

Four Keys #4

Living Rituals



1. TRADITIONS AND RITUALS?

A "tradition" or "ritual" is something that we regularly repeat!

I'll never forget when I first heard our seminary lecturer talking about rituals. I really disliked the idea of ritual or tradition. So I marched up to Joe Strelan's office to tell him how wrong he was. But he asked me if I never did the something the same way twice. He asked if I washed regularly. He asked if I ever brushed my teeth. Then he asked if I celebrated Easter! His point was well made – rituals (and habits) are essential to life. Some years later I was talking to a pastor of a Pentecostal Mega-Church – he told me quietly that although his church looked more "free" their worship pattern was as rigid as the Catholics in the Vatican. He noticed that ritual patterns are natural. The question is "are they healthy?" Rituals can be living or dead, helpful or unhelpful, Christ centred or idolatry. Which are yours?

2. BEWARE OF DEAD TRADITION

**Dead Tradition: Unchangeable, tradition for tradition's sake,
Repeated action that enslaves us, which has lost its meaning
Used to judge or exclude people! Even good things can become this over time.**

Can you name a dead tradition?

Mark 2:23-28. One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grain fields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain. The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is against our law on the Sabbath?" He answered, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? In the days of Abiathar the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions." Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for people, not people or the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

Colossians 2:16-17. Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.

Lutherans do appreciate tradition. But the founders of our Lutheran Church recognised that loving people and sharing God's love comes before even our cherished church traditions. Our core document 'The Augsburg Confession' Of 1530 says:

It is enough for the true unity of the church to agree about the teaching of the gospel and the giving of the sacraments. It is not necessary that human traditions, rituals, or ceremonies instituted by human beings be the same everywhere. As Paul says "one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all..." (Augsburg Confession Article 7)

3. HEALTHY RITUALS: REPEATED ACTIONS THAT POSITIVELY FORM CHARACTER AND IDENTITY.

Living Rituals: things we repeat with meaning and purpose – that form us in Christ's image.

- Give us a sense of "who I am" (identity) and "that I belong" (community).
- Grow relationships.
- Teach values.
- Share God's word of grace.

Deuteronomy 6:20-22 [Living Bible]

"In the years to come when your child asks you, 'What is the purpose of these laws which the Lord our God has given us?' tell them, 'We were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt, and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with great power and mighty miracles-with terrible blows against Egypt and Pharaoh and all his people. We saw it all with our own eyes...'

4. DISCUSSION: DAILY, WEEKLY, ANNUAL RITUALS?

What Are Our Daily And Weekly Rituals?

What Are Our Annual Rituals?

What Are Our Occasional Rituals And Traditions?

5. DISCIPLES HAVE DISCIPLINES – HEALTHY HABITS THAT FORM US IN CHRIST'S IMAGE!

"Let the word of Christ completely fill your lives, while you use all your wisdom to teach and instruct each other. With thankful hearts, sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs to God" - Colossians 3:16

Why not take some "homework" home and discuss this with your family today or tonight. List your rituals and work out how you might use one of them to grow your faith.

For Deeper Meditation: Rituals and Traditions To Help Form Faith With Those You Love:

- Eat meals together... and without the TV or radio on.
- Saying "thank you". Saying "The Lord's Prayer". Goodbye hugs.
- What about a "highs and lows" habit with those you love? Or table grace? Or a daily 'check-in'?
- Birthdays, anniversaries, baptismal anniversaries... include prayer in them!
- Observe special church seasons at home e.g. Christmas, Lent, Holy Week, Pentecost.
- Community events: Australia Day, ANZAC Day, the Boxing Day Test, Origin?