

For the Sake of your Tradition

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The following message, "For the Sake of your Tradition" was a message delivered by Scott Brown at the Regional Uniting Church and Family Conference in Wake Forest, North Carolina in 2007.

I would like for you to take out your Bibles because we are now going to enter into a time of study of Scripture. I would like you to turn to Mark chapter seven and we are going to begin in verse five.

I am going to make four main observations and their application to family life from this text. Our text brings to our attention a kind of conflict that comes when the Lord Jesus Christ is reforming his Church. And, interestingly enough, the story here speaks of God's design for the family and how a particular tradition in Judaism was harming that design.

And so Mark is explaining how the Jewish Church had drifted from the commands of God and replaced them with their own traditions. I would like for us to read this text, Mark chapter seven verses five through 13.

Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, "Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?"

He answered and said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.' For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men—the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do."

He said to them, "All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition. For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.' But you say, 'If a man says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me is Corban" —'(that is, a gift to God), then you no longer let him do anything for his father or his mother,

making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do."¹

So here is the common conflict that comes when the Lord Jesus Christ is reforming his people. It is interesting. J C Ryle opens his commentary on Mark seven by saying, "This chapter is a humbling picture of what human nature is capable of doing in religion." He says, "It is one of those Scriptures that ought to be frequently and diligently studied. For all those who desire the prosperity of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ."

This is a humbling passage of Scripture because it does something that is very difficult for us. It brings up the question of our traditions. Now that is a problem. Here are just a couple of the problems of traditions.

Most of our traditions we came by honestly. We were born into this world and we began to walk in the traditions of this world. We had no defense against it. It is the way of the world.

Secondly, many of those traditions are contrary to the Word of God. Those are two big problems of traditions.

First of all, Jesus' disciples were being questioned for ignoring the unscriptural traditions of Judaism. In verse five we read the Pharisees and the scribes asked him why. "Why are you doing this?" They, the disciples were ignoring the traditions of Judaism and ignoring those traditions got them in trouble with the religious establishment.

Whenever men or women step outside of accepted traditions, they open themselves up to arrows and explosions and censurings and all kinds of things like that. And that is what the disciples were doing. They had stepped outside of the traditions not of holy Scripture, but they had stepped outside of the traditions of men that had worked their way into the practices of faithfulness to holy Scripture.

And the Jews did have some reasonable laws about cleanliness. There were washings required for particular situations and they... there is a principle, a godly principle behind each one of those. But the Pharisees took it far beyond the detail and the intent that Old Testament was defining.

I was interested to read another thing by J C Ryle. He said, "Once we leave the King's highway of truth we may end up washing pots and cups like the Pharisees and the scribes."

They had left the king's highway. Brothers and sisters, we, the Church, have left the king's highway regarding family life. That is one of the messages. Now the disciples here had gotten themselves into trouble because they had stepped outside of the traditions that had accumulated around godly practices.

¹ Mark 7:5-13.

The second thing that we see here is that the people of God were degraded in their practices and all was not well. All was not well with the Church and the temperature makes it very clear. And there was a degraded condition of the Jewish religion. They were like sheep without a shepherd. They had covered themselves up with external observances and [?] that ended up actually working against and contradicting the love of God. Contradicting the love of God is not something that you want to do. God does desire his love to be spread everywhere. And when our traditions stand against it, it is a tragedy. Traditions that replace the commands of God and the scribes and Pharisees that fall in love with things that were not of God.

And Jesus was sounding an alarm for the Pharisees and the scribes and Mark seven is a beautiful story that shows us the alarm that Jesus was sounding. They have left the king's highway and they had gone on their own, creating their own highway.

I would just like to say, you know, we here in this conference are sounding alarm. We are saying boldly, "Something has gone wrong in the Church." We believe that this at this time which we believe is one of the darkest hours in the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ men must stand up and say, "Hey, something is wrong." That is what the Lord Jesus Christ is doing in this passage of Scripture.

