Sermon Notes
(A basic transcription with modifications for style and clarity)

THE VALUE OF TRADITION

Brian Orchard, January 4, 2025

What I want to do today is to build on a principle that we find the Apostle Paul used during his ministry in the Church. It's a principle that is biblically based and, I believe, will be helpful to us as we face the challenges, as we go forward into this coming year.

1 Thessalonians 4:1 Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God;

Paul is clearly exhorting spiritual growth and development and strength within the members. He sees himself in a position of a conduit between Jesus Christ and the members of the Church. He says, "Just as you received from us." He makes it clear that it's not out of his own heart or mind. That it's from Jesus Christ. But he's imparting to them how they ought to walk and to please God. Another example:

Colossians 2:6 As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,

He makes the point that you have received Christ Jesus the Lord from us. From himself is what he's really saying in some of his letters. Paul saw his role as one who transmitted or handed down the teachings of Christ. In Acts 20 Paul was actually passing on timeless anchors for the people to give them something solid to hold onto.

Acts 20:27 For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.

Paul is not passing on what ***he*** thought. He was passing on what Christ had given to him. He is trying to maintain the continuation of teaching within the Church.

1 Corinthians 11:23 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you:

He makes that statement a number of times with different points of truth that he's passing on. This is the Passover but it's the principle that:

23 ...I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you:

It's a very important point and what I want to address today is ***the transmission of customs and beliefs from generation to generation as a godly requirement*** for each of us.

<u>1 Corinthians 15:1</u> Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand,

2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you — unless you believed in vain.

3 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,

And then you read on with what he's revealing to them there. A very definite anchor point or series of anchor points, telling us how we ought to walk and to please God.

What I have just given you is actually a definition of the process of passing on this information. That came from the ***Oxford Dictionary***. The first one I read to you **is the transmission of customs and beliefs from generation to generation.**

Let's turn to ***Websters*** and see what they have to say. It says, "**An inherited**, (and that's an important turn here) **established or customary pattern of thought, action or behavior, handing down of information, beliefs and customs."**

These definitions are definitions for the word" tradition". We need to address the value of tradition.

In a world that is increasingly experiencing disconnection, we, as a physical family, and as God's spiritual family need a greater sense of ***connectedness***. What we're talking about today will involve family and many of you sitting here don't have your family with you or you don't have young children. It applies to every one of us because this is a family. We do have a family, a spiritual family. And we are to act like a family. All of that which we say here today has application whether you have a young family or not.

If we try to put a positive spin on some of the traditions that we have witnessed here in the last week or so, like into the dark side of Christmas, we want to go to the bright side of Christmas to try and find something positive. That would be connectedness. I'm not addressing the customs necessarily involved. The aspect that I think was positive was the fact that it did get families together again at this time of the year.

<u>Deuteronomy 4:9</u> Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. And teach them to your children and your grandchildren,

Indelibly imprint in your mind these things that you're involved in here that I am showing you, that I am teaching you.

That's the point here that we want to make. It's a passing down of beliefs from one generation to another. It's essential. It's not a suggestion here. It's absolutely essential.

10 especially concerning the day you stood before the Lord your God in Horeb, when the Lord said to me, 'Gather the people to Me, and I will let them hear My words, that they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children.'

It's a very clear and a very powerful statement. Even though we're involved in a one-time event and Moses is taking them back to the actual event to remind them of it all, imbedded in the event that God was drawing His people to Sinai for, were timeless traditions that were to be a part of who they were. God is giving them traditions to follow from that point forward. They were to make sure that the traditions were passed on from one generation to another. The traditions are not manmade, but are directly related to God and His purpose. The number of places through here that this is mentioned, just in chapter 6 it comes up again:

Deuteronomy 6:7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.

It's to be a part of who you are.

Deuteronomy 4:11 "Then you came near and stood at the foot of the mountain, and the mountain burned with fire to the midst of heaven, (Fire burning as a column up to the midst of heaven) **with darkness, cloud, and thick darkness.**

If we look closely at what is recorded here I think we can see that there is a lot involved at this point in time. It's not a casual encounter by God with His people or Israel with God. Back up to verse 9.

9 Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself...

The *Commentary on the Old Testament* simply says, "to keep the soul, (referring to that life), that is to take care of the soul as the seat of life, to defend one's life from danger and injury." If they embraced what God is telling them and leading them to come and see and understand, it would defend their life from danger and from death.

