

## Matthew 15

Has ever tried to assemble furniture or use a new gadget without reading the instructions, only to find it frustrating or even broken.

- Men, where are ya? You know most, if not all of us have tried this – (we say) ***Nah, I got this***
  - After several hours of frustration, your wife lovingly suggests you consult the owner's manual
- God's Word is our Ultimate "Owner's Manual" for life and Faith
- He has created us in His image by His design – Just as ignoring the manufacturer's instructions can lead to malfunction, ignoring God's perfect Word in favor of our own ideas, traditions, or even our good ole American Know-How, can lead to spiritual frustration and deviation from His design!

Just like we sometimes try to navigate life without reading the instruction manual, there were people in Jesus' day who were doing something similar, but with far greater consequences.

- They were neglecting God's perfect instruction manual—His Holy Word—in favor of their own rules and traditions. And it created quite the controversy.
- If you have your Bibles, turn with me to **Matthew chapter 15**, where we witness a direct confrontation between Jesus and the religious leaders of His day—the Pharisees and scribes.
- This passage is pivotal because it exposes a timeless danger: the temptation to elevate our human customs, our traditions, and our interpretations above the very Word of God itself."

**Matthew 15:1-20** - Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying, <sup>2</sup>"Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread."

**Matthew 15:3-7** - <sup>3</sup>He answered and said to them, "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? <sup>4</sup>For God commanded, saying, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.'<sup>5</sup> But you say, 'Whoever says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God"—<sup>6</sup> then he need not honor his father or mother.' Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition. <sup>7</sup>Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying:

**Matthew 15:8-9<sup>8</sup>** 'These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with *their* lips, But their heart is far from Me. <sup>9</sup>And in vain they worship Me, Teaching *as* doctrines the commandments of men.' "

The Controversy was not that the disciples didn't wash up for dinner – It's called...

- **Netilat Yadayim** ([neh-tee-LAHT yah-DAH-yeem](#)) The name means "**lifting up the hands.**"
- This washing was **not about hygiene**, but about **ceremonial purity**. (Pour water over hands, twice This was part of the tradition of elder ( oral law )
- This was not commended in the OT Law
- The idea was that hands might become ritually unclean through daily contact with the world.

- The Pharisees believed this practice helped bring **Temple-like holiness into everyday life**, treating the dining table almost like a small altar.

The Religious Leaders elevated these tradition equal to, if not more important than the Written Word.

Jesus Gives an Example...Claim to Donate to money to the Lord but

- The Pharisees and scribes had come up with a way that allowed children *not* to provide for their parents
- If parents needed something but a child didn't want to give it to the, the child could simply claim that what was needed was dedicated to the Lord...and yet not give it the Lord...
- This tradition could be used to avoid honoring one's father and mother.

If we are going to have Real Devotion – We must

### **Magnify The Word**

**Matthew 15:6** – "...Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition."

- Making . . . of no effect" means "to deprive of authority" or "to cancel."

The Religious Leaders had raised their traditions to a level that undermined the Word of God. Let me illustrate it this way...

A man once bought a beautiful lamp for his living room.

- Over time he liked the **lampshade** so much that he kept upgrading it—bigger, nicer, more decorative. Eventually the shade became so large and heavy that it **blocked the light completely**.

The lamp was still there, but the **light couldn't shine**.

- That's what happens when traditions grow bigger than God's Word. Traditions can be helpful, like a lampshade guiding the light—but when they become more important than Scripture, they **block the very light they were meant to support**.

**Traditions may guide us, but Scripture must govern us.**

**Our response should be to let Scripture shape our traditions, not the other way around.**

1. We should hold traditions loosely but hold tightly to the authority of God's Word.
2. The Christian posture is humble submission to the authority of God's Word.

**Traditions may guide us, but Scripture must govern us.**

**Psalms 119:89** - For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.

**Hebrews 4:12** - For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

**2 Peter 1:19-21** And so we have the prophetic word confirmed,

- Peter just recounted his experience on the Mount of Transfiguration (Mt. 17) He said we have a more sure word
- In essence, Peter is ranking Scripture over Experience. He says,

**2 Peter 1:19-21** ...which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; <sup>20</sup> knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, <sup>21</sup> for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit...no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God"

### **Magnify the Word - Personally**

**John 8:31-32** – Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. <sup>32</sup> And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

**Get into the Word until the Word gets into you –**

**Let it be at Home in you**

**Colossians 3:16** - Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

- Means "to **take up residence**; to **saturate** our minds and heart; to be the **abundance source of our thoughts and actions.**"
- Make the Word of God so at home in your life that it affects every area – Memorize & Meditate

