

Schedule of Meeting Times:

WKAC 1080 AM Sunday 7:30 AM
 Study Sunday 10:00 AM
 Worship Sunday Morn 11:00 AM
 Worship Sunday Eve 5:00 PM
Singing every 2nd Sunday evening
 Study Wednesday 7:00 PM

Preacher / bulletin editor:

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“Now I praise you
 because you remember
 me in everything and
 hold firmly to the
 traditions, just as I
 delivered them
 to you...”

—1 Corinthians 11:2

**Servants during March:**

Songleader: Stanley (2), Larry (9),
 Dwight (16), Stanley (23), Larry (30)

Reading: Stanley

Announcements: Larry

Table: Mike M, Marty, Stanley

Wednesday Lesson: Stanley (5), Kris (12),
 Larry (19), Stanley (26)

Area Meetings:

South Cullman, 3/30-4/2, Josh Welch;

Market Street, 4/6-9, Don Miller

Hays Mill church of Christ

21705 Hays Mill Road

Elkmont, AL 35620

The Bible . Examiner

“Examine everything carefully...” 1 Thessalonians 5:21 NASB

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The Concept of Tradition

By Jim Ward

Several passages highlight the tension that existed in the concept of tradition in Bible times and which continues until now. Two of them are:

“Now I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I delivered them to you,” 1 Cor 11:2 (cf 2 Thess 2:15).

“See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human traditions, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ,” Col 2:8 (cf Mt 15:3,6).

Clearly, the former speaks favorably of tradition and the latter unfavorably.

To understand this topic better, let’s begin by thinking about the word tradition. It has a neutral significance, neither good nor bad. It means “handed down” and in Scripture it usually refers to “a teaching or practice which has been handed down from generation to generation.” The first and

most obvious question to consider is the source of the tradition. From whom was it “handed down,” God or man? The New Testament speaks in a pejorative sense of the “tradition of the elders,” Mt 15:2, the “tradition of men,” Mk 7:8, and the “traditions of my fathers,” Gal 1:14.

So, can we conclude, then, that traditions from God are good, and traditions from men are bad? No, things are not quite that simple. In fact, in my judgment, it would be impossible to conduct the work of God without some human input. To put that another way, the making of human traditions is absolutely necessary.

For example, God has given us very few instructions about conducting church meetings. He has told us what to do: take the Lord’s Supper on the first day of the week, give of our means on the first day of the week, pray, sing, and study the Bible.

However, He has told us next to nothing about how we do these things

together. Must they come in a certain order? If so, what should it be? Granted we must assemble on the first day of the week, but may we assemble at times other than the first day of the week? Must we meet indoors or outdoors? May we borrow, rent, or buy a meeting place? Must a period of time together begin and end with a prayer? How many songs? Can we conclude with a song? Would it be acceptable to put our contributions in a box located at some convenient place in the building, rather than passing a plate or basket? Can a preacher's sermon be interactive; could he pause at various points and ask if there are any questions? True, we must pray through Jesus, but must a phrase such as "in the name of Jesus" be appended to every prayer? Instead of having our pews in a row, could we put them facing each other, with, say, half on one side of the auditorium and half on the other, with the preacher standing in the middle? Can we make announcements during these assemblies? Must they come either before an "opening" prayer or after a "closing" prayer? Could we ever announce anything of a social nature?

Could we devote a Sunday service to the Lord's Supper, with all prayers, songs, and teaching focused on that event? Could we meet to focus on singing, praying, or studying? Midweek services were once primarily devoted to prayer and even called "prayer meetings." Was that acceptable? Was it acceptable to change to something else?

As you can see, the questions are endless. And God didn't give us the answers to these and countless others. He does require us to meet on the first

day of the week. He established the principle of decency and order in our assemblies, 1 Cor 14:40. He forbids "a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man," 1 Tim 2:12. But beyond these things, God has specified little else about our assemblies. To make a practical observation, we can change most things about how we conduct our meetings, since we are the ones who arranged them.

All of this leaves us mainly to our own judgment, and makes it impossible, as I said earlier, to avoid human traditions. So, getting a handle on tradition is not as simple as determining whether they come from God or man. What other Bible teaching, then, can help us in understanding the place of tradition in our spiritual lives? If the making of human traditions is necessary, can they ever become wrong? If so, when? A look at Matthew 15 and Mark 7 will be particularly helpful in answering this question.

A Human Tradition Becomes Sinful When It Breaks a Command of God: Jesus asked the Pharisees and scribes, "And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition," Mt 15:3? He had reference to their tradition of corban. In this practice, the Jews permitted the dishonoring of parents (in violation of Exodus 20:12) by neglecting them in time of need. This was done by telling them, "Whatever you would have gained from me is Corban (that is, given to God)," Mk 7:11. Giving to God was no excuse to neglect one's parents (it still isn't), and to do so is to disobey God. It seems to me that we are not as prone to this kind of error as we are to the next.

A Human Tradition Becomes Sinful When We Make it as Binding as a Precept of God: "Now, when the Pharisees gathered to him, with some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem, they saw that some of his disciples ate with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed. (For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands, holding to the tradition of the elders, and when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other traditions that they observe, such as the washing of cups and pots and copper vessels and dining couches.) And the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, 'Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?'" Mk 7:1-5.

I suppose that it was as okay then as it is now to wash one's hands as a matter of good hygiene (mothers demand it whether God does or not). But it was sinful to bind it as a law of God, and then judge others as unfit servants if they did not do it.

One other danger associated with tradition bears mentioning. That is contempt for each other among

Christians. I believe this is the sin that Jesus condemns in the Sermon on the Mount.

"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire," Mt 5:21,22.


We do this—or at least come close to it—when we speak scornfully of each as traditionalists or tradition breakers. It is right to study together and to try to correct errors we see in each other. It is not right to be full of contempt for each other. Contempt is only a step away from hatred.

Most of our traditions—invitation songs, gospel meetings, ending assemblies with a prayer, etc.—are good things. It's not likely that we are going to abandon them in wholesale fashion. But we made them, and we can change them. Let's remember that. Above all, let's treat each other with respect; we are all children of God.

—Via *Lost River Bulletin*. 

Remember in Prayer

Mike B is no longer on the ventilator, but has a feeding tube due to difficulty swallowing; he is in HH, room 605. **Pam McNatt** will shortly be scheduled for chemotherapy. Please

continue to pray for **Barbara; Betty; Carolyn; Deborah and Serenity; Hazel; Joshua V; Kathy M; Pam B, Julie, Kaylee and Violet; Mark and Vickie Horton; and John, Sylvia, and Paige Pollard.** 

Life is like a cafeteria: choose what you want, but know that you will certainly pay at the end. Choose wisely. (cf Eccl 11:9)
