



ourselves of good, worthwhile traditions. If we are too quick to get rid of our traditions, we run the risk of removing those things which generations before us put in place to help us achieve growth and maturity. As I stated at the beginning of this article, we must be careful not to make a tradition of getting rid of traditions! May we never get to the point that we disregard legitimate traditions.

Finally, this topic, like so many others, simply demands balance. We must never ignore the value of the traditions we already have in place, but we must also recognize that traditions are not bound by God. May God give us all wisdom as we do our best to serve Him in love and unity.



we must be diligent to discern between our man-made traditions and the commandments of the Lord. May we never get to the point that we transgress God's commandments in order to defend our traditions.

On the other hand, we must understand that we can also mistakenly strip

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THE OLSEN
PARK CHURCH
OF CHRIST

Faithful Sayings

December 21,
2014



Services

Sunday: 9:30 AM

10:20 AM

6:00 PM

Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:

Pat Ledbetter
Jeff Nunn
Kyle Pope

Deacons:

Steve Dixon
Jack Langley
Neil Ledbetter
Brady McAlister
Walker McAnear
Lance Purcell
Rusty Scott

Evangelists:

Kyle Pope
Andrew Dow

The Traditions of Men

By Andrew Dow

A growing sentiment among my own generation is the urge to avoid anything that could be described as a *tradition*. This would include anything from the *traditional* interpretation of Scripture, to the *traditional* order of service. Many churches of Christ *traditionally* have two services on Sunday, and a midweek service. The fact that we offer an invitation at the end of our gatherings is a *tradition* that we have formed. My generation and perhaps some before my own have viewed these *traditions* as hazardous to the church's growth and maturity.

I have no doubt that many of those who reject traditions do so out of a sincere love for God and a desire to serve Him. However, I would suggest that if there is no scriptural basis to reject traditions, those who reject them become no better than those who set up the traditions in the first place. In the end, they create a tradition of rejecting traditions! So, what does Scripture teach about the traditions of men?

Traditions Are Not The Problem

First, we should clear up a misconception: *traditions are not the problem*. Is there a problem that plagues churches and stunts their growth? I imagine every church faces such problems, but I would suggest that the problem is much deeper than traditions. In fact, traditions are spoken of highly by the apostle Paul.

Paul wrote the Corinthians, **“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). He wrote to the Thessalonians, **“So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us”** (2 Thessalonians 2:15). In the same epistle he wrote, **“Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the traditions which you received from us”** (2 Thessalonians 3:6).

These passages are interesting to me because of what they say and to whom they were written. *First, consider what these verses are saying*. In all of the above verses, Paul expected his readers to keep the traditions he gave them. While these “traditions” may have involved binding instructions, it would also seem to include Paul’s instructions in matters of judgment. Everything that Paul taught **“by word of mouth or by letter”** was included in these **“traditions.”** Paul encouraged the brethren to hold onto these traditions! *Second, consider to whom these verses were written*. Corinth was a

church plagued with problems. Thessalonica was a very young church which faced persecution from its beginning. I often hear people saying that traditions will only hinder growth and hurt the church. If that’s true, why does Paul instruct a troubled church and a growing church to **“hold to the traditions”**?

Traditions are not the problem. In fact, according to Paul, traditions are a good

thing that can be used to keep us on the right track. Those who refuse to follow traditions are considered **“unruly.”** So, if traditions are not the problem, what is?

Traditions Can Be Misused

A conversation about traditions cannot be complete without mentioning the Pharisees. The Pharisees were a very traditionally minded people. This is seen in the way they spoke to Jesus, **“Then some Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, ‘Why do your disciples break the traditions of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread’”** (Matthew 15:1-2). The various Jewish sects were constantly trying to trick Jesus into saying something incriminating (cf. Luke 10:25). I believe the Pharisees’ words here are no different, but in trying to trap Jesus the Pharisees show us how they felt about their traditions. If Jesus and His disciples didn’t go along with the Jews’ man-made traditions, they were viewed as if they had violated God’s law!

To my knowledge, neither Jesus nor his apostles ever condemned the Pharisees for having traditions. That’s because the traditions weren’t the problem. The problem was that the Pharisees misused their traditions. Notice Jesus’ words in response to the Pharisees question above: **“Why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of**

your tradition? ... You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you: ‘This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far away from Me. But in vain do they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the precepts of men’” (Matthew 15:3-9). You see, Jesus wasn’t bothered by the fact that the Pharisees washed their hands, the problem was they treated their traditions as more valuable than God’s word! The misuse of traditions caused the Pharisees to ignore and violate the binding Law of God.

Some Final Thoughts

First, it would serve us well to understand that we can fall into the same trap the Pharisees fell into. That’s simply the nature of having traditions. Therefore,