Notice the stern language that he uses. He is calling these people names. He is sounding a mighty, mighty alarm. And something has gone wrong in the Jewish Church and we say something has gone wrong in the modern Church and we are saying that it is wrong for us to continue and... with business as usual in the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ today regarding the home. And there must be a mighty reformation of practices not just in the home, but in the Church. There are many things that the Church must recover in this time.

Many who are looking at the Church today say that in two generations the Church will half its size. There are serious problems in the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. What we are saying is that worldly thinking has crept in to the practices of Church and home. And it has affected specific things, specific methods, specific principles of God and have contradicted them. The antithesis between those who follow Christ and those who do not is really becoming more clear.

Hey, all is not well in the Church. You know, 50 percent of the pastors in America have been divorced. Seventy percent of pastors in America constantly fight depression. Eighty percent of the pastors in America feel unqualified of their role as pastor and their seminary training didn't prepare them. Fifty percent of pastors are so discouraged by their role that they would leave the ministry today if they could.

How about this? Eighty percent of pastor's wives which their husbands had chosen another profession. And a majority of pastor's wives said the most destructive thing that ever happened in their lives was the day her husband entered the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Hey, all is not well in the Church today, 50 to 70 percent of pastors are regular users of pornography depending on what study you want to look at. And, of course we all know that there have been a number of studies in the last five years that have indicated that somewhere between 70 and 90 percent—some even say 94 percent of the children in the youth groups of our conservatives churches—will leave the faith by their freshman year of college.

But one thing enough should cause pastors all over America to stand up and scream, “Fire, fire. Something is wrong. Something has to be done about this.”

And that is one of the things that we are saying here. I bought a book the other day. Josh McDowell has written a book called *The Last Christian Generation*. He cites a study conducted by the Nehemiah Institute. They say 20,000 Christian students, 85 percent of the youth of Christian homes that attend public schools do not have a Christian world view. Six percent have a Christian world view. Sixty-three percent don’t believe that Jesus is the Son of God. Fifty-eight percent believe that all faiths teach equally valid truth. Fifty-one percent don’t believe that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. Sixty-five percent don’t believe that Satan is a reality. Sixty-eight percent don’t believe that the Holy Spirit is a real person. And there is no more than four percent difference between the attitudes and actions of professing Christian youth and non Christian young people.

The conclusion of that study was, hey, look, the youth in our conservative evangelical churches have departed the faith, past tense. It is done. Now what?

And, of course, we are saying we must go back and recover biblical discipleship methodologies in the home.

Hey, the preaching of the gospel from one generation to the next has been compromised because of traditions and practices that have invaded the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. And that warning that is here in this text, “You nicely set aside the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition,” is very relevant. We have traded inventions and pragmatic means that neither fulfill nor justify the ends that we are achieving from them.

So we are saying, “Yes, it is time to stand up and say we should not continue to do many of the things that we are doing in the church.”

The apostle Paul says, “Beware, lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men.”²

Hey, that is what the traditions of men can do to us. We are born into these traditions. They seem so harmless. We rise up within them. We raise our families in them. And we often don’t... it often may even take us a lifetime to realize that the traditions of men have cheated us. They have stolen from us the things of the glory of God.

² Colossians 2:8.

Peter said, “That you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers.”³

There are things, traditions of our fathers. There are traditions of our dear pastors who love the Lord Jesus Christ which are contrary to the Word of God.

Well, the people of God were degraded in their practices. All was not well. The Lord Jesus Christ was using very crisp language to explain it.

“You hypocrites,” is what he said.

Now if we said something like that we would get in actually more trouble than we are in right now. But the Lord Jesus Christ here is not afraid to use difficult language to explain problems that are in the Church. And we should have the same kind of boldness. We should be honest about what is going on. All is not well then and all is not well now. We need to understand that.

Jesus identifies five problems in this text that I think we should camp on and make sure that we understand what is happening here. The first is that outward things became more important than inward faithfulness.

