

SUMMARY: A number of activities which we engage in are customs and/or traditions. It is not necessarily wrong to have customs and/or traditions

Custom (Webster's International): 1. a usage or practice common to many or to a particular place or class or habitual with an individual, b: long-established practice considered as unwritten law c: repeated practice d: the whole body of usages, practices, or conventions that regulate social life (other definitions regarding taxes).

Tradition (Webster's International): 1. an inherited, established, or customary pattern of thought, action, or behavior (as a religious practice or social custom), 2. the handing down of information, beliefs, and customs by word of mouth or by example from one generation to another without written instruction, 3. cultural continuity in social attitudes and institutions, 4. characteristic manner, method, or style.

Our definition of "custom/tradition of the church": any activity or belief which is done or taught regularly by the church that is:

- a. Not commanded (command, example, or necessary inference) in the New Testament, and
- b. For which you would be considered to be a displeasing member if you were not in conformance with the activity or belief.

WHAT THE BIBLE ACTUALLY SAYS:

There is little actual description of what first century worship services looked like.

1. Worship was on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7, 1 Cor. 16:1-2)
2. The worship services were initially in the temple. (Acts 2:46)
3. Worship services were then typically held in the home of a member rather than having dedicated buildings.
4. Baptisms were likely in rivers or similar available waters. The Jewish religions had Mikvahs for ceremonial baptisms. (The reason baptisms did not need to be explained.) (Acts 2:38, Acts 8:26-49)
5. Giving: As they initially had no facilities, utilities, or paid preachers, funds collected were primarily used for benevolence and missionary work. 1 Cor. 16:2, Acts 20:7
6. Preaching Acts 20:7
7. Singing, Eph. 5:19
8. Communion Mark 14, Acts 20:7
9. Prayer (Acts 2:42)

10. Shepherds as overseers (I Tim. 3:1-7 & Titus 1:5-9) (See lesson 6.8)
11. Deacons as servants of the church (I Timothy 3:8-13)
12. Ministers (Duties: II Tim. 4:2-5) (Can be paid I Cor.9:7-14, II Cor. 11:8)
13. Missionaries (Acts 15:40-41)

WHAT WE LEARN FROM HISTORY ABOUT THE FIRST CENTURY:

1. The speaker typically sat while the audience stood.

ACTIVITIES AND/OR PRACTICES WHICH MAY BE CUSTOMS OR TRADITIONS:

As little description is given of actual worship in the first century, numerous things are logically done and some are done so customarily that they take on the feeling of being scriptural. We should have considerable flexibility in practices we choose to implement to do so in ways which best support church growth.

1. Dedicated baptistries, New Testament baptisms were typically in rivers. (First century baptistries have been found) (Convenience).
2. Baptism by laying backwards.
3. Dedicated buildings (Convenience).
4. Use of multiple cups for communion rather than a single cup. (Practicality of serving a large group of Christians)
5. Passing of collection plates rather than central collection.
6. Worship twice on Sunday.
7. Wednesday evening service.
8. Separate Bible classes. (Started in the 1780s)
9. Elders being in physical charge of the church in addition to spiritual charge. (There were not physical plants in the first century.)
10. 1 hour long services.
11. Song leader, song books, 4-part harmony.
12. Having an invitation song.
13. Lack of responsive readings, clapping.
14. Lack of raising hands.
15. Always bowing heads during prayer.

16. Opening and closing all worship services with a prayer.
17. Confessing that you have sins rather than confessing your sins. (James 5:16)
18. Creation of the heavens and the earth in 144 hours.
19. Criticism of social drinking and dancing.
20. Swearing in court. (James 5:12)

THINGS TAUGHT IN THE FIRST CENTURY WHICH ARE NOT DONE TODAY

1. Foot washing (John 13:5-15) (Was a social rather than a religious custom which reflected the long walks taken in an arid area with open toed sandals and having dirty feet. There is no comparable custom today. Jesus was instructing us to serve others in humbling ways as He did according to this example.)
2. Greeting one another with a Holy Kiss (Romans 16:16) (Contemporary custom, today's comparable custom is shaking hands).
3. Anointing with oil (James 5:14) Contemporary practice which was associated with miracles. Oils have some medicinal value.
4. Miraculous manifestations of the Holy Spirit (miracles). They do not exist today.
5. Widow's list (I Tim. 5:3-16).