The main danger that seems to be revealed here would be the idolatry of the nations roundabout where they were going to go into the land.

15 "Take careful heed to yourselves, for you saw no form when the Lord spoke to you at Horeb (Mount Sinai) **out of the midst of the fire,**

That seems to be a major point. They did not see God. He did not reveal Himself as a Being. But they heard a voice.

<u>Deuteronomy 4:16</u> lest you act corruptly and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of any figure: the likeness of male or female,

The human mind, being what it is, wants to get its hands on things to see, to be able to understand it and address it. God did not reveal Himself. What He revealed is, that it'll be fairly natural for you, if you're not very careful, to want to create something you can see and touch and relate to – **idols**. And of course, that's exactly what they did. So, God is warning them very clearly.

25 "When you beget children and grandchildren and have grown old in the land, and act corruptly and make a carved image in the form of anything, and do evil in the sight of the Lord your God to provoke Him to anger,

This seems to me to be the other side if you don't teach your children and your grandchildren. If you don't teach these things they will automatically lean towards the things they can see and feel and touch – **idols**. And the whole system will become corrupted from keeping God's truth alive and well. It's a very serious situation. **"Take heed to yourself and diligently keep yourself"** is something very powerful and very important.

40 You shall therefore keep His statutes and His commandments which I command you today, that it may go well with you (That's the underlying point. It's for your benefit.) **<u>and with your children after you</u>, and that you may prolong your days in the land which the Lord your God is giving you for all time."**

It's for the benefit of your families, for the benefit of your children, for the benefit of your grandchildren. You are to do this so they will have positive lives,. Make sure this truth is passed down.

11 "... the mountain burned with fire to the midst of heaven...

They didn't see God. God did not reveal Himself as a real Being. He revealed Himself through the fire and through the voice that they heard. He's giving them something that is a connecting point for them. They're not seeing God but God gives them a connecting point. That fire went up towards heaven and pointed towards God, where God resides and it pointed in that direction and came down and made connection with them. It enabled them to connect between their environment, their physical environment and God in heaven.

Later it obviously moved over the tabernacle after the tabernacle was built, and that God did reside in the tabernacle where the fire came down and indicated from heaven that this is where God is. **This fire is very significant in God's transmission of values.** God spoke out of the fire:

12 And the Lord spoke to you out of the midst of the fire.

The fire was light. God is light. And interestingly He made it all gloomy and dark surrounding this so the fire stood out for the people. God is impressing upon them that something very powerful was to stay with them, to remain with them and to be transmitted continuously to their children.

The imagery here is very hard for me to describe. But it's very powerful and it' was to stay in their minds. It was something that they would not lose. It was clearly meant to make a big impression on the Israelites that reinforced the passing of that information on.

God gives them a visual. It's not Himself but it's something that would become very important to them. As you know, Moses broke the two tablet of stone that were originally given to him.

Deuteronomy 10:1 "At that time the Lord said to me, 'Hew for yourself two tablets of stone like the first, and come up to Me on the mountain and make yourself an ark of wood.

2 And I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke; and you shall put them in the ark.'

3 "So I (Moses) **made an ark of acacia wood, hewed two tablets of stone like the first, and went up the mountain, having the two tablets in my hand.**

4 And [God] wrote on the tablets according to the first writing, the Ten Commandments, which the Lord had spoken to you in the mountain from the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly; and the Lord gave them to me.

5 Then I turned and came down from the mountain, and put the tablets in the ark which I had made; and there they are, just as the Lord commanded me."

That ark, made of acacia wood, now containing the two tablets of stone, was placed in the tabernacle, in the Holy of holies at the bottom end of this pillar of fire connecting heaven now with these two tablets of stone writing down the outline of God's law. We're talking about keeping your life, how important it is:

Proverbs 19:16 He who keeps the commandment keeps his soul, (He keeps his life. It's that important.) **But he who is careless of his ways will die.**

Keeping our lives underscores the importance of the law of God, ***We shall live.***

Deuteronomy 11:1 "Therefore you shall love the Lord your God, and keep His charge, His statutes, His judgments, and His commandments always.

Now we've come up into the present. In the previous chapters we were looking back in the past. He was reminding of what happened at Mount Sinai. Now we come up to the present.

