

SCRIPTURE READING: Mark 7:1-13.

DISCUSSION:

1. What are traditions? According to the New Oxford American Dictionary, a tradition is a long-established custom or belief that has been passed on from generation to generation.
2. There are two types of traditions.
 - A. Traditions handed down by God. 1 Corinthians 11:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:15; 3:6. Examples: Luke 22:19; Ephesians 5:18-19.
 - B. Traditions handed down by men. There are two types of traditions handed down by men.
 - 1) Authorized traditions. Examples: *store bought* unleavened bread; *four part harmony* psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Other possible authorized traditions: homemade; unison.
 - 2) Unauthorized traditions. There are two types of unauthorized traditions handed down by men.
 - a. No authority to do at all – much less to hand down from generation to generation. Colossians 2:8. Examples: leavened bread; secular songs.
 - b. No authority to bind as a law of God. Mark 7:6-7.

APPLICATIONS:

1. **We must honor the traditions handed down by God and be very, very careful with traditions handed down by men.** Regarding the latter, we must make sure they are authorized. Otherwise we must oppose them. If they are authorized, we must use wise judgment in making them and never treat them as if they were traditions of God.
2. **We must be able to distinguish between various types of traditions.** If we fail to do so, we can make at least two mistakes.
 - A. First, we can dishonor the traditions handed down by God. For example, when it comes to music in worship some reason as follows – we cannot bind traditions; a cappella singing is a tradition of the churches of Christ; therefore we cannot bind a cappella singing. The major premise is flawed. We must bind traditions handed down by God and a cappella singing is a tradition handed down by God. There is no authority in the New Testament for any other type of music in worship.
 - B. Second, we can make the traditions handed down by men into laws of God. James 4:11-12. Examples of authorized traditions of men: the use of PowerPoint instead of an overhead projector, singing facing one another instead of looking at the back of each other's heads, ending worship with a song instead of a prayer. People have condemned others for the first two. Would we condemn others for the last? To do so is to elevate the traditions of men into the laws of God. This we may not do.
3. **We must be very careful changing from one authorized tradition of men to another authorized tradition of men.**
 - A. We must change for the better, not simply because we want to change.
 - B. We must appreciate that many authorized traditions of men become so because they are very effective ways of doing things.
 - C. We must not be naïve, but we must assume the best and not risk committing slander.
 - D. We must appreciate the nature of people. Younger people like to change, older people don't. Both need to be reasonable. Philippians 2:3-5; James 3:16-18. Example: "contemporary" songs.
 - E. We must appreciate the value of unity. John 17:20-23.
 - F. We need to focus as much on how to best make the change as we do on the change we want to make.
 - G. We must appreciate that often what we really need to change is our heart.