### **Magnify the Word – Collectively ( The Church )**

**Acts 2:42** - And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. ( v. 46-Worshiping in the Temple / Gather from House to House)

**Hebrews 10:24-25** - And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, <sup>25</sup> not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as *is* the manner of some, but exhorting *one another*, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

We Value God's Word – We Abide not only Personally but Collectively – here's how Alignment Benefit of Alignment – Aligning Bible Reading, Group Studies, and Preaching Series

**1. It helps Families have spiritual conversations: Family Devotions**

**2. Alignment Multiplies Scripture's Effectiveness**

- Repetition is the Key to Learning
  - **Strengthens neural pathways:** Repeated exposure to information creates stronger, quicker pathways in the brain, similar to how a worn path is easier to walk than one through tall grass.
  - **Spaced repetition:** Spreading out repetitions over time is more effective than cramming them all into one day. For example, repeating a math equation ten times over a week is better than repeating it twenty times in one day.

**Flows from our Theology – Mission, Vision and Values**

- We Value God's Word – We Abide
- We are Relentlessly Pursuing God's Design, alignment enhances that

3 Ways to Listen and Apply Actively

**1. Prepare Your Heart Beforehand**

## 2. Pay Attention – Take Notes

## 3. Participate in Discuss and Apply Afterwards (Identify a Key Take away / Action

### Solidify Our Beliefs

When we Magnify God's Word, we can then solidify our beliefs

There is a couple of things going on here –

1. Unwashed Hands
2. False Claim - If parents needed something but a child didn't want to give it to the, the child could simply claim that what was needed was dedicated to the Lord...and yet not give it the Lord...

Both of these were examples of the Religious Leaders elevating their traditions to a level that undermined the Word of God.

**Matthew 15:6-8** - <sup>6</sup>... Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition. <sup>7</sup>Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: 'These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with *their* lips, But their heart is far from Me. <sup>9</sup>And in vain they worship Me, Teaching *as* doctrines the commandments of men.' "

This is Imperative that we understand this – Nothing wrong with Ritual of Washing Hands (Problem was the elevation of this ritual to the level of even above the Word of God

### Something that I have found helpful is what Dr. Al Mohler called Theologica Triage.

- **Dr. Mohler, President of Southern Seminary** borrowed, if you will, the concept of Triage from the emergency medicine, where doctors categorize injuries to priorities treatment.
- That way a scraped knee will not get the same urgency of consideration as head trauma

Mohler applies this to Christian doctrine, suggesting we categorize beliefs based on their importance:

#### 1. **First-Order Doctrines:** These are the **essentials** of the Christian faith.

- Things like the Trinity, the deity and resurrection of Christ, salvation by grace through faith alone, the inerrancy of Scripture.
- If you disagree on these, you're essentially disagreeing on what it means to be a Christian. They are non-negotiable for true faith.
- Paul said in 1 Cor. 15 – I passed on to you what was of FIRST IMPORTANCE – THAT IS THE GOSPEL

#### 2. **Second-Order Doctrines:** These are doctrines that are **crucial for church cooperation and denominational identity.**

- Issues like the mode of baptism, church governance (e.g., congregational vs. elder-led), or specific understandings of end times prophecy.
- Disagreement here might prevent us from being in full fellowship or serving together in the same local church or denomination, but doesn't mean someone isn't a believer.

3. **Third-Order Doctrines:** These are matters where **Christians can genuinely disagree and still maintain warm fellowship and cooperate in ministry.**

- Things like worship styles, end times, or even personal convictions on certain practices not explicitly commanded or forbidden by Scripture.
- These are important, but not essential to faith or even necessarily to local church unity.
- In fact, believers with different views can comfortably belong to the same local church and even enjoy thoughtful, friendly dialogue about their differences.

**Problem in Jesus' Day**

- The Religious Leaders had elevated a man-made rules and dietary customs to what were at best **third-order issues** – to first order importance
- They elevated human rules with God's Direct Commands
- And Judging Jesus and his disciples by it
- And in doing so, they completely missed the true **first-order commands** of God: things like honoring your parents (which Jesus highlights) and the very heart of the Law, which is about inner purity and love for God. They were majoring in minors and missing the majors.

This is why Jesus' words are so sharp: 'You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to human traditions.' (Mark 7:8, a parallel passage). He was saying, 'You've confused the triage! You're treating what should be a minor preference as a core essential, and in doing so, you're actually violating God's true essentials.'