“This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me.”⁴

Look at verse six. Do you see that? These words are stunning and really beautiful words and very convicting. There isn't a person in this room, including myself, who is not terribly convicted by this. This is not a problem of somebody else. This is my problem every single day. I honor God with my lips, but my heart is far from him. And this is our struggle as God's people. This is not just the problem of the bad guys who are messing up the Church. This is me. This is all of my children. This is my wife. This is the problem of the church that I am a shepherd at and it is our problem together in the Church.

But what was happening there they were pretending that practices were for the glory of God. But their hearts were actually far from God and they were governed by ambition, success, covetousness. The desire for success is often one of the great reasons why we continue to promote unbiblical things.

Unfortunately the traditions of men can cause a certain kind of success. I would just like to say that again. The traditions of men can cause a certain kind, a certain brand, a certain quality of success that we like. And if we stay on those traditions this success will stroke us and make us think everything is beautiful, but everything is not really beautiful.

The people of God in Jesus' day were paying lip service and they were very active.

³ 1 Peter 1:18.

⁴ Mark 7:6.

You know, there is no lack of activity. There is no lack of passion. There is no lack of stuff going on. There is no lack of programs and thoughts about the Church. The problem was they had begun to love their things and their heart was far from him. They were very active in performing their duties. But their activity replaced their piety.

The second thing that they did is that they taught things that were man centered, verse seven. They taught things that were man centered.

“And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”⁵

This is the identification of a problem that we all have. This had to do with the things that they taught. What is being taught? So when we read this we should say, “Well, what are we teaching in our churches?”

The Lord Jesus says that they were teaching things that were man centered.

What about us? This should cause us to think and pray, “Oh, Lord, what man centered practices are we teaching?”

You know, this is very difficult because... particularly for those who preach because we are men. We are mere men. Every word, every word we have ever spoken has some level of failure and sin in it. Not one movement, not one thing I have ever done is not somehow tainted by sin.

But, at the same time, there is a responsibility that we have not to teach the doctrine of man. They were teaching as doctrines the commandment of men. And they were saying this worship is vain. You know, God desires that we not worship our own way, but his way and we follow our own inventions and we make them authoritative doctrine. We find out something that works and we say everybody in the whole world has to do this when at the root of it actually might be the doctrine of man that promotes man.

And so not only did they teach the wrong things, they do this third thing. They actually lay aside what is of God and replace it with the inventions of man.

Verses eight and nine.

For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men—the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do. He said to them, "All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition."⁶

So the Jewish Church had fallen in the trap of replacing the commandment of God with their traditions. It is interesting in this text Jesus repeats this three times. Three times he says it and it is there for emphasis, there for awakening that this is a problem in the

⁵ Mark 7:7.

⁶ Mark 7:8-9.

Church. It was a problem in the Jewish Church and it is so obviously a problem in the modern Church.

These traditions of men work in so many winsome ways. They may on the surface seem harmless at the beginning at the time the practices might have seemed helpful and then they became required and then they became idols and then they became things that actually eclipsed the other good things that they... that the original intent never dreamed would bring about.

The Jews did have laws for washing and cleanliness and it did extend to the washing of utensils, but they invented new washings and new ideas and they took it far beyond the original meaning that God had in mind.

You can turn to Leviticus 11 and you can see where these washings came from. The ones that the scribes and the Pharisees added had the appearance of wisdom, but in actuality they diminished the true worship of God. They had actually added to the Word of God and at the same time laid aside what was clear.

It is the same thing as saying that Scripture is not sufficient, that we need something more.

How many additions to Scripture can be endured in the Church? How many additions to Scripture can be endured in the Church? That is what the Lord Jesus is saying. How many additions can be or should be endured in the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ? How far beyond Scripture can we go? How far will we go? How many practices are we allowed to invent and then to make them requirements in the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ?

When we do this we destroy the authority of God in the Church and we exalt our own.

