

## A FAMILY TRADITION

The family of my mother-in-law has a tradition. Every year, on the weekend closest to her mother's birthday, relatives from coast-to-coast converge on the "old home place" for a family reunion. The typical attendance is well over one hundred people even though Big Daddy, Big Mama, a few children and two grandchildren have passed from this life. Why does this tradition continue? Easy, they are taught to attend by the preceding generation. This is an example of a healthy tradition, but not all traditions are such. What about traditions in the Church?

Yes, we even have traditions in our worship services. Here are a few to consider: 1) the order of each of the five elements, 2) do we open with a welcome followed by singing/prayer, 3) the number of songs before prayer, 4) the invitation song and many more. What's wrong with these traditions you may ask? The answer is...maybe nothing. Let's look at some scripture regarding traditions and see what we find.

First, consider Matthew 15:1-9 (Mark 7 also records these events). Here Jesus scolds the Pharisees and scribes regarding their handling of traditions.

*"Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honor thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; And honor not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."*

What was the reason for the rebuke? Was Jesus opposed to hand washing prior to eating; certainly not. He was opposed to teaching "hand washing" or any other such man initiated practice as God's Law. What the Jewish leaders of the day were doing was

teaching that it was sinful and contrary to God's Law to eat without washing. Frequent hand washing, especially before eating, is a healthy habit and should be encouraged. However, it has no place being taught as "an ordinance of God."

In order to rightly apply this principal today, we need to understand the difference between scriptural requirement and scriptural freedom. We are guided through scripture in two primary ways, either by command ("Thou shalt not....") or example. Some would add a third, necessary inference, which can be considered a subset of example. Commands are usually easy to grasp - Paul refers to them as "milk" (Hebrews 5:12, 13). Examples require more discernment but are just as binding. We are not directly commanded to assemble on the first day of the week, however there are at least two clear examples of the early church doing just that (Acts 20:7 and 1 Corinthians 16:2). Also, in both cases one purpose for the assembly was to observe the Lord's Supper.

Further, we are given great freedom to arrange the order of our services. Some prefer to take the Lord's Supper first, some in the middle and still others prefer to wait until the end of the service. Which is the "right way?" The order doesn't matter. The saints that I assemble with in Alabama place the Lord's Supper at the end of the service. This order is completely acceptable, but if we teach that it must be at the end then we have begun to teach tradition as an ordinance of God which is completely unacceptable.

We should also take care that we don't teach by our silence. It is possible to leave the impression on younger generations that our "traditions" are the only way to do things. As a final example, I grew up in the church and had always seen preachers end each sermon with an "invitation song" never realizing that no such song can be found in the scriptures. Singing a song following a speaker is not scripturally a problem. However, if we teach either by command or example that such is a requirement then we have missed the mark.

Man has always had the ability to imagine. Through this gift of God, technologies have been developed that has allowed man subdue this world as God instructed in the beginning. But when we ignore God's word to propagate an innovation of man, we err much like the Pharisees in Matthew 15. Paul (and other writers) warned us of following such false ideas in Colossians 2:8. *"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain*

*deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."*

Below are some other related scriptures to consider.

*(Galatians 1:14) "And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers."*

*(2 Thessalonians 2:15) "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle."*

*(2 Thessalonians 3:6) "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us."*

*(1 Peter 1:18) "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;"*

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## INFLUENCE

Let us consider I Timothy 4:12, *"Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."* Notice that Paul is actually directing Timothy to be a good influence so as not to be despised.

First Timothy is directed to be an influence in word. God evaluates the tongue. *"Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof."* (Proverbs 21:18) James says about the tongue, *"But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison."* (James 3:8) Every one of us will be judged by our words. Jesus says in Matthew 12: 36-37, *"But I say unto you, That every word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified and by thy words shalt thou be condemned."*

Paul next directs Timothy to be an influence in conversation. Conversation means conduct or behavior. Paul told the Corinthians in II Corinthians 3: 2, *"Ye are our epistle written*

*in our hearts, known and read of all men."* This means somebody is watching us; we are influencing others. Christians are changed when they obey the gospel, to live a life for Christ. That's why our conversation or conduct is so important. In Roman's 6:3-4, Paul wrote, *"Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism unto death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."* We should walk the walk of a Christian. Our body language as well as our speech should display Christianity. The world may not display a Christian conversation, so we must be very careful. Our lives are seen by others. As long as we live, we need to examine our life daily so as not to be worthless or reprobate. *"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith, prove your own selves, know ye not your own selves how that Jesus Christ is in you except ye be reprobate."*(2 Corinthians 13:5)

The third item Paul tells Timothy in which to be an influence is in charity. In 1 Corinthians 13 we find Paul's well known chapter on charity. I have heard charity described as love in action. When someone needs our help and we don't respond with a love offering, we fail Christ. The Lord expects us to love with pure hearts. In 2 Corinthians 9:6-8 we read, *"But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart so let him give; not grudgingly or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you that ye always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:"* Charity displays love toward all and therefore we show by helping others in a charitable way, pure religion, and a good conversation.