**Application for Us:**

- "This passage challenges us to constantly evaluate our own lives and our own church. Are we, like the Pharisees, sometimes elevating our preferences, our cultural norms, or even our cherished traditions (which may be good in themselves!) to the point where they become more important than the clear, unvarnished Word of God? Are we sometimes creating divisions in the body of Christ over what should be third-order issues, while neglecting the crucial first-order truths that unite us and the second-order truths that define our fellowship?

Theological Triage reminds us that true faithfulness is not about adhering to every human custom, but about humbly submitting to God's Word, giving priority to what *He* says is most important."

**Illustration:** Imagine you're going on a trip and you have **three suitcases**.

- The **first suitcase** contains the things you absolutely cannot travel without—your passport, wallet, medication, and phone. If you lose this suitcase, the trip is in serious trouble. These are the **non-negotiables**.
- The **second suitcase** contains important things for the trip—clothes, shoes, and toiletries. You still need them, but if someone else packs a little differently than you do, it doesn't mean they're not going on the same trip.
- The **third suitcase** contains extras—maybe a favorite hat, a book, or a pair of sandals. These are nice to have, but if someone else packs differently, it doesn't really affect the trip at all.

The Christian faith is similar.

- There are **Tier 1 truths**—the gospel itself: who Jesus is, His death and resurrection, and salvation by grace through faith. If we lose these, we lose Christianity itself.
- There are **Tier 2 issues**—important church distinctives like baptism or church governance. Faithful believers may disagree here, which is why we have different denominations.
- Then there are **Tier 3 issues**—things like end-times views or other secondary debates where believers can disagree and still worship, serve, and fellowship together in the same church.

The wisdom of theological maturity is **knowing which suitcase an issue belongs in.**

- Some people put everything in suitcase #1 and end up fighting about everything. Others put everything in suitcase #3 and end up standing for nothing.
- But the church stays healthy when we **hold tightly to the gospel, hold our convictions with humility, and hold our brothers and sisters with love.**

**Hebrews 10:23** - Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.

### Fortify Our Faith

**Matthew 15:10-11** - <sup>10</sup> When He had called the multitude to *Himself*, He said to them, "Hear and understand: <sup>11</sup> Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man." (Peter says, would you explain this)

<sup>16</sup> So Jesus said, "Are you also still without understanding? <sup>17</sup> Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated? <sup>18</sup> But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. <sup>19</sup> For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. <sup>20</sup> **These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man.**"

**When we Magnify the Word –**

**Solidify our Beliefs,**

**we will Fortify our Faith**

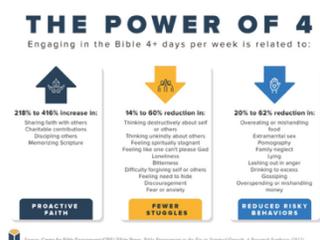
**Proverbs 4:23** - Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.

**2 Timothy 3:16-17** - All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

The Power of Four –

In a recent study from the Center for Bible Engagement, they said...

- If you read the Word of God 1,2, or 3 times a week, the results are **negligible** – It has little or no effect on your life
- What they saw is that when you got to 4 times or more a week, people's lives radically changed...
  - Feelings of loneliness decreased by 30%
  - Feelings of anger dropped by 32%



- Viewing pornography decreased by 61%
- (Positive results) Sharing your faith increased by 200%
- Discipling other increased 230% - teaching someone else God's Word

We all know the importance, but here is the reality

- 85% of U.S. Households own a Bible
- There are 4.4 Bible in every US Household
- 46% of American read "no more than once/twice a year"
- Reading decline in proportion with the moral decay of our society

**Romans 10:17** - So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

- YOU WANT TO FORTIFY YOUR FAITH – GET INTO THE WORD, UNTIL IT GETS INTO YOU

***The heart of the matter is the heart!***

"As we close, think about building a house.

- The most important part isn't the paint color, or even the design of the rooms; it's the **foundation**. You dig deep, you pour solid concrete, because everything else depends on that unshakeable base.
- Now imagine if the builder tried to put something else in place of that concrete – maybe some pretty stones, or even a stack of old books. It might look okay for a moment, but it's not a real foundation, and that house won't last.

Friends, God's Word is our concrete foundation.

- Our traditions, our preferences, our cultural ways – these can be like the paint color or the decorative stones. They might be familiar, even comforting. But if we ever mistake them for the foundation, or put them *above* God's clear truth, our spiritual house is in danger.
- Let's commit today to building our lives and our church squarely on the unshakeable foundation of God's Word. Let nothing else take its place, so that when the storms come, we will stand firm."