We might say, "Well, you know, all things are lawful."

But if you do not follow that up and continue the sentence, "...but not all things are profitable."

How do you guarantee that something is profitable? You compare it with what is here. You open up God's holy Word and say, "Is there profit in this direction or not?"

Scripture helps us define where the profit and where the loss is. We should always be asking of this love of tradition has destroyed a lawful obligation. We must ask if our tradition has destroyed an obligation that God has placed upon us.

The fourth thing that we see here, not only did they lay aside, but they replaced it with the inventions of men. And so Jesus confronts the Pharisees because their traditions were affecting family relationships and responsibilities.

You see this in verses 10 to 12.

For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.' But you say, 'If a man says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me is Corban" —'(that is, a gift to God), then you no longer let him do anything for his father or his mother.'⁷

It is always interesting to me when I hear people say, "You know, the New Testament really doesn't have anything about the family."

That is absolutely not true. The New Testament has much to say about the family and family kinds of relationships.

Now Jesus is identifying a particular treasured tradition. It was the tradition of Corban. And it was causing, this tradition was causing the sons and daughters of Israel to violate the Fifth Commandment to honor their fathers and their mothers.

So here we have a precedent for the commandments of God regarding family obligations being set aside for the traditions of men.

There are many examples of this in Scripture. Here this is just one. And Jesus was constantly confronting the Jews because they had created so many creative laws and traditions that had no basis in holy Scripture. And, of course, on one occasion he wove a whip and he drove the money changers out of the temple because they had violated the principles of the Word of God regarding the worship of his people. The practices had drifted so far away from God's desires that he actually violently drove them out.

And Mark has a very interesting take on this. He gives us this moment of Jesus weaving the whip. He wove it by himself. It is very interesting. Can you imagine what he was thinking about when he was putting this whip together and braiding it together? He had time to think about what this whip was going to do and what it was all about.

You know, the Pharisees never opening denied the Fifth Commandment. Now that would never work. You would never contradict the Fifth Commandment in your ministry. You would never say, "Forget the Fifth Commandment."

No. You would never do that. The Pharisees didn't do that either. They just replaced the meaning of the Fifth Commandment with a bunch of other things. You know, the reformers of the 16th century faced a very similar situation.

Of course everyone in the Church has always believed that children should honor their parents, but in the 16th century the Catholics had added that if a child takes a monastic vow he is released from his duty to his parents. And the reformers came hard against his. Calvin was very careful to expose this wickedness, this wicked practice of the monastic

⁷ Mark 7:10-12.

vow that took children and put them in monasteries and they did not fulfill the commandments of God to take care of their parents. They went off by themselves and contemplated their navels and had no resources to take care of their older parents. It was dishonoring to their father and mother.

The reformers had this same situation.

But Jesus gives the example of how a man centered tradition in Judaism compromises an aspect of family life that is required by God.

So Corban released children from financial obligations to their parents. And the application of the Fifth Commandment argues that it is a godly thing to provide for your parents in their old age and that keeping money in the family for this reason is a good thing.

But, friends, he says, “No. Give it to God. Give it to the kingdom. That money is doing no good on this earth. Make it Corban.”

And many did. And they set aside the commandment of God to honor your father or mother by taking that money that should have been used to support their parents and giving it to the Church.

The ceremonies were in competition with the intentions of God regarding the honoring of father and mother. This tradition of Corban was diametrically opposed to the doctrine of honoring father and mother.

And so the Lord Jesus Christ chastises the Pharisees for this false doctrine because their traditions which were designed to promote their own selfish desires and build their own kingdom were being called into question. And Jesus here points out how easily human tradition can conflict with the moral purpose of the Word of God.

And this bears on so many issues here. How may we worship God? We worship him his way or our way. Are we free to invent things like Corban?

Jesus condemns them for departing from the king’s highway. You have seen this before. You have seen missionaries who claim dedication to God as the reason they abandon their families and they put their children away and they break the commandments of God regarding the discipleship of their children. They nicely set aside the commandment of God for the sake of their tradition. They desire something else.