2 I do not speak with your children, who have not known and who have not seen the chastening of the Lord your God, His greatness and His mighty hand and His outstretched arm —

3 His signs and His acts which He did in the midst of Egypt, to Pharaoh king of Egypt, and to all his land;

4 what He did to the army of Egypt, to their horses and their chariots: (These are powerful events that they witnessed) **how He made the waters of the Red Sea overflow them as they pursued you, and how the Lord has destroyed them to this day;**

5 what He did for you in the wilderness until you came to this place;

6 and what He did to Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, the son of Reuben: how the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, their households, their tents, and all the substance that was in their possession, in the midst of all Israel (Powerful, mighty acts that God performed and He's saying, "*Your children didn't see this but you did.")*

7 but your eyes have seen every great act of the Lord which He did.

They were containers of information and knowledge. And their children had not had the same witnessing effect of these things.

8 "Therefore you shall keep every commandment which I command you today, that you may be strong, and go in and possess the land which you cross over to possess.

18 "Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. (Make them important. These words will be your life, your soul.)

19 You shall <u>teach them to your children,</u> speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.

20 And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates,

They are to be a very strong, powerful part of who you are as a family before Me, is basically what He is saying to these people. You who have witnessed all of these things are **to pass it on to the next generation**. And their responsibility is to accept that and to pass it on to another generation and so on down the line to keep the truth and way of God alive. It's what God intended.

Having made their responsibilities very clear, God provided them tools that they could use to do this job, to help accomplish the generation to generation handing down of 'information, beliefs and customs':

Exodus 12:24 And you shall observe this thing as an ordinance for you and your sons forever.

25 It will come to pass when you come to the land which the Lord will give you, just as He promised, that you shall keep this service.

26 And it shall be, when your children say to you, 'What do you mean by this service?' (Why are you doing this? The children are asking their parents.)

27 that you shall say, 'It is the Passover sacrifice of the Lord, . . .

When the children ask why, it is the best teaching situation. They're open to receiving the response from you. That's just a statement of fact as far as childrearing is concerned.

Exodus 13:11 "And it shall be, when the Lord brings you into the land of the Canaanites, as He swore to you and your fathers, and gives it to you,

12 that you shall set apart to the Lord all that open the womb, that is, every firstborn that comes from an animal which you have; the males shall be the Lord's.

13 But every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb; and if you will not redeem it, then you shall break its neck.

And obviously the children of Israel say, "What? Why? That seems a little strange. Why would we break the neck of the donkey?"

13 ...And all the firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem.

14 So it shall be, when your son asks you in time to come, saying, 'What is this?' (Why are we doing this? There is an answer for them.)

15 And it came to pass, when Pharaoh was stubborn about letting us go, that the Lord killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of beast. Therefore I sacrifice to the Lord all males that open the womb, but all the firstborn of my sons I redeem.'

They had the opportunity to redeem this firstborn donkey with a lamb. Symbolic? Clearly. But if they chose not to redeem it with a lamb then they were to kill it. If that sacrifice of Jesus Christ is not applied you die. There was a lesson in it. But the point I'm trying to point us to is that when your son comes and asks why, that is a perfect time to transmit beliefs, values, customs and so on.

Deuteronomy 32:45 Moses finished speaking all these words to all Israel,

46 and he said to them: "Set your hearts on all the words which I testify among you today, which you shall command your children to be careful to observe — all the words of this law.

47 For it is not a futile thing for you, because <u>it is your life</u>,

It is your life. This way of living, being passed on here based on the commandments and the statutes and judgments of God is life. Real, true life. And that's the importance of them to be passed on.

47 ...and by this word you shall prolong your days in the land which you cross over the Jordan to possess."

God's way of life pays off. It doesn't smooth out all the bumps in the road of life but ultimately, the end result will be life, true life, real life. **The value of tradition** is very clear and very powerful. Has anything changed? Is this just reading about something in the Old Testament that is of no value to us today? These things are our life, our true life.

Two very important tools that we have been given would be the Sabbath Day and the Holy Days. I'm limiting what I'm addressing today. I can't address everything but these are powerful and important tools. Both are required by God's law. In Leviticus 23 both the weekly Sabbath and the Holy Days are commanded assemblies, 'holy convocations'. These are not issues that we have any latitude to say, I will or I won't. If we are able then we should observe these days as God has commanded them.

Part of the question being asked in the sermonette was "Why do I attend services? Now that we stream I don't have to. I can stay home. I can do this. I can do that." A number of options are available to us.

But why? Why do we attend Sabbath services? I've got four reasons. You can expand it if you will.

