



We Believe - In the Living Tradition

Key idea:

Christians are called to uphold the living apostolic tradition—not as empty ritual, but as the unchanging truth received with a faith that is alive, growing, and joyfully obedient to God’s Word.

Key text:

Matthew 15:6-9 ESV

So for the sake of your tradition you have made void the word of God. ⁷ You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said: ⁸ “This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; ⁹ in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”

1 Corinthians 11:2 ESV

Now I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I delivered them to you.

2 Thessalonians 2:15 ESV

So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter.

Key points:

1. Scripture teaches that tradition is good and important, but that if it is not conceived, received, and handled correctly it can become a problem that nullifies the power of the Word of God in the life of believers and the Church.
2. Tradition is the living faith of the dead; traditionalism is the dead faith of the living.
3. Jesus taught that two things determine the difference between living tradition and dead traditionalism.
 - a. Living tradition is rooted in Scripture, while dead traditionalism is rooted in human ideas.

- b. Living tradition is received with a vibrant, joyful, obedient faith, while dead traditionalism merely goes through external rituals without a response of vibrant faith.

Discussion Questions:

1. How can you distinguish in your own life between living tradition (the living faith of the dead) and dead traditionalism (the dead faith of the living)?
2. What does Jesus mean when he says the Pharisees "made void the word of God" through their tradition? Can you think of modern examples where this might happen?
3. In what ways might you be honoring God with your lips while your heart remains far from Him, as Jesus warned the Pharisees?
4. What traditions or practices in your spiritual life are firmly rooted in Scripture versus those that might be merely human customs?
5. Bret mentioned that Americans are "fascinated by the new and suspicious of the old." How does this cultural bias affect our view of ancient Christian teachings and practices?
6. How does the distinction between tradition and traditionalism challenge the modern impulse to constantly pursue what is new while being suspicious of what is old?
7. When you participate in church rituals like communion or reciting creeds, how can you ensure you're responding with genuine faith rather than going through empty motions?
8. Why is it impossible to live without traditions, and what does this reality teach us about being made in the image of a Creator God?
9. How does Paul's commendation of the Corinthians and Thessalonians for maintaining traditions challenge the idea that we should have 'no creed but Christ'?
10. In what practical ways can you personally plant deeper roots in Scripture this week rather than relying solely on weekly teaching?
11. What would it look like to approach worship, prayer, and Scripture reading with the urgent, expectant faith that the Holy Spirit wants to work in you?
12. How might embracing the church's historic tradition actually provide the rootedness and stability that our confused, rootless culture desperately needs?

13. Take time this week to carefully read and meditate on the truths in the Nicene Creed.
14. Listen to the new song "[This is the God We Love](#)" (which is based on the Nicene Creed).
15. Listen to the song "[The Goodness of God](#)" to remind yourself of the current, living work of God in your life.

Practical Applications:

1. Read Matthew chapters 1-2 in preparation for the Advent series.
2. Pray specifically asking the Holy Spirit to make you receptive to His work in worship this week.
3. Choose one spiritual discipline (Bible reading, prayer, communion preparation) and intentionally engage it with "active faith" rather than routine throughout this week.