



**CULTURAL BAGGAGE WE LAYER ONTO CHURCH**

We are the Church – Part 2

Pastor Keith Stewart

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“Traditionalism is the dead faith of the living.” - Jaroslav Pelikan

“The good old days weren’t always good, and tomorrow ain’t as bad as it seems.” – Billy Joel

*Do not say, “Why were the old days better than these?” For it is not wise to ask such questions. Ecclesiastes 7.10*

“You do not move ahead by constantly looking in a rearview mirror. The past is a rudder to guide you, not an anchor to drag you. We must learn from the past but not live in the past.” – Dr. Warren W. Wiersbe

*Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? Isaiah 43.18-19*

***Don't bookmark your experience with God!***

## **1. THE PROBLEM WITH NOSTALGIA**

- ❑ The enemy uses it to destroy hope.

*Now the rabble that was among them had a strong craving. And the people of Israel also wept again and said, "Oh that we had meat to eat! We remember the fish we ate in Egypt that cost nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic. But now our strength is dried up, and there is nothing at all but this manna to look at." Numbers 11.4-6*

*If your security is rooted in the past, then that's where you'll always end up.*

- ❑ Nostalgia causes us to misread the past.

*People prefer predictable misery over the uncertainty of happiness.*

- ❑ It's a sign of decline.
- ❑ It's a form of idolatry.

"Whenever we take what God has done and put it in the place of God, we become idolators." – Oswald Chambers



*He...broke up the bronze serpent that Moses had made, because the people of Israel had begun to worship it by burning incense to it; even though, as King Hezekiah pointed out to them, it was merely a piece of bronze. 2 Kings 18.4*

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## ***2. IT'S NOT ALWAYS BEEN DONE THIS WAY***

### **❑ Singing Hymns**

*Remember the days of old; consider the generations long past. Ask your father and he will tell you, your elders, and they will explain to you. Deuteronomy 32.7*

*No one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the new wine will burst the skins and will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed. But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins. Luke 5.38*

"Willie, these are our people; these are the people I want you to live for and bring to Christ." – William Booth



"Secular music, do you say, belongs to the devil? Does it? Well, if it did, I would plunder him for it, for he has no right to a single note of the whole seven. Every note, and every strain, and every harmony is divine and belongs to us. So, consecrate your voice and your instruments. Offer them to God. And use them to make all the hearts about you merry before the Lord." – William Booth

#### ❑ Expository preaching

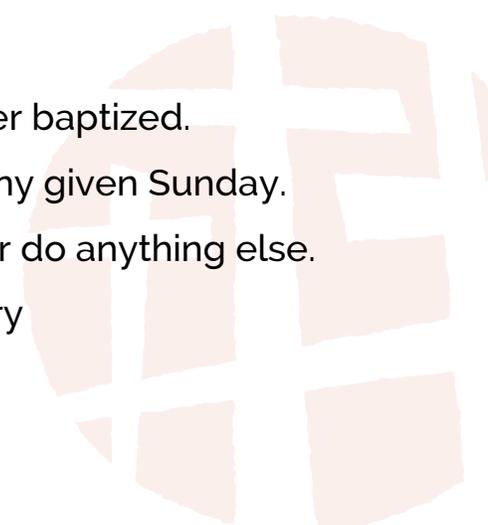
"...there is almost no example in the Bible of any speaker or teacher doing what we would call an expository sermon. Paul's sermons and letters are "synthetic", drawing from a great variety of Biblical texts. So is the preaching of Peter and others in the book of Acts..."

– Dr. Timothy Keller

#### ❑ Altar calls

"There are so many stony-ground hearers which receive the word with joy that I have determined to suspend my judgment till I know the tree by its fruits." – George Whitefield

Out of every 100 professions of faith only 30 are later baptized.  
Out of the 30 that are baptized 10 will show up on any given Sunday.  
Out of the 10 that show up at church, only 4 will ever do anything else.  
– Jim Elliff, Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Talk about the good and the bad with nostalgia. Give examples of times when it can be a good thing. Give examples of times when nostalgia is a bad thing.
2. In the case of Israel and her time in Babylonian captivity, engaging in nostalgia was counter-productive because they kept yearning and thinking the only way out of their present situation would be for God to do once again what He did in freeing them from Egypt. Yet this was not God's way. God would not repeat what He did in Egypt. He was doing a new thing. Have you ever done this to God? Have you ever expected God to repeat something He'd done in your past or did in Scripture for others? How did that work for you?
3. There is a real tendency when we're being nostalgic to see only the good in the past while ignoring or glossing over the bad. Pastor Keith talked about this in regard to the first century church and how people today often refer to it as a more pure and untainted version of the church. But the first century church had major problems just like the church today. Can you think of any other examples of how we do this with history or in our personal lives?
4. Pastor Keith pointed out some ways we have allowed culture or tradition to influence who the church is today using as illustrations, hymns, expository preaching and altar calls. What are some other things that are really just culture or traditions that have been layered onto the church but aren't necessarily things that the church has always done?