- **God says to do it.** It's a holy convocation. God says to attend a gathering of My people on these days.
- **For spiritual nourishment.** Be able to come and participate in listening to the sermon and sermonette or whatever is given on that day to receive the spiritual nourishment. Reminders of these things.
- **Connectedness**. To fellowship with like-minded people –To connect together. We need each other as a family. And you should leave here more buoyed up and strengthened each Sabbath than when you first arrived. Just the fellowship, the companionship with people who think like you do and you can share God's way of life together. It should be strengthening to us.
- **To set the example for your children.** Attending services, if you are able is not an option. It's something we should do and our children should see us keeping the Sabbath this way, coming together as a family before God. The Sabbath service is a haven. It's a place out of the work week world.

The main point I would make about tradition is that it's meaningful. There's something involved in this tradition that's not just for the now but is to take us forward from this

point. It carries a value, a lesson, a teaching, and a reminder. An example is in Leviticus 23 regarding the Feast of Tabernacles:

<u>Leviticus 23:42</u> You shall dwell in booths for seven days.

These booths were quite specific to the area in which they were. They were to cut down boughs of trees and build a structure that they could live in for eight days during the Feast.

42 … All who are native Israelites shall dwell in booths, (Why?)

43 that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.

The bottom-line for doing it is to point the families dwelling in these sukkahs, these temporary dwellings towards the fact that God had done everything that we have needed to bring us here. God is the One who brought us out of Egypt. God is the One who protected us at the Red Sea. God is the One. Period. And that was to be brought across.

This life is temporary. The things that make for a real life are eternal, and they are spiritual. Living for eight days in temporary dwellings (including the Last Great Day), we discuss and focus on the future millennial existence of the God family helping impart very important values and understanding, as we're living in this thing made of leaves and branches.

Traditions based on God's word carry important meaning. A habit is something different. A habit is something you do without thought. It's just something you do. Whereas, *a tradition has a meaning that is to be transmitted:*

<u>Psalms 78:1</u> Give ear, O my people, to my law; Incline your ears to the words of my mouth.

2 I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old,

3 Which we have heard and known, And our fathers have told us.

4 We will not hide them from their children, Telling to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, And His strength and His wonderful works that He has done.

5 For He established a testimony in Jacob, And appointed a law in Israel, Which He commanded our fathers, That they should make them known to their children;

6 That the generation to come might know them, The children who would be born, That they may arise and declare them to their children,

7 That they may set their hope in God, And not forget the works of God, But keep His commandments;

They are life and they were not to forget them. They were to pass them on and at this point I would suggest we change over to the present and apply those words exactly to us today, to the present. Never has there been a stronger need to do this than the present. *We are in danger of losing so much in the transmission of beliefs, customs, those things that are very important to God*.

We are in the process of looking at how we can work with bringing the younger people in the Church to a stronger position in their relationship with God. Personally, my wife and I have been praying for a long time for God to show us clearly what He wants us to do. There are some things that we, as a group, can't do. But there are some things, as a group we can do. We tend to be coming around to focus in on that now. What can we do to help connect younger people to God's way of life?

I'll just remind you, from time to time we make comments up here about getting old. That's because we are. I also would remind you, for those of you who were at the Feast in Oxnard we had a dinner dance. Do you remember who was on that dance floor the majority of the time that night? And the dance floor was full to overflowing. Young people. There were a lot of young people at the Feast in Oxnard this year. They need to be in our sites in terms of what we're talking about today, tradition. Passing on the traditions and the values God has given His people.

Satan's master plan includes the destruction of the family. Period. The reasons for that are obvious. God is creating a family. He's not trying. He will succeed. And Satan wants to prevent that from happening. And the family concept is not limited to the physical family. He wants to destroy the spiritual family as much as the physical family.

In this regard, Satan's 'wiles' or 'scheming' centers on disconnection. It centers on disconnection. Paul said that with the armor of God, we can stand against the wiles of the devil. I would suggest to you that godly tradition is an important way to do that. The traditions that you pass on and build into your family, into your children centers all away from the wiles of the devil.

Just before Paul addressed the need to put on the whole armor of God (one part of which was to fight the wiles of Satan) he addressed family, right before he got to the armor of God, both spiritual and physical family. Ephesians 6 goes through a long description where the family is being used to illustrate the relationship between Christ and the Church. That's made very clear. Next it goes into the area of children:

<u>Ephesians 6:1</u> Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

2 Honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise:

This is the linkage that takes us back to what we've been reading in the Old Testament. And Paul is well aware of the things that I have been addressing today because that's

how he conducted his ministry. He was a father trying to pass on customs, knowledge, and information to the members for their benefit.

