

Foolish Rules Made by People

(Based on Mark 7:1-23, Matthew 15:1-20,
John 7:1, Luke 11:37-54)

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One day a bunch of phony religious Pharisees came to Jesus all in a huff. "We just saw a most despicable thing! We saw your disciples eat bread, and they didn't wash their hands first!"



The Pharisees washed their hands, their cups and bowls a certain way. Everything had to be just so. Some of their ancestors had made this a rule and the Pharisees obeyed every time.



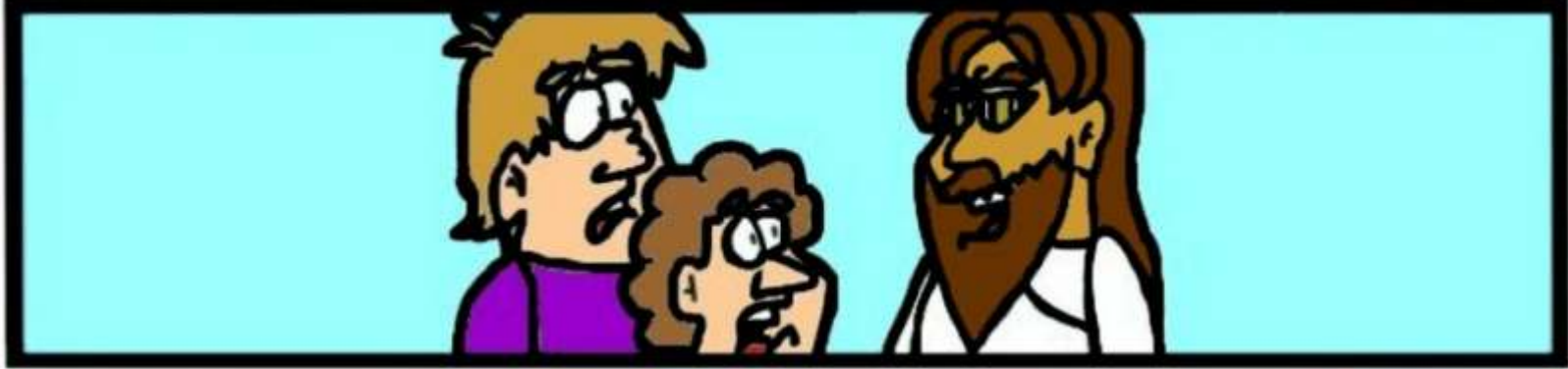
"You play actors!" said Jesus. "You worship God with your words but your heart is far away from him. You don't care at all about God's rules, but you hold tight to rules made by people!"



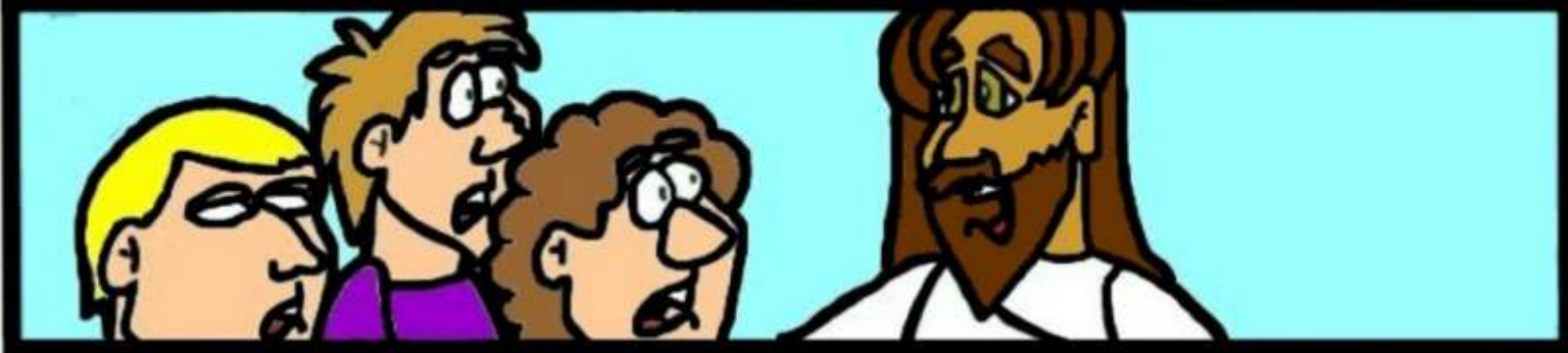
"God said to honour your father and your mother, but you say that people don't have to as long as they give what they should have given to their parents, to God instead. You took the power away from the Word of God by holding onto your traditions."



"Everybody come to me," said Jesus as he gathered the crowd around him. "Hear me and understand what I'm saying. Not what goes inside a person's mouth makes him dirty but what comes out of a person's mouth."



"Master, the Pharisees are really cranky with you," said the disciples. "Leave those Pharisees alone. They are blind people trying to guide other blind people. They will both fall into the ditch," answered Jesus.



"You guys don't understand?" asked Jesus. "The things that go into a person's mouth, go into the stomach and get flushed down the toilet. But evil thoughts, murder, sexual sins and pride come out from the heart. They make a person dirty inside."



Another time Jesus was invited to dinner by a Pharisee. "Humpfff!!!!!! Did you see that?!!! Did you see that?!!! Jesus didn't wash his hands before dinner!" gasped all the Pharisees who were also invited for dinner.



"You Pharisees clean the outside, but inside you are full of evil!" said Jesus. "You love rules, except the ones about treating people fair and loving God!" The Pharisees asked many questions. They hoped Jesus would say something foolish.



Lord, help me to remember that you look at our hearts. If I have a clean heart then I will do good things.