiple and significant things that will seem to delay our spiritual maturity but are actually essential for it. We might be looking for a spiritual drive thru, but God is a master chef. He's cooking up something much better for us than what we might have in mind.

The question is if we are willing to wait.

**Rob Tims** has been married to Holly for nearly 20 years. They have four children: Trey, Jonathan, Abby, and Luke. He has served in the local church for 20 years as a children's pastor, student pastor, and senior pastor. He currently serves on a team at LifeWay Christian Resources that develops customized Bible studies for groups and teaches two classes for Liberty University School of Divinity Online. He is the author of the book *Southern Fried Faith: Confusing Christ and Culture in the Bible Belt*.

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