

## A Study of the Book of Matthew: Chapter 15 v. 15-20

- **15:15-16 “Then Peter answered and said to Him, ‘Explain this parable to us.’ So Jesus said, ‘Are you also still without understanding?’”**
  - Peter is the boldest of the disciples.
    - He is the one who asked to walk on water (**Matthew 14:28**).
    - He is the one who often says what others are thinking but unwilling to speak
      - **Mark 8:29** -
      - **Luke 18:24-28**
    - And here he’s the one to speak up. On behalf of the group, Peter asks for explanation of Jesus’ comments.
    - Every group of students needs someone like Peter: the one brave enough to introduce good questions and show the teacher what level of understanding the group has reached.
  - **“Explain this parable to us.”**
    - Peter's question refers to Jesus' words in verse 11: that only what comes out of the mouth defiles, not what goes in (**Matthew 15:11**).
    - Once again Jesus challenges them to think.
  - **“Are you also still without understanding?”**
    - After all that these men have seen/experienced (His teaching, life, and miracles) they still do you not understand.
    - Even though He has dismissed the religious leader, Jesus does not dismiss His disciples.
    - He takes the time to explain truth to them clearly, giving all of us a better chance to understand His meaning.
- **15:17 “Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated? “**
  - **Simple fact** - Physical food enters into and passes out of the body without affecting man’s spiritual condition.
  - The law of Moses labeled many edible things as unclean. Consuming those things made the person ceremonially unclean, as well, requiring specific actions be declared "clean" again.
    - The Pharisees' traditions included strict rules meant to prevent even unknowingly contacting these unclean items and consequently required hand-washing before eating (**Matthew 15:1–2**).
    - What was the original intent of the “food laws”?
  - According to the Pharisees’ interpretation, if someone unknowingly touched something unclean, washing your hands according to specific guidelines would keep you from accidentally eating that bit of uncleanness.
  - Jesus has rejected that idea, saying it's not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person; it's what comes out of the mouth that does that (**Matthew 15:11**).

- The disciples asked Jesus to explain this; Peter suggested Jesus was speaking in a parable **(Matthew 15:15)**.
    - But this wasn't a parable.
  - Jesus wanted them to understand that what a person eats—the physical substance itself—simply travels through the body.
    - His point is that this is merely a physical process. Food, all by itself, doesn't touch the spirit or soul of a person. It can't cause a person to become sinful.
  - This explanation is not meant to dismiss the dietary requirements of the law of Moses **(Matthew 5:17–19)**.
  - The *food itself* was not the issue, it was whether a person sought to obey God's command that mattered.
  - That is why ritual handwashing did not keep anyone from sinning.
  - Those who *knowingly* ate unclean foods *did become* ceremonially unclean; that uncleanliness was due to their actions and intentions, not mere contact with a physical object.
- **15:18 “But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man.”**
    - The things that come out of the mouth reflects what is in man's heart, and do affect one's spiritual condition.
    - Sin (the thing that defiles a man) already live in us.
      - That defilement is revealed by the words a person says.
      - Words show what is inside a person's heart.
    - Compare this statement to **Matthew 12:33-37**
  - **15:19 “For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. “**
    - **Jesus gives examples**
      - No one has ever committed any of these things without having a corrupt heart.
      - To know the heart, we should look at what a person does.
      - **“You will know them by their fruits” (Mt 7:20).**
      - Works of the Flesh - These are the things which truly defile a person **(Gal 5:19-21)**.
  - **15:20 “These are *the things* which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man.”**
    - The scribes and Pharisees were so concerned with these externals that they were not focused on the internal, spiritual things.
    - The spiritual was the focus of Jesus.
    - Jesus finally answers the Pharisee's question.