

Lip Service – A Lesson Plan on the Spirit of the Law

Do we really follow Jesus or do we just pay Him lip service? This lesson plan will help youth understand the importance of seeing the heart of God in the spirit of the law.

Background Material

- [Gospel of Mark, The \(Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture\)](#)
- [A Biblical Walk Through the Mass \(Book\): Understanding What We Say and Do In The Liturgy](#)
- [Praying the Rosary Like Never Before: Encounter the Wonder of Heaven and Earth](#)

Game for Lesson Plan on Lip Service

Start with a game of [Pictionary](#). This game is very much like charades, except using drawings instead of acting out the clues. For complete instructions, see [Pictionary Game for Youth Ministry](#).

Here are some ideas for phrases for the game:

- Lip service
- Letter of the Law
- Heart of God
- Wash dishes
- Ten Commandments
- Wash hands
- Eating

Or you can just use random silly words and phrases.

Spirit of the Law vs Letter of the Law

In the Old Testament, God gave the Isrealites many laws. These laws were intended to bring the people closer to God and to keep them safe. But the Pharisees were more focused on the law than their relationship with God.

Let's read the gospel of the day:

[Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23](#) (Jesus speaks about the law) – the Gospel Reading for the [22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year B](#)

When the Pharisees with some scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus, they observed that some of his disciples ate their meals with unclean, that is, unwashed, hands.

– For the Pharisees and, in fact, all Jews, do not eat without carefully washing their hands, keeping the tradition of the elders. And on coming from the marketplace they do not eat without purifying themselves.

And there are many other things that they have traditionally observed, the purification of cups and jugs and kettles and beds. –

So the Pharisees and scribes questioned him, “Why do your disciples not follow the tradition of the elders but instead eat a meal with unclean hands?”

He responded, “Well did Isaiah prophesy about you hypocrites, as it is written: This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines human precepts. You disregard God’s commandment but cling to human tradition.”

He summoned the crowd again and said to them, “Hear me, all of you, and understand. Nothing that enters one from outside can defile that person; but the things that come out from within are what defile.

“From within people, from their hearts, come evil thoughts, unchastity, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, licentiousness, envy, blasphemy, arrogance, folly. All these evils come from within and they defile.”

Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

Discussion for Lesson Plan on Lip Service

In this reading, the Pharisees are telling Jesus that he and his disciples are not following the law closely enough. But Jesus reverses the discussion and tell them that they have missed the point.

The Pharisees were very harsh. Not only did they obey the law down to the littlest detail, as they saw it. They expected everyone else to do the same. They looked down on others who weren’t as “observant” as they were. Basically, they used the law to make themselves feel superior to everyone else.

Tradition itself is good. It binds us together in community and connect us to the past. But that can also become a distraction if we use it to feed our ego. It is also a problem when we become so rigidly attached to it, putting it before everything else, including God.

Jesus calls them out for giving the law lip service only. They say they love the law, but they don’t show it in their actions and attitudes to other. He reminds them that the things they are so concerned about are

external things. They need to pay some attention to what is inside them. They need to look at their hearts.

Reflection Questions on the Spirit of the Law

So let's talk about loving God with our hearts.

- Have you ever gone to Mass and not paid attention through a lot of it? How does this relate to the gospel we just read?
- Have you ever prayed the rosary and just recited the words without thinking about God? Or have you ever prayed without thinking?
- What are some other things we do which are doing what we are supposed to, but not letting it bring us closer to God?

It is also good to remember to not look down on others because they are not practicing their faith the way we are. A much better approach is to love them and offer them encouragement as they try to grow. Walking the path of discipleship is difficult for all of us. We can be good example of God's generous loving heart. That is usually more helpful than judgement.

Challenge for Following God with Our Hearts

This week, pick one way to really go deeper in your observance of the faith. Pay better attention at Mass. Or when you pray, really try to stay focused on God. If your current method of prayer is not deepening your relationship with our Lord, try something different like Lectio Divina. Or learn a new prayer and focus on what the unfamiliar words mean. And if you fail, don't be too hard on yourself. Instead, just try again.

Additional Resources for Lesson Plan on Lip Service

- [Lectio Divina](#)
- [Learn a New Prayer](#)
- [Look to Christ, not the law, to receive new life](#)