

University Heights Church  
of Christ  
445 Columbia Ave.,  
Lexington, KY 40508  
(859) 255-6257  
www.uheightschurch.com

#### WORSHIP SERVICES

##### **Sunday**

Bible Study: 9:45 AM

Worship: 10:45 AM; 6:00 PM

##### **Wednesday**

Bible Study: 7:30 PM (This is  
immediately followed by a  
short worship period)

##### **First Friday of Each Month**

Singing: 7:30 PM

#### LEADERSHIP

##### **Elders**

Garry Banks, David Collins,  
John Thompson

##### **Evangelist**

Adam Litmer

##### **Deacons**

Troy Antle, Richard Brundige,  
Matt Thompson, Adam  
Litmer, Bill Morelan, Jim  
Parsons, Pat Seabolt, Adam  
Daniels, Jamie Powell

#### Update

Ruth Poynter (Bennie's  
mother) is in UK  
Hospital at the time of  
this writing with a severe  
blood infection along  
with several other  
ailments. The infection  
must be dealt with before  
anything else can be  
done.

#### **Wisdom From The Wise**

The wise man said, "*Leave the presence of a fool, for there you do not meet words of knowledge.*" (Proverbs 14:7) Throughout the wisdom literature the thing that often separates the wise from the foolish is faithfulness and commitment to God. The one committed to God will be committed to His instruction and guidance, which will reflect in the manner in which his life is lived.

When I was a very young Christian and just beginning to enter the workforce I had a very bad habit of making friends with coworkers who were as ungodly as they could be. Their lifestyle was foolish and destructive. To put it bluntly, I had no business making such people close companions. Whatever positive influence I may have had on them was more than offset by the negative influence they had on me.

The apostle Paul expounded upon the wise man's theme in 2 Corinthians 6:14-18. He began the thought by offering this instruction: "*Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers.*" How many Christians have stumbled back into the world because they disregarded Paul's instruction? The wise man also said, "*Whoever walks with the wise will become wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.*" (Proverbs 13:20) The greatest wisdom is found in walking the path blazed by Christ. Let us make companions of those walking it.

#### **IN NEED OF PRAYERS**

Jeff Howerton, Rhonda Boyd, Paul Atkisson, Barbara Matheny, David Morrow, Debbie Parker, Vina Krissow, John Bennett, Robert Brundige, Donald Dawson, Gail Stein, Sandy Childress, Susie Burton, Jacob Profit, Valerie and Barry Boyd, Wilma Lawson, Jannett's mother and stepfather, Sandy Driver, Erlene Young, Doris Baker, Lyn Kincaid, Bernard Larch, Burnice Richardson, Ann Chrusiel, Janett Brundige's mother

# University Heights Messenger

Volume 7--Number 5

February 1, 2015

#### **Thoughts On Tradition**

Adam Litmer

In the time that I have been preaching much has been said about tradition within the Lord's church. It has been interesting to hear what's been said and read what's been written. Within the last several years a number of blogs and websites have begun that seem designed primarily to militate against what is called "Church of Christ tradition." The majority of the sites that I am aware of were started by Christians in their twenties or thirties, though a few are operated by those much older than that. The problem, according to many of the people who operate these sites, is that too often human traditions are elevated to the same level as inspired revelation. However, in their haste to make their point, they have a tendency to place the "our tradition" label on certain things that are not human traditions at all (necessity of baptism-Acts 2:38, instrumental music-Colossians 3:16, women evangelists and elders-1 Timothy 2:11-12; 3:2, etc.). While I believe their concerns are valid, I also believe they tend to run to very dangerous extremes.

Many brethren have arisen to combat these individuals, either through word or in writing. I have heard many brethren, usually older Christians, speak of the great arrogance involved in taking established traditions and tossing them all out as if the people who helped to establish them were not careful Bible students and had given no thought to the matter at all. It is insulting, they say, for young Christians to scoff at the traditions of those much older and more experienced. I could not agree more. Yet I have also listened as a defender of human tradition worked himself into such a frenzy that he concluded a young Christian who questioned a particular congregation's uninspired tradition may have very well forfeited his soul. Here, too, is a dangerous extreme.

The word "tradition" simply means, "The transmission of customs or beliefs from generation to generation." Much of what Christians do today is the result of inspired tradition. "*What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.*" (Philippians 4:9) "*Now we command you, brothers, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us.*" (2 Thessalonians 3:6) Sometimes people claim that a Christian from the first century would not recognize our worship assemblies today. I deny that and challenge them to produce the evidence reasoning solely from Scripture. We follow the same revelation they did,

thus we follow the same inspired traditions. No one has ever produced evidence to the contrary.

