

Childhood, Tradition & Change

“Tradition is winning over Change” was a statement made as to:

Why a Church is Suffering a “Slow Death.”

Is Tradition Winning Over Change?

First of all, the statement itself is misleading. I think that the word “Tradition” should be “Traditionalism.” It is important to know the difference. I will discuss this later on in this document.

Second, change should be better explained.

Most Christians understand the importance of change to meet the needs of the church family and community. Holding on to a pipe organ in a church filled with young adults and young families might not be a good practice in support of attracting the new families within the community. However, changing from hymns to rap music and a repeat of the same words over and over again in a service vs. a testimony of a changed life might not be the right change for the church. In other words, “change for change sake” is not a “good change.”

The attendance of many of the local churches has been declining for several years now . I am a firm believer *in **adjusting (better word than change)*** to make a better and more attractive service for those walking through the doors of the sanctuary. If the local church has been established with an anointed presence of the Holy Spirit and has its roots in evangelism, it has every gift given to the church’s members and adherents needed for an extraordinary and exciting service every time it meets. It is imperative for the Bible classes (Sunday School/Equip/Home Bible Study) groups to be taught with gifted teachers on Sunday morning or whenever the classes might meet. The Encounter service (Worship and Preaching Service) has the giftings of the leaders who can reach the members, adherents, and the visitors attending the challenging service time on Sunday morning. The Encounter and Bible Study times means serving our members and adherents spiritual needs on a regular basis.

It is also imperative to reflect and ADJUST as necessary to the needs of the church body. If “Change” is ordered of the Lord God, we should be

willing to make those adjustments as necessary. We must turn things around as necessary to assure we “stop the bleeding” if we are seeing a continuing decrease in the church’s attendance. This is where prayer, godly discernment, and the use of our spiritual gifts have to be effectively and appropriately used. Abusing and misusing the gifts will “fast track” a church’s decline and, at worst, closure. We must seek God’s will and be willing to ADJUST to the requirements that should be obvious to the church leadership on matters dealing with the local church’s goals and objectives.

It is imperative that we make it our #1 objective in seeing people saved/born again, seeing people come to the altar with extraordinary things happening due to the Holy Spirit directing our every move, and hearing the testimonies of God doing great and mighty things in the lives of the individuals attending our services.

As a member of THE CHURCH (THE BRIDE OF CHRIST), I would think that I might be able to speak and influence a vote as to making change (ADJUSTING). Therefore, I feel I could say and even vote, even writing on my ballot, “We need to adjust our priorities to effectively and immediately begin our journey of making our services so exciting that people would hesitate in leaving our services because they have seen the CHANGE in the lives of everyone in the congregation.

Going back to the original subject and my first statement concerning such:

I believe “tradition” benefits our churches, but “traditionalism” poses challenges.

Tradition, spiritually and biblically speaking, refers to the beliefs, teachings, and practices handed down through generations since the time of the apostles. With my belief in holding on to specific traditions that influenced my walk of faith through the years, I want to give some answers in support of my belief.

Tradition encompasses both the spoken and written communication of the faith, including doctrinal teachings and moral instructions.

Tradition also serves as an important component in the interpretation and understanding of the Scriptures. It has served as a living connection to the early Church.

The Word of God inspired by the Holy Spirit and written by flawed human beings, yet anointed by and with the Holy Spirit’s approval, acknowledges the

significance of tradition. The Apostle Paul exhorts believers in 2 Thessalonians 2:15, “*So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter.*” This exhortation from Paul gives credence to the importance of maintaining the integrity of the faith. Paul provides a similar passage supporting the church members at Corinth in holding on to specific traditions in 1 Corinthians 11:2, “*I commend you for remembering me in everything and for maintaining the traditions, just as I passed them on to you.*” Here, tradition is portrayed as a commendable practice, essential for the unity of the Church.

Traditionalism, on the other hand, is not good. Why?

1. **It emphasizes what our churches have done more than what God has done.** Traditionalism fights to save traditions, but the traditions are what we have done...what our church and forefathers did...(whisper)—*what our denomination has “always” done.* Traditionalism assumes that “our way” of worship and addressing church issues are God’s commands.
2. **It elevates the past over the future.** Traditionalism guards yesterday’s successes at the expense of making a difference today and tomorrow. It fears tomorrow (the future) more than it influences it.
3. **It hinders and places a stumbling block in reaching the next generation.** Traditionalism assumes that almost anything new is a threat to the gospel, even if the gospel itself is never compromised. An attitude of requiring the younger generation to become us if they want to follow God.
4. **It blocks any necessary changes.** It does not communicate and *inform* change like tradition does; it obstructs it.
5. **It leads to division.** Traditionalism is elevating tradition to the level of a commandment as if tradition equals the gospel. The emotion behind such a position usually creates conflict and disunity.

The question: Why is “tradition” such an issue in the church today? The answer...Men and women want to “have it their way!”

This is why this devotion is so important. Traditions should not be a hindrance to the progress of the church going forward and should not be a stumbling block for the seniors who were raised with singing of hymns, altar calls (invitational evangelism), robes for the choirs, preaching on Sunday mornings and Sunday nights, and pastors who require a dress code for the

church staff and, in some cases, the attending church members. We can adjust without changing “the way we do church” just to conform to the New Age movement. We “seniors” can accept change. We cannot, however, accept change just for change sake. If the Gospel of Jesus Christ can be better presented in a different way we were raised, we seniors not only should be willing to make the change but be a part of the change; wholly involved in the process by volunteering our services to meet the needs of a changing society. It is not giving up or giving in...it is giving of ourselves to see young people come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Remember...Keep the main thing the main thing; preaching and teaching Jesus and seeing people born-again!

Someone once said, “The Bible sometimes gives us all the ingredients, but it doesn’t always tell us how to bake the cake.” This statement is important to our understanding of change and holding to our traditions.

The preachers and teachers of the Word of God are fallible, God is not. He never changes the ingredients for the pathway to enter His Kingdom, but how we present the truth to mankind sometimes is approached from a different angle as the years pass by. The various media outlets bring the truth of the born-again requirement to all the world. In the past, the only way the truth was presented was through word of mouth, face to face—one born-again believer giving testimony to the fact that Jesus saves. **“Jesus is the only way. Not one person can enter the Father’s kingdom accept through His Son (belief in the death, burial and resurrection of King Jesus). That method should never change, but opening new avenues of the presentation of the gospel must be available for the ever-changing classes of people in this world in which we live.**

Therefore, young Christian brothers and sisters, let us embrace change when it is biblically and spiritually sound...without casting aside “tradition”—of which, should not be a burden but as a blessing, not as a limitation but as a path to the freedom only found in Jesus, the Christ, Savior of the World.

Malachi 3:6a, “I the Lord do **not change**...”

James 1:17, “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does **not change** like shifting shadows.”

Psalms 55:19, “God, who is enthroned from of old, who does not **change**—”

Some material in this devotion is from:

- *An article by Chuck Lawless, "Why Tradition in a Church Is Good and Traditionalism Is Not." September 7, 2017*
- *Website: Traditions in the Church, John Piper (@JohnPiper), founder and teacher of Desiring God and chancellor of Bethlehem College and Seminary*