

Pursuing Partnership: Moving Mountains of Strongholds

Stronghold #5 – Tradition and Fear of Change

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In this series of blogs, Leslie and Chad identify spiritual strongholds that need to be unearthed and removed so that godly men and women can partner well together for the completion of the Great Commission. Pray with us into these mountains, and by faith may these tectonic plates move in Jesus' name!

Tradition and Fear of Change



“To be Syrian is to be Muslim.” “To be Bhutanese is to be Buddhist.” “India for the Hindus!”

Cultural identity and tradition run deep, especially in cultures that go back hundreds or thousands of years. In many of these worldviews, the enemy keeps people bound by beliefs and practices that do not acknowledge the Most High God or the standards of God’s kingdom. Tradition screams loudly, and people naturally resist change!

As Christians, it is easy to look at these traditions and immediately recognize the Enemy who wants to kill, steal, and destroy. The enemy wants to trap people in cultures of hopelessness and death. As a result, many traditions lead to destruction.

Consider:

- India's history of *seti* (living widows were burned on the cremation fire of their deceased husbands).
- "Honor killings" in the Middle East (women can be stoned/killed if the family has lost honor.)
- Prostitution in Southeast Asia (families intentionally send their daughter to the city to "work" and provide money for the family).
- Female genital mutilation (FGM/female circumcision) in African villages to insure fidelity.
- Foot-binding in China (taught that crippled female feet were beautiful and desirable).
- Rampant sexual immorality (devalues bodies and promotes abortion, government dependence, or cycles of poverty).
- Chest-binding on the rise in the U.S. (women compress their chests because of gender chaos.)

The enemy seeks to keep perverse practices culturally esteemed. *"That's just the way it is"* or *"This ensures faithfulness"* or *"This promotes beauty"* are powerful phrases that keep tradition (and destruction) going strong.

When brave followers of Christ work to stop barbaric practices, the resistance intensifies. *"Leave our culture alone!"*, *"This is our tradition!"*, *"Who are you to change our culture? This is how our ancestors practiced, and we honor them!"*, *"Our spiritual leaders say it's okay."*, *"Are you saying that our grandparents were wrong?"* You can hear the pride, the fear, and the resistance.

Good Thing We Are Not So Bad...

Followers of Christ can agree that blatant injustices (like the ones listed above) are wrong/dishonorable. But what about our own traditions? Do any of our church traditions violate the ethics of God's kingdom? Do any of our traditions that seem so right hinder God's mission in the world? Do any of our traditions cause us to prefer one gender and devalue the other?

Consider:

- Can a godly, gifted woman preach?
- Who can pray aloud in your congregational church model? Who is asked to pray?
- Who baptizes new believers?
- Can anyone distribute the elements of communion?
- Are godly men and women given the same titles/votes/opportunities?

The enemy loves a Church guided by policies and practices that cut, cripple, and bind. Some churches, believing they are following God, needlessly limit godly women and say, *"That's just the way it is."* Or *"We value men and women equally, but women cannot serve as men can. But there are so many ways women can serve!"* These powerful phrases keep traditions going strong.

Ahh, even if the enemy cannot maim or kill them in the local church, he aims to shrivel women's influence, steal their dignity, divide God's laborers, and reduce their output and effectiveness. God wants people to create culture that lines up with His character, His standards. Jesus came preaching the kingdom of God and demonstrating its ethic. There are aspects of every culture that line up to God's kingdom culture, and there are aspects of every culture that violate God's kingdom culture. Local

churches also have practices that line up to God's kingdom culture, and probably have areas that contradict God's kingdom culture.

Origin and Destination

If you are a person more comfortable looking *back* fondly to the "ancient ways" of tradition, then consider that GOD'S ORIGINAL PLAN for men and women is "**even more ancient**" than any fallen human culture. God's design came before your childhood pastor, before your denomination, before your national heritage, before your religious traditions... God is the ORIGINAL foundation. If we love old traditions, then we MUST love God's design. *It came before everything!* And **God's design from the very beginning was for men and women to be side-by-side, shoulder-to-shoulder fulfilling the five commands of both Genesis 1:28 and Matthew 28:18-20!**

By contrast, if you love thinking about "future-possibilities," then consider that GOD'S ULTIMATE PLAN for men and women in his kingdom is more "future" and more "enduring" than any fallen culture! And of course, in God's eternal kingdom, will men rule over women? Will women rule over men? NO! Jesus had a simple and powerful battleplan against the demonic stronghold of tradition... know God's standard and live it out – even when God's kingdom culture runs counter-cultural to our own. The enemy wants happy, entertained, plump, inward-looking, comfort-seeking Christians who find satisfaction in traditions. The enemy wants timid Christians too passive and too afraid to take a bold stand for Jesus and his kingdom culture regarding men and women.

Pray God's people line up with God's character and live out God's kingdom! May the mountains of TRADITION and FEAR OF CHANGE be moved, in Jesus' name!