How can you fulfill the commands of God for your children which are to bring them up in the training and the admonition of the Lord, to speak the commandments and the judgments of the Lord when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down and when you rise up? How can you fulfill those very clear commands when you are off on the mission field and your children are in a Christian orphanage

somewhere? How can you do that? You cannot fulfill the commandment of God doing that.

Now, it would be an interesting discussion to really develop this whole idea because there really are many nuances to it. We could turn to a number of passages of Scripture which really bear on this whole subject. We can speak about the passages of Scripture, for instance, in Matthew 19 where Jesus is dealing with many family problems.

In Matthew 19 in verses one through 10 he deals with divorce. In verses 11 and 12 he deals with problems of singles. And 13 through 15 he deals with children. And 16 through 26 issues of money and how they affect everything. And then he talks about loyalty to Christ over family. And in verses 27 through 30 there is a very interesting narrative here that speaks of all these different things. And it speaks of duties of the gospel and the conflicts to the family.

And someone comes up and says, “Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?”⁸

And Jesus says, “Well, you know the commandments, do them.”

And he was a rich man and he loved his riches and obviously riches can be very distracting for us in this world. They can be some of our greatest temptations, the bewitching power of wealth was upon this man. And Jesus said, “Well, it is very hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.” He says, “In fact, it is easy for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.”

And so the disciples were astonished and they said, “Well, how could we be saved?”

I mean, that is the question I ask every time I read this. “Lord, how can I be saved, because I, too, am a man wedded to this world?”

And then he says, “With men this is impossible. With God all things are possible.”⁹

And then he speaks, after speaking about the great tensions that the gospel brings in our relationship with money because the gospel always brings tumult and it will bring tumult to your pocketbook. The gospel will bring tumult to your family. It will bring tumult to everything.

And then the Lord Jesus said this and Peter answers and says, “See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?”¹⁰

And Jesus said:

⁸ Matthew 19:16.

⁹ Matthew 19:26.

¹⁰ Matthew 19:27.

Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.¹¹

And so he is saying here that there are many things that can distract us from the kingdom of God and your family is one of them. Your family can become an idol. And what he is saying here is that the gospel can bring a division in families. But I... from everything that I know about Scripture, I don't believe that Jesus is saying leave your family, reject the commandments of God to raise your children, reject the commandment of the God to be the head of your wife, reject the commandment of God that says teach your children when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down or rise up. That is not what Jesus is saying. He is saying when the gospel comes, when you fulfill the commandments of God it may mean that there is calamity and difficulty in the family and we should not idolize our families. Family idolatry is just as bad as any other kind of idolatry.

Jesus speaks of the same thing in another passage of Scripture where he speaks about the realities of the division that happens in families. It is not the division, though, of the man who says, "Hey, I am laying aside everything about honoring my father and mother. I am laying aside everything about loving and being the shepherd of my family."

Jesus is not calling us to set aside the commandments of God. He is calling us not to idolize our families so much that we reject the commandment of God. And we should be willing for division to be in our families but for the gospel not because of our traditions.

So Jesus is confronting the Pharisees because their traditions were affecting family relationships and responsibilities.

So here is a question for all of us. What traditions are there in your life, in my life now? What traditions are there in your church if you are a pastor, that are harming family life in the sense that they are causing, they are causing you to neglect a command of God? That is a question that we need to be asking when we read this passage of Scripture.

And then they were making the Word of God of no effect through their tradition, verse 13. If you look at these words, "Making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do."¹²

So there are many traditions in the Church today that harm family life and there are many things that have been adopted that have... in which something else of God has been banished. And so where will men stop once we have made the Word of God of no effect? Where will we stop?

¹¹ Matthew 19:28-30.

¹² Mark 7:13.

