

## Three Steps to a Thoroughly Clean Home

Spring is here! I am so happy to see robins and... the ground! The snow is gone, the sun is shining, and I have the urge to clean.

Spring cleaning is a tradition, a rite of spring as much as daffodils and tulips.

Jesus was often accused of violating tradition even though He said He did not come to do away with the Law. Matthew 5:17 says, "Don't suppose that I came to do away with the law and the Prophets. I did not come to do away with them, but to give them their full meaning."

His life and death were the ultimate fulfillment of this verse, but He also taught the Jewish people the full meaning of the laws they were attempting to keep. For example, in the rest of Matthew chapter five He is doing just that.

But in Matthew 15, the Pharisees from Jerusalem are paying Him a visit. It is not a friendly one. They have either heard or witnessed that Jesus' disciples were not washing their hands before they ate. They demanded to know why. This is not like getting scolded by your mom. The Pharisees were authorities on church rules and taught adherence to those rules. Washing your hands before you ate was one of those rules. They believed that if you touched food, your meat or your bread, with unclean hands that it defiled the food and therefore defiled the man through the eating of it.

The Pharisees were one of three divisions in the Jewish religion. The other two were the Essenes and the Sadducees. At the time of Jesus' ministry, the Pharisees were the most popular. They endorsed extreme attention to detail in observing the law. Obedience is good, but Jesus did not have much good to say about their interpretation of His law. The Pharisees tweaked the rules to their favor in a way that did not represent the nature of God's word. In Matthew 23:24-25, Jesus called them blind leaders and show-offs. "You wash the outside of your cups and dishes, while inside there is nothing but greed and selfishness." (CEV)

Imagine only washing the outside of our cups, dishes, pots and pans. Gross. That is what Jesus saw when He looked into the Pharisees' heart.

Jesus' responds to their question with a question of His own in Matthew 15:3. He doesn't wait for them to answer but rebukes them by pointing out their failure to obey the law in its entirety and exposing the immorality of their teaching. When He does answer their question, He does not address them directly. That had to sting their pride. Jesus calls to the people in the crowd to listen as He instructed them on clean and unclean.

"What goes into a man's mouth does not make him 'unclean,' but what comes out of his mouth, that makes him unclean." Matthew 15:11 (NIV)

His answer made the Pharisees and the teachers of the law angry. When the disciples told Jesus this, He advised them to ignore the offended men because "they are blind guides. If a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit." Matthew 15:14 (NIV)

The disciples did not want to be one of the men falling into a pit (hell) so they got Peter to ask Jesus to explain the parable to them. Jesus couldn't believe they didn't get it. He gave them a lesson on anatomy.

“Don’t you see that whatever enters a man’s mouth goes into the stomach and out of the body?”

And then on the kingdom.

But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man ‘unclean.’ For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what make a man ‘unclean.’” (Matthew 15:17-20)

What would Jesus see when He looks inside our cups, our homes? In all our efforts to have a clean house, to maintain order and support a framework for our lives have we considered the atmosphere *in* our home?

Or, like the Pharisees are we guilty of letting greed and selfishness take root in our homes and control the atmosphere we live in? Jesus told the Pharisees to first clean the inside of their cup, then the outside would be clean as well. (Matthew 23:26 CEV)

### **To have a thoroughly clean home we need to know these three things:**

- What is in our homes represents what is in our hearts.
- What is in our hearts comes out our mouth.
- Our words are the evidence of what is in our hearts, and we live the atmosphere we create with our words.

It an easy exercise to wash our hands and declare ourselves clean. Likewise, it is an easy thing to clean our homes and declare them habitable. But it may be uninhabitable for a healthy soul, the spiritual lives of your children, your marriage, relationships or health.

### **It is time to clean the soul of our home.**

What lives there beside clutter, dust and cobwebs? Do evil thoughts, malice, lust, immorality, theft and cheats, false testimonies or slander reside there? We must be as diligent in rooting out these things in our homes as we are clutter. Get rid of everything that falls under one of those categories, and you will find that you have room for the important things.

### **So how do you go about soul cleaning your house?**

- The **first step is to invite** God into the center of your home and giving Him first place there. First place in deciding what you say to each other, how you treat each other, in your emotions and de-votions— what you watch, pursue, listen to and read.
- The **second is to maintain** the atmosphere by giving no place to anything that sets itself up against God’s word and His way.
- The **third is to support** this framework by reading the Bible and doing what it says in an attitude of love and mercy.

If we take these three steps to clean the inside atmosphere of our homes, the rest of our spring cleaning should be a breeze.

