

**The Character of Jesus 33**  
**Matthew 15:1 – 20, Mark 7:1 – 23, John 7:1**  
**Tradition**

- Characteristic: Thinking through tradition
  - Following the Matthew account
  - (1 – 2) Mark adds examples of ceremonial hand-washing before meals, bathing after visiting the marketplace, and ceremonial washing of utensils.
    - The assumption was made that a person or utensil may have become unclean without direct knowledge of the event. Of course, an unclean person may have inadvertently touched something. Of greater weight was the fact that many Gentiles were mixed into their society, so uncleanness “must” be rampant.
    - The assumption was made that these traditions had been given by God to Moses, who relayed them orally, as did the rabbis of old. However, no proof for these traditions can be found before the Babylonian Captivity.
  - (3 – 9) Jesus assessed the traditions and found that the traditions cause the people to fail to comply with the Law.
    - Exodus 20:12, Deuteronomy 5:16, Exodus 21:17, Leviticus 20:9 Honoring and not speaking evil of parents were fundamental precepts of the Law. Jesus concluded that financial support of aged parents would be part of honoring them.
    - A tradition developed that allowed a son to declare a plot of land to be a gift to God. Conveniently, the same plot of land also had been dedicated to the support of the parents. The produce from that land was then donated at the Temple rather than being given to the parents. The last step is what makes this profitable to the son; the donated produce was counted as part of the son’s tithe.
    - Isaiah 29:13 Seven centuries earlier, God had complained of the very same problem. Even during the reign of Hezekiah, as reasonably good king, ritual had overtaken understanding, so their allegiance to God was worthless.
  - (10 – 11) To the multitude, Jesus gave the principle that the heart is what is important; the rituals only illustrate. Without the heart, the rituals are meaningless.
  - (12 – 14) Jesus’ disciples cautioned Jesus about being so shocking to the Pharisees.
    - Jesus told them to ignore the Pharisees; God will handle them.
    - Jesus characterized the Pharisees as blind guides of the blind, both of whom will fall in a ditch.
  - (15 – 20) Peter, representing the disciples, asked for further clarification.
    - Jesus used more words to say the same thing.
    - Mark adds, “Thereby making all foods clean.” This was not the end of the dietary rules, since Jesus did not change anything about the Law (Matthew 5:18). Rather, this is akin to the quote from Hosea 6:6, “I desire mercy and not sacrifice.”
- Application: Thinking through tradition
  - Is our thinking rooted in tradition, or have we analyzed and taught the meaning of each tradition?
  - What traditions do we have?

- “Command, Example, and Necessary Inference”, “The Authority of the Scriptures,” and “The Silence of the Scriptures” are theories invented by people that causes principles to be overlooked.
  - How many commands are there?
  - Who decides which examples to follow and which are unimportant?
  - Silence is not the issue, but mutual exclusivity
- Five acts of worship
- Steps to salvation
- And many more
- Do we learn what our symbols mean?
- Ignore the legalists. God will handle it. Spend time on the good stuff.