

Imagine you have gone on a Summer vacation. You look up a church before you leave, write down the Sunday morning time of 10am, and you drive up at 9:50...and immediately notice some things.

- 1) **The Sign** – it says “Christians meet Here.” This alarms you. But yes, the address is correct.
- 2) **The Start** – they all assemble for 45 minutes in the auditorium for a Lord’s Supper Service Event.
 - a. By the way – no contribution is taken. You remember there was a “Giving Box” in the back.
- 3) **The Separation** – then they break into classes. All go to classes. No auditorium class.
- 4) **The Single Service** – Back to the auditorium for songs, prayers & a sermon. “See you Wednesday”

So, you get in the car with your family and say.... What?

- a. *That was a unique yet uplifting worship service! We should recommend a thing or two at home.*
- b. *OR – Never going there again! Isn’t there some brotherhood police we should report this to?*

In truth, it would probably be somewhere in between, right? Questions: how many things did that church do differently than we do, in terms of tradition and order? Several. How many things did they do that was unsound or outside of God’s will? Zero. Different than us – but still perfectly, spiritually right.

How is that possible? And if they can be different than us in all those ways and we must accept it, then how can we have room to say that the church across the street is wrong because they do things differently?

Ahh, 3 possible responses to those questions:

- 1) *That’s what I was thinking, they are both wrong. Only one was is right.*
- 2) *You are right. I guess we need to accept everyone if they worship in Jesus name.*
- 3) *It’s all about understanding Tradition. Or more accurately: Traditions – different kinds.*

Well, here are some things we need to come away with today:

- 1) You and I must be CONFIDENT that what we are doing here is right before our God.
- 2) We must be accepting of others who are DIFFERENT and maybe even OPEN to change.
- 3) We must NOT be accepting of others who are DIFFERENT if the changes violate God’s will.

I. Demanded Traditions

a. Some traditions MATTER and must be HELD – **II Thess. 2:15; 3:6; I Cor. 11:2**

b. In terms of church worship, we have been GIVEN those traditions:

- i. **Assemble** – Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 14:26
- ii. **Sing** – Ephesians 5:19; Col. 3:16; Heb. 13:15; I Cor. 14:26
- iii. **Pray** – I Timothy 2:1-2; James 5:13-16
- iv. **Study** – II Timothy 2:1-2; I Corinthians 14:26
- v. **Give** – I Corinthians 16:1-2
- vi. **Partake** – Matthew 26; I Cor. 11; Acts 20:7

c. Those include the “5 Acts of Assembled Worship.” What we really mean is – these are the things the Scriptures clearly teach by example and command to be the Worship and Work of God’s people as a church when they assemble.

d. These are God’s Revealed Pattern. These are non-negotiable for the Christian.

II. Optional Traditions

a. These are perfectly lawful choices a church can make, at any time, fitting under the above.

- i. **Sing** – One song, 10 songs, old songs, new books, books, projector, etc.
- ii. **Pray** – 1,2,10 – Generic, themed, Lord’s Supper focused, Elder specific, etc.
- iii. **Study** – 1 sermon, 2 sermons, short, long, classes before or after, Eulogies to Jesus
- iv. **Give** – Trays once per day, twice per day, Box Left in Back, CC Swiper at the door.
- v. **Partake** – Where in service, length of emphasis, one or more speaker or prayer.
- vi. **Assemble** – One meeting time on Sunday, two meeting times, meeting all day – all options – dictated by the ELDERSHIP and RESPECTED by the MEMBERS (this is key)
 1. **Hebrews 13:17** – Local elders decide – we honor their decision.

- b. So, church in the intro compared to us:
 - i. **Sign:** Church of Christ / Christians Meet Here – both true, both fine.
 - ii. **Start:** Lord's Supper first, classes first, assembly first, no classes, one event. All fine.
 - iii. **Separation:** classes without auditorium class to hide in could split churches. Why?
 - iv. **Single Service:** they are not less godly. If a church met three times are they more?

Now I know what many are thinking – “Maybe those changes are authorized, but that doesn't mean we should change for changes sake!” Or “I don't like some of those changes.” I'm not advocating change, I'm advocating the right attitude about **LAWFUL DIFFERENCES**. No, I mention it because...

- 1) when we bind without authority and look negatively to others, it's hurtful to Christ's Cause.
- 2) when we are open to such differences, we may actually learn more efficient ways to worship.
- 3) when onlookers ask about church difference, they need the proper explanation.

Because... there is a difference between these differences and...

III. Violating Traditions

- a. Firstly, this does exist. It is something to be careful of – **Colossians 2:8; Galatians 1:14**
- b. How do we know if we've crossed that line?
 - i. Notice we say this already in earlier passages: **II Thess. 2:15; 3:6; I Cor 11:2**
 - ii. **Matthew 23:18-20; I Cor. 14:34,37-38; II John 9 / Revelation 22:18-19**
- c. So, there are traditions of men that come short of or go beyond the authority of God:
 - i. Assemble – (NO Assembly) (Adding Social / Recreational Purposes to worship)
 - ii. Sing – (NO Singing) (Adding Instruments to Singing)
 - iii. Pray – (NO Praying) (Adding Women Leadership to Prayers)
 - iv. Study – (NO Bible) (Adding non-biblical or simply false ideas)
 - v. Give – (NO Giving) (Adding mandatory Tithing / church in business for income)
 - vi. Partake – (NO L.S) (Adding social meal or non-Christ centered activity)

Okay, so those who do not like this lesson today will fall into two categories:

- 1) Those among us who say: *“The way we do it is right and works and change should never happen!”*
- 2) Those not among us: *“Our church can chose to change things in Jesus' name. Don't judge us!”*

For final consideration on those polarized positions, I want to leave you with a word: **Pharisaical**. Universally, nobody wants to be Pharisaical. It's a world wide negative term. But universally, nobody believes they are and everybody almost always believes the spiritual opponent is. Universal weapon.

In line with our tradition study, what do we learn from the Pharisees? (**Mark 7**)

- 1) (**Mark 7:1-7**) – Washing hands was fine. It was local tradition. It did not violate God's will on Old Testament practices. But the elders were **BINDING** it as if it were from God. They considered those who didn't do it their way to be in opposition to God. **THAT** is PHARISAICAL.
 - a. Binding the traditions of God, taught by God, enforced by God – NOT Pharisaical.
 - b. But binding our optional, cultural traditions, as if from God – Pharisaical.
- 2) (**Mark 7:8-13**) – They would often neglect the actual teachings of God in honoring their traditions. Like giving certain amounts to God (optional vows) and violating law to honor parents!
 - a. Following optional traditions and ignoring the will of God – Pharisaical
 - b. Honoring man-made traditions (instruments) that violate God's revealed will – Pharisaical.

So, what does it mean to be like the Pharisees?

- 1) I am binding optional and cultural practices as if they were from God (we need to be careful)
- 2) I am following cultural traditions that violate the things God clearly said (religious friends).

Conclusions: You and I must be CONFIDENT that what we are doing here is right before our God.

We must be accepting of others who are DIFFERENT and maybe even OPEN to change.

We must NOT be accepting of others who are DIFFERENT if the changes violate God's will. II Timothy 2:15