However, for the purposes of this article, *inspired* traditions are not really the issue at hand. Each individual congregation has its own peculiar *uninspired* traditions. We can see this in things like the order and times of worship, “special” assemblies like prayer or singing services, approach to Bible classes and meetings, and things of that nature. It is rare indeed to find two congregations who match perfectly in these areas. The question is this: how are such traditions to be viewed? Answering this question is so important because it will have a bearing in the way we view those who differ and/or advocate changing them. For the remainder of this article let’s consider a few thoughts on uninspired congregational traditions.

**Though they are in place for a reason, they are in need of constant examining.** Whether it is the times of service, an approach to gospel meetings, or how Bible classes are conducted, thoughtful Bible students with a wealth of experience established those traditions for a reason. Sometimes they did it to protect against potential problems, sometimes they did it to aid in carrying out an inspired command decently and in order, and sometimes they did it because the circumstances of the day were simply conducive to doing it that way. It is foolish and arrogant to disregard such traditions out of hand. Nothing that is the result of careful thought and Bible study should ever simply be dismissed.

At the same time, it is unrealistic to imagine that the world remains static. That potential problem of many years ago is perhaps something completely different today. That method that aided in carrying out a command many years ago may perhaps need some tweaking now. It is important to regard highly faithful saints who have gone before and to carefully consider why they established the traditions they did. It is equally important to regularly examine those traditions to ensure that they still meet the needs they were designed to meet.

**Souls will not be saved on the basis of their loyalty to uninspired human traditions, but to Christ** (Luke 9:23; John 21:21-22). This may sound a bit strange to you, but for many years I struggled mightily with congregations that did not have a closing song. The reason was not because Christ commanded it and not having one was a violation of his will. It was because my grandfather, whom I loved and admired tremendously, thought it was important to conclude a worship assembly with an energetic, up-tempo hymn for saints to carry out into the world with them. Was it immature of me to struggle this way? Probably. May I suggest that it happens among brethren all of the time?

It is not uncommon to hear brethren who prefer two Sunday worship assemblies and weeklong gospel meetings to speak disparagingly of those who do not. Just over a decade ago a congregation chose to have a single extended worship assembly on Sunday morning. A brother at another congregation with two assemblies began to rake them over the coals. He claimed they didn’t really want to worship God, that they were lazy, and that they were trying to do as little as possible. It was pointed out to him that they were actually meeting for

well over three hours with a few breaks spread throughout. There were more prayers being said, more time spent on the Lord’s Supper, more songs, and more time in Bible study and proclamation in that one assembly than they’d had in two. However, that brother would not accept it and eventually got to his real problem when he declared, “*We just don’t do it that way!*” He was not rejecting them because of any unfaithfulness to Christ, but because they were not following a human tradition he subscribed to. That’s a problem on *his* part, not theirs.

The same is often seen in relation to gospel meetings. Those of us who continue to stay with meetings that last a week must not besmirch the character or faithfulness of those congregations who have shortened them or chosen to go in a different direction altogether. There have been times when I’ve questioned their commitment because of this very thing and I was wrong to do so. Brethren from a hundred years ago, when meetings could span an entire month, could very well question *our* commitment. The disciples in Jerusalem who attended the temple and spent time together every day (Acts 2:46) could very well question us all! It is appropriate to point out that both society and circumstances have changed in the past one hundred years and certainly since the first century. That understanding alone should help us prevent viewing uninspired human traditions as sacred and above review.

Let us remember that an extended single worship assembly on Sunday or two “regular” assemblies is a decision each congregation is entitled to make for themselves. Let us recall that gospel meetings, whether they last a month, a week, or a weekend are traditions established by individual congregations to facilitate growing in the faith, evangelizing their communities, and building up the local body. If they determine there is a better way for them to meet those needs they have every right to do so and *I* have not the right to disparage them for it. Let us strive to remember that they will be saved on the basis of their faith in Christ, not their faithfulness to an uninspired human tradition, even if that tradition happens to be one that I prefer.

**So what do we do?** We remember that our congregational traditions, though uninspired, have a very important place. We recognize the good they do in serving as safeguards as well as helping to facilitate obedience to our Lord’s command’s. At the same time we recognize that our loyalty must not be to those traditions but to Jesus Christ himself. This understanding makes it easier to keep our uninspired traditions in their proper context so that they can be carefully and prayerfully examined to see if they continue to meet the needs they were designed to meet. If a change is necessary it can be made with the understanding that the design is to better serve our Lord and not to dishonor those who have gone before. When all of this is understood there is no cause to view brethren whose uninspired traditions differ from ours with suspicion or disdain.