3 "that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth." (That's a direct quote back from the Old Testament.)

4 And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

Paul clearly connects with what we have been reading in the Old Testament with where we stand today. Family stability is a part of our foundation. It's a foundation of society but it's also a foundation of God's Church as well. We talk about both church and society as a whole.

God is creating a family and the adversary wants to disconnect us from that program in any way that he can. Traditions can play a part in resisting this disconnect. I would suggest that scripture supports this. Families all have some kind of traditions that they keep. You would have had them in your family.

Thinking back, working with this material are some of the traditions that we both grew up with. They were very strong traditions in our families. As I was researching and looking at this subject as a whole I came across a book. I would not suggest that you spend the money to buy it. I'm going to give you the main part of it right now. The book is called *The Ritual Effect* by Michael Norton. I would say 'The Effect of Tradition'. This section is entitled, "The Family Table" and I think this is a very important tradition that we need to look at:

> Everyday family meals offer another opportunity for reinvention. In the United States, one in five family meals are now consumed in a car, and close to three-quarters are eaten outside the home. So, three-quarters eat their meals outside the home. Fewer than 33 percent of American families eat together at an actual table more than two times a week.
>
> An abundance of research over the past two decades has confirmed the power of reviving this ritual. In 2012, for example, a survey conducted by the National center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University found that regular family dinners were linked to a decreased rate of substance abuse in teenagers and an increase in feelings of connectedness between adolescents and their parents. One study of ninety-three parents with a first-grader showed that the benefits of mealtime rituals are particularly pronounced for boosting relationships between fathers and daughters, family members who otherwise spend

> less time together. It's not a question of *if* for most families; it's more a question of how. Between sports schedules, after-school jobs, commutes, and school days and work meetings that run late, how can we make the family meal into a meaningful event? (They are all factors of life aren't they? If you have young kids, you're probably a helicopter parent.)
>
> Psychiatrist Anne Fishel has some ideas. Fishel directs the Family and Couples Therapy Program at Massachusetts General Hospital, where she saw a need for more guidance on making this meal happen. She started the Family Dinner Project. The project is designed to transform family meals from habits to rituals; that is, from empty to meaningful experiences that connect family and enrich the lives of children.

It enriches the lives of children. That is why I bring this up. It provides a connectedness that we need. And maybe we all need to think about how we can come back to that. One of the tools that we have is the Sabbath. And the Sabbath starts *Friday* evening. So, there is a meal Friday evening and it's a great time for the family to connect. It should be a family tradition within God's Church.

The Friday night meal should be special. It's a time to realign the family structure as Paul referred to it in Corinthians. We have the Father, Christ, the physical father, wife, and children all aligned together. It is a time to realign with the church, fathers and mothers who have gone before us. It's a great time to do that. In this day and age that structure needs protection and nourishing. I am very, very grateful for the opportunity as a family that we have to get together. And on a Friday night, now that we are living in the same general area, we get together every Friday night. One Friday night at our place and one Friday night at Steven and Carrie's place. It's just a wonderful thing to do.

I would suggest that you don't have electronic devices at the table. We had a meal recently in a Mexican Restaurant. It was a little crowded and pushed together where you sat with an extended family whether you wanted to or not. Beside us was a husband and a wife and two children. They were interacting okay. But it was interesting. The kids, (teenagers) sat there with their iPhone and did whatever you do with an iPhone through the meal. We don't need to do that on the Sabbath. We can step away from that.

We have a situation in our family where a couple of the grandchildren are moving on, spreading their wings, gone to college, moving away. William goes down to southern California but he keeps the Sabbath with our daughter, JoAnn. We connect by video link. We're at our table eating and they're down in southern California and we communicate a little during the meal. So we keep that contact going. And I'm very, very

appreciate of that opportunity to do so. It's been an important part of our family's tradition for many, many years. Gillian and I have always tried to make the Sabbath meal, Friday night, a special meal. Candles, always. It's just something special. We've tried to do that and we still continue to try and do that.

I'll just make this comment because when we came here in 1984. Many will remember the size of the two congregations that were in Oakland–San Francisco area. After pastoring one year as an associate, I was promoted to pastor. The current pastor moved on and they didn't move anybody else in. So, I was here on my own for a whole year before Keith Britton turned up.

