

- Tradition. What comes to your mind when this word is mentioned? What do you think of when people start talking about traditional things? Sadly, some words often associated with the words tradition or traditional are words or thoughts of something old, out-dated, boring, etc. And the funny thing is that this is true almost regardless of the context of tradition or traditional things being spoken of.
- Take college football for instance. When people talk about the traditional schools what do they mention? They mention Alabama's same old uniforms, Notre Dame's golden helmets, USC's jerseys without names on them, Tennessee's checkerboard end zones, etc. And what is it that you hear? "Alabama needs some cooler jerseys! Those same old things are boring!" "Notre Dame needs to mix up the helmets and jerseys, too!" And on and on go the complaints against tradition. What about the innovative schools, though? What about the Oregon, TCU, Baylor, and other schools that have new, cool, and exciting jerseys or other things? The kids love them! Why?? Because they're new and different, and for whatever reason, those things that are deemed traditional have fallen away as being bad and no good. On the other side of the coin, you have folks who think that anything that is not traditional is just foolish and no good. They might say something like, "If its new then it must be no good cause we've done plenty well without it for years!" "Our traditions have gotten us this far so there is no need to change anything!" "Anything that is new must be wrong because its new", is essentially this group's mentality.
- What about traditions in a different context, though? Let's consider for this study some traditions within the church. Now, I'm not talking about the traditions of the Apostles as spelled out for us in **II Thessalonians 2:15**. The traditions mentioned by Paul in this text are those traditions that would amount to the doctrines and teachings of the Apostles. What we are considering in this lesson are traditions that have been created over the years by men and practiced within the Lord's churches.
- We have mentioned two different approaches to traditions in general, and I'd like to suggest that, unfortunately, these types of attitudes are present in regards to traditions within the church, as well. Some people hate anything that might be considered "traditional" because in their minds that is something that is just old and no good. Others would say that only those things considered "traditional" are what we ought to be practicing. Neither of these extremist attitudes are good or beneficial. What we ought to do is consider each each tradition on a case by case basis and see if it is good or not. With these thoughts in mind, I would like for us to consider The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly in regards to our traditions within the Lord's churches.

Considering the traditions of men, not the traditions of the Apostles. (II Thess. 2:15)

I. The Good of Traditions

A. Traditions that help God's Will to be accomplished.

1. There are things that we as churches have practiced for many years that are practiced because they help us carry out the Apostolic traditions of Scripture that have been handed down.
2. We have met in buildings to facilitate our meetings together. (**Heb. 10:24,25**)
3. We have used songs books and projectors to aide us in our singing of songs together. (**Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16**)
4. We have met during the week on a specified night in order to spend more time in the study of God's Word and encouraging of one another.
5. We could look to so many more traditions that we practice, but the main point is the fact that these traditions are good because they help us to carry out those traditions of truth that have been handed down by the Apostles. (**II Thess. 2:15**).

B. Traditions that are expedient in their nature.

1. Having a building to meet in isn't just good because it helps us to assemble, but it is also good because it is expedient in its nature. This means that it is just practical in nature.
2. Having a building is the easiest and most convenient way for a congregation to meet together, especially if there is poor weather.
3. Sure we could meet outside on the regular, but what if it begins to rain or if its storms? At that point, meeting outside wouldn't be expedient to our meeting together.
4. Song books and projectors are also incredibly convenient to have so that we can all know the words of songs and sing along together.
5. Traditions that help us accomplish God's Will and that are expedient are good! We ought not hate on them whether they are older or newer in nature. Our standard of judgement should be whether they are good and expedient, not just if they are older or newer.

II. The Bad of Traditions

- A. Traditions that go against the teachings of God.
 1. Sadly, not all traditions are created equally. Sometimes, man creates practices that do not help us follow God's will, but they actually are counter productive to that in the fact that they go against the traditions of the Apostles.
 2. One such practice is the use of instrumental music. Many would like to say that this falls into the realm of opinion, but this man-made tradition contradicts what has been either told, shown, or implied to us through New Testament writings. **(Eph. 5:19, Col. 3:16, etc.)**
 3. This isn't something new though, Jesus dealt with problems of people establishing traditions that went against God's commands. The Jewish leadership's tradition & practice of Corban was one such practice that negated the command of God to care for one's father & mother. **(Mark 7:9-13)**
 4. There is a degree of freedom that we have in created traditions, but they must never be carried out to the neglect of God's commandments.
- B. Traditions that are no longer expedient.
 1. As times change, so does the expedient traditions of the church.
 2. Back in the day, bed sheets and overhead slides were the most expedient means of aids for class teachers and evangelist, but those things have been passed up by better technology. Therefore they are no long expedient in teaching.
 3. Used to, putting an article in the paper was the best way to share Bible truth with others, but today that just isn't the case because very few people still read the newspaper. Today, it is much more expedient to share articles or teaching online with others.
 4. Its not that these things are wrong to use, but it is just unwise to waste opportunities using these means when much better and efficient means are available.

III. The Ugly of Traditions

- A. Traditions that are treated on level with God's Word.
 1. This, again, was a problem that Jesus had to deal with in regards to the religious leadership of His day. Again, let's look to **Mark 7:1-8**.
 2. To begin with, the Pharisees were rebuking the disciples of Jesus for not washing their hands before eating which was strictly a tradition of the Jewish elders. **(vv.1-5)**
 3. Jesus responds by quoting Isaiah concerning them and their elevation of their traditions to or above the commandments of God. **(vv.6-8)**
 4. While wouldn't like to admit it, this sometimes happens with us by the 2nd part of the ugly side of traditions...
- B. Traditions that cause brethren to be divided.
 1. How many sad stories have we heard about brethren who have fought and eventually divided over matter of tradition and opinion? I'd say the answer to that is far too many.
 2. Again, God has left some things to our judgement and we ought not judge others for their decisions in regards to judgement.
 3. Too many brethren had said hateful things to others or "marked others as unfaithful" simply because they only meet for one service on Sunday, they don't have a midweek service, they only have one meeting or no meetings a year, they use powerpoint, have a different order of worship, and on and on.
 4. These things ought not be the case with us. We must respect the liberty of other Christians and other churches. We sometimes get so caught up in traditions that we fail to differentiate between binding traditions of the Apostles and matter of judgement in regards to traditions of men.
 5. We must not let our freedoms of traditions to be turned into something ugly and divisive. We must also make sure that allow our appointed leadership to play their role in doing what is best for the local churches. Respect must be had for those mean in leadership.

We have been blessed by God with some ability to choose to carry out His Traditions given down by His Apostles. May we be wise in our traditions and make sure that they are good in their nature and that they only help us to accomplish His Will better. May He help us to not be foolish and allow our traditions to turn into something bad or ugly, but instead may our traditions do nothing but glorify Him as we seek to do His will in this life.