



[Matthew 15:18-20](#)

(18) But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man 'unclean.' (19) For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. (20) These are what make a man 'unclean'; but eating with unwashed hands does not make him 'unclean.' "

New International Version

The heart symbolizes our innermost being, the source of our words and actions. Today we call it the mind. When [God](#) awakens us to some of His great truths, when we at last begin to realize the vital importance of righteousness, there is a blush of first [love](#), and we begin to hunger to apply them in our lives. But what is already in the heart fights almost desperately not to be displaced by the new nature in [hope](#) of wearing down our enthusiasm for the [truth](#). Paul illustrates this resistance in [Galatians 5:17](#):

For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.

Why do we not do the things we wish? The answer lies in the extraordinary power of ingrained habits. They are most difficult to break because they have had free sway for so long one unconsciously does what they incite. Paul speaks of this using a different metaphor in [Romans 7:23](#): "But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of [sin](#) which is in my members."

The almost constant persistence of these habits can be depressing. If we seem to be making no progress, life can become downright discouraging. But we must not give in to discouragement. We have everything to gain and nothing to lose except that which is of no value for the [Kingdom of God](#) anyway. Discouragement that feeds frustration only makes Satan's work that much easier for him.

The Berean: Daily Verse and Commentary for Matthew 15:18-20 (<http://www.theberean.org>)

There are things we can do to enhance the initial hunger God gives to us. If we were physically hungry or thirsty, we would give every last ounce of strength we had to find food and water or die in the effort. We must be willing to do whatever it takes to make progress in our quest for God's righteousness.

As adolescents, we were unaware that growth was taking place until someone who had not seen us for a while brought it to our attention. Even though we were not aware we were growing, we still made efforts to grow by eating and drinking the things that promote growth. In the same way, spiritual growth may also seem so slow that we think it is not happening. But we should not let that stop us! We must keep on making the spiritual efforts even as we did the physical, and growth will occur. Keep on praying for others, thanking God for His [goodness](#) and [mercy](#), asking for [wisdom](#), love, and [faith](#). Keep studying God's Word, filling the mind with

Whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. [Philippians 4:8](#))

— John W. Ritenbaugh

To learn more, see:

[The Beatitudes, Part Four: Hungering and Thirsting After Righteousness](#)

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