There are many traditions in our churches which cause fathers to violate the commandment of God. There are many traditions in our church that cause women to violate the commandment of God regarding their very clearly defined roles. There are many traditions in our churches which cause children to disconnect from and dishonor their parents. And whenever we elevate a man made obligation that causes us to set aside the commandment of God we have transgressed the law.

I want you to notice here Jesus is not throwing out the Old Testament. Have you noticed that? He is bringing the heart and the intent and actually the command of the Old Testament into real life in the Church. And we need to do that same thing.

We seem to live in a Christian culture that believes that the law of God can be violated without consequence and without danger, that we are at liberty to commit sin against the stated will of God because somehow we are free now to ignore the heart of God.

You know, for some reason it did not terrify the scribes and the Pharisees to trade the Word of God for tradition. Now, what about us? Are we terrified to trade the Word of God for a tradition? Would we have such a high view of the book that it would terrify us if we would set aside a commandment of God?

And so Jesus exposes the root of the problem. There were two foundational problems and one is a rejection of critical Bible doctrine, the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture. It is taking lightly the Word of God instead of taking it heavily without sufficient care and attention, taking it indifferently.

The doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture says that Scripture is enough, that it is all we need for life and godliness.

2 Timothy 3:16 says:

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.¹³

This is what the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture states. But we so lightly take the Word of God in our times.

Let me just give you an illustration of this. There are many ways lightly... we take so lightly the commands of God. I am going to give you one illustration.

Let's take the subject of fertility. There is one single unmixed, unqualified message from Genesis through Revelation on fertility. And here is what it is. You find it in Genesis to Adam, "Be fruitful and multiply." You find it from God to Noah, "Be fruitful and multiply." You find Rebekah's brothers rising up and saying, "Our sister, may you be the

¹³ 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

mother of thousands of ten thousands.” You have it in the Abrahamic covenant that you might be as the stars of the sky and the sands of the seashore.

That doesn't mean that we just sin that grace may abound. Absolutely not. We so lightly set aside the commandment of God because we don't take the commandment of God heavily, seriously as a mighty weight. We have got to read them carefully and go word to word and say, “Oh, Lord, help me to be a living picture of this. Help me to be a living picture of this fertility that you have defined. Oh Lord, humbly I take your Word upon me. I reject my own word. I reject my mother's word as it contradicts the Word of God.”

We so lightly set aside the commandment of God for the sake of our tradition. Instead, we should take it heavily.

Here is another example. What does God say about femininity? What does God say about the role of a woman? The Bible says that a woman should be a keeper at home. The Bible says that she should be a fruitful bearer of children. The Bible says that she should be a help meet. The Bible says that she should be a living demonstration of unfading beauty.

Well, let's just take one of those. Let's take that a woman should be, a wife should be a keeper at home. Let's just take that one.

Why is it? What is up with the Church who can read those words and go off and work 40 hours a week in a job away from her household and not be a helper to her husband and not be a keeper at home? What happened to us where the women in our churches are not saying, “Oh, Lord, help me. Help me to be a living picture of this. Help me to be a beautiful expression of these wonderful words that you have given. Help me to be a keeper at home. Help me to safely trust in my husband. Help me to call my husband lord. Help me to be a fruitful bearer of children. Oh, Lord, help me to focus my energies on home.”

Why is it? What is up with evangelicalism that so lightly sets aside the Word of God for the sake of our tradition?

Of course we know that feminism has invaded our whole beings. We can't even think without thinking like feminists. None of us can. I don't think we are even very well aware of how ungodly feminism has just soaked and we just can't even... we can't even think straight about it. What is up with the Church that has rejected the commandment of God for the sake of tradition?

Paul said, “I write to you that you may know how to conduct yourself in the Church of God, the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.”

Paul said to Timothy, “Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.”¹⁴

¹⁴ 2 Timothy 1:13.

The pattern. Hold fast to the pattern. Guard the deposit. Hold fast to the pattern.