Fourth, Paul tells Timothy to be an influence in spirit. If we have the proper spirit in us, then Christ's Spirit is alive in us. We show His Spirit by watching our language, our conversation, our charity, and all that we do because Christ showed all these qualities in his life. Notice Romans 8:9-14 reads, *"But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the*

*flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.*" If we show the right kind of spirit, we will follow the examples of Jesus and the apostles. I believe this spirit must come from our heart that learns, that goes out to others in need, that loves, that has compassion, and that lights our faces when we hear a good gospel song or a good gospel sermon. Examine your spirit. II Corinthians 3:6 says, "*the spirit giveth life.*"

Fifth, Paul admonishes Timothy to be an influence in faith. We must have complete trust in God to have the proper faith. I believe our faith is displayed by pleasing our God and reverencing Him. His promises and His commandments are true and never ever to be doubted. "*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*"(Hebrews 11:1) "*While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.*"(2 Corinthians 4:18) We must have genuine faith, do away with bad habits, dress modestly, and shun dancing with the opposite sex for that promotes lustful feelings that should be avoided by Christians.

Lastly Paul tells Timothy to be an influence in purity. Purity is a quality or state of being pure. When I think of purity, I think of James 1:27, "*Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world*". We cannot be pure or show purity and have Satan's dust all over us. Isaiah 1:18 says, "*Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.*"

Adapted from a Sermon by EDWARD HERREN  
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# GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>DATES</u>	<u>PLACE &amp; TIME</u>	<u>SPEAKER</u>
July 1 - 3	Chapel Hill Church Pell City, AL	Sam Dick (Cave City, KY)
July 7 - 10 7:30 P.M.	Dowell Hill Church of Christ Columbus, IN	Harry Cobb (Wedowee, AL)
July 10 - 15	Templehill Church McComb, MS	Joe Hill (Hager Hill, KY)
July 11 - 15	Becton Church Becton, KY	J.D. McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
July 15 - 17	Antioch Church of Christ Douglasville, GA	Ron Scott (Bloomington, IN)
July 17 - 20	Mt. Zion Church McComb, MS	Joe Hill (Hager Hill, KY)
July 17 - 22	Oak Grove Church Woodland, AL	Bill Prince, Jr. (Oxford, AL)
July 22 - 24 7:30 P.M. CST Fri. & Sat. 9:30 A.M. CST Sunday 4:00 P.M. CST Sunday	Antioch Church of Christ Greenup, IL	Mike Daniel (Douglasville, GA)
July 24 - 29	Napoleon Church Woodland, AL	J.D. McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
July 29 - 31	Verona Church Verona, KY	Joe Hill (Hager Hill, KY)
July 29 - 31	Fayetteville Road Church of Christ Atlanta, GA	Carley Conner (Cookeville, TN)

## SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. Psalm 90 says the length of our days is how many years normally?
2. Besides giving them manna to eat, what 2 things does Deut. 8 tell us God did for the Israelites in the wilderness?
3. What two masters can you not serve at the same time?
4. Name the four metals in the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's first dream.
5. What did Reuben find in the field and give to his mother, Leah?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .

and remember last month's questions?

1. Abram complained to God that he had no heir. Who did Abram say would be his heir because he had no son? ELIEZER OF DAMASCUS WHO WAS HIS STEWARD (Gen. 15:2-3)
2. In the land shown to Ezekiel in a vision, how often do the fruit trees bear fruit? EVERY MONTH (Ezek. 47:12)
3. After what event did Judas go and offer to betray Jesus? HIS ANOINTING WITH PERFUME (Mark 14:10)
4. What two crimes had Barabbas committed? REBELLION AND MURDER (John 18:40; Mk 15:7)
5. What reward was given to Daniel for interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's first dream? HE WAS MADE A RULER (Dan. 2:48)