Most weeks, the only night I was home was Friday night. I always made sure I was home Friday night. And that was a very important night for us. It usually ended up in me wrestling with the kids, which I gave up when my daughter broke my collar bone. But that was a tradition in our family. We did something together after the meal and it was important. I still remember it very fondly. I think Steven and JoAnn probably remember it very fondly as well.

Look at a couple of principles that Paul refers to in 2 Corinthians 12:

2 Corinthians 12:14 Now for the third time I am ready to come to you. And I will not be burdensome to you; for I do not seek yours, but you...

I don't want your physical assets. I don't want your money. I'm not coming to get something from you. But I want to bring you into a closer, stronger relationship with God. And he uses this principle:

14 ...For the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.

He saw himself as a parent to the Church, the church members. And he saw it as his responsibility to lay up for them using the same principle again. We need the same kind of zeal for our families, fathers using a tradition to transmit godly values.

2 Corinthians 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion (fellowship) **of the Holy Spirit...**

That is an interesting principle here, the communion could be translated fellowship.. Fellowship can mean partnership, participation or social intercourse. What better way to have communion of the Holy Spirit than around a dinner table? Our children can understand spiritual things. They are holy. You can have spiritual discussions around a family dining table and the children can understand the principles that you're trying to communicate to them.

In days gone by, it was much more common for Church members to get together for meals in each other's homes. It was a fairly standard way of doing things back 'in the day' as they say. We don't have that anymore. Things have changed.

If I wanted Gary and Mary to come to my place for dinner, I would invite them to come out for dinner. That's at the end of the day. The commute for them would be something like two, two and a half hours to get from their place in Alameda to our place way out on the other side of the country. It's a long commute. That's one way. Two to two and a half hours commute one way. You just don't do it.

In line with that, we also went through a period of time as the church was breaking up, of not knowing who you could talk to. And many members would go to services, we would keep to ourselves, and we keep our mouths shut because we don't know who we can talk to. Because if you talk to somebody and say you're having trouble with the new truth you'll likely get a call from your pastor.

Satan has done a magnificent job of disconnecting. And this is where we stand today. We've got to break through this barrier somehow. I also want to leave you with a word of ***caution*** as well.

Not all traditions are positive. You can't view them all in a positive light. Not all spiritual traditions are spiritually beneficial. In Mark 7, Jesus Christ is not delving into the exact situation, but He's addressing traditions of men:

Mark 7:8 For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men...

Obviously the traditions of men is something that we watch out for and they're something to be avoided.

9 He said to them, "All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition.

A tradition is not just simply positive because it's a tradition. The meaning is very, very important of it. In **Colossians 2 :6**, we read: "**As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,"** Note verse 8:

Colossians 2:8 Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.

If you want a definition of what a tradition of men is, there it is. Philosophy and empty deceit. These are things to watch out for and I'm talking about in-house. I'm talking about where you get your information, how you process it and what you check against the word of God.

The real danger is not pagan traditions. I don't think any of us would have any trouble with recognizing the pagan customs, so the real danger is in philosophy and empty deceit, things reasoned to be wise by the human mind. I'm always mindful of this, going back to William Barclay and his commentary on 1 John. It is very interesting the way he approaches that. He says very clearly that these false teachers and they were in the

Church and Peter identified them very clearly, they were ***not*** introducing, in their mind, ***heresy***. They were wanting to improve the existing understanding of doctrine. Have we not seen a lot of that in the Church over the last number of years? Wanting to improve. We need to be very, very watchful and very careful. Paul said to Timothy:

<u>1 Timothy 6:20</u> O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge —

Maybe he was talking here about Gnosticism, gnostic thought, but maybe in your Bible it says “science”. It’s knowledge and we need to be very, very careful of what we are allowing in as knowledge into our minds. Paul was a good example of a ‘father’ who transmitted and handed down the teachings of Christ to Timothy and the way he conducted his ministry

<u>2 Thessalonians 3:6</u> But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us.

The word here for tradition is ***paradosis*** and it means ***transmission.*** According to that which we transmitted to you. He said very clearly that he received his understanding from Jesus Christ. And that’s what he felt, as a minister, was his responsibility to pass on to the people, generation to generation. Clearly, it’s a mission for the Church family which includes all families within the bounds of the Church. It is the transmission of godly doctrine and understanding. It’s a requirement from God. Tradition should play a very important part in that role.