What is the pattern? The word pattern is the word τυπος (too'-pos). It means impression. It means to strike or mark with a blow. It is a word that was used for the minting of coins where you have a dye, a hard dye coming down on a soft coin, a malleable coin.

If the coin is harder than the dye, then it won't work. It will break it. But God has designed a pattern for the Church that it would be impressed upon by the Word of God.

“Hold fast to the pattern,”¹⁵ the pattern. Where is the pattern in the Church today? What is the pattern in my home?

We must constantly be working to the pattern, not our salvation doesn't depend upon it. Absolutely. But there is a pattern and the dye must be harder than the blank.

Paul said to the Philippians, “Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.”¹⁶

For God does desire his pattern. God is a God of design. Every relationship in the family is designed for the glory of God. And unfortunately we have a condition that I am just going to call creative Christianity. Creative Christianity has created a Church that is indistinguishable from the world. And many modern Christian leaders that were just free to create the Church newly in every generation or every generation. And that is not right.

“Let's find the best way to engage the culture. Let's find a need and meet it.”

The only problem with that is it starts with man. It starts with earth and it doesn't start with the pattern. It doesn't start with heaven. It doesn't start with the Word which is eternal and will never pass away.

The third danger in the DNA of creative Christianity is that it is man centered and it rejects the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture. We should say, “What does the Scripture say? What does the Scripture say?”

The second foundational problem is that it is rejection of the principle of taking heed to biblical patterns.

And so we make a great appeal to the pattern of Scripture for Church and family and we say along with the apostle Paul, “If anyone is inclined to be contentious we have no other practice, we have no other pattern, nor do the churches of God.”

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Philippians 3:17.

And so Paul's statement here should forever affirm the idea that the Lord Jesus Christ presented with the Pharisees and the scribes that there are normative practices in the churches and in the homes and in the cultures, in all historical periods. And we have to decide whether we will emphasize biblical patterns or pragmatic patterns because there is a way that you ought to conduct yourself in the household of God.

I trust that his conference will call us back to the king's highway, that it will bring us back to love the patterns, to say, "Oh, Lord, I see what you have said about manhood. I see what you have said about womanhood. I realize the patterns of the world are contrary, that there is a hatred, there is a hatred toward these patterns that are here."

Every believer needs to understand that there is a hatred in the world for these things.

You know, when you were saved, did you say, "Oh, Lord, please don't touch these areas of my life?"

No, you didn't say this. You said, "Lord, where you lead me I will follow."

Many of you were saved singing, "I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back, no turning back. The world behind me, the cross before me."

That is how we were saved, but why don't we continue in it? We should continue in it. We need to understand something really important here. We live in a Christian environment today where the doctrine of sanctification is being set aside. The doctrine of sanctification states that there is an upward call, that there is progress, that old patterns are replaced, that we are renewed by God and our lives and our patterns change.

But do you know what we have today in evangelicalism? If you get saved and you change your patterns of family life, if you change your dress, if you change the things that you look at, if you change the things that you listen to, you are... people rise up and they say, "Legalist."

We have rejected the doctrine of sanctification in the Church. And that is the heart of it. And I am not standing up here claiming to be some holy person. But I do know this, that it is just as easy for me or you or any other pastor to set aside the commandment of God for the sake of our traditions. How easy it is to get off the king's highway, but oh how blessed it is, how fruitful, how fat, how lovely it is, how refreshing it is to step on the king's highway. For his ways are pleasant ways and all his paths are peace. He is a tree of life to those who embrace him and those who lay hold of him and his wisdom will be blessed.

Will you pray with me?

So Lord, you have given us the law to teach us, our school master, where we have erred. And you have given us your Son to take us by the hand, this shepherd, this precious marvelous shepherd full of grace and truth. Oh, Lord, come and take our hands now and

lead us through these times, through all these considerations to see how we might declare your glory from one generation to the next in the Church and in the home. May the angels do more deeply to see marvelous things that you are working among your people. In Jesus' name. Amen.