Introduction: Sometimes, what we're used to isn't always right!

✓ "The earth is flat."

✓ "The Bible must remain in Greek, Hebrew, or Latin."

✓ "Cigarettes make you cool."

✓ "Suntans make you healthy."

Tradition – "an inherited, established, or customary pattern of thought, action, or behavior (as a religious practice or social custom)" – "the passing down of elements of a culture from generation to generation; especially by oral communication."

(Webster's)

Thesis: Traditions are not wrong, but they are dangerous!

Traditions are the highway by which we pass on the values and principles that matter most; unfortunately, over time, <u>the</u> <u>means</u> (traditions) we practice to remember those values/truths can take precedence over the truths themselves.

TRUTH	**(vs)**	**TRADITION**
Liberates		Perpetuates
Gives Life		Nullifies God's Word
Change		Status Quo
Reality		Stability
Threatening		Comforting
Dynamic		Static

LIVING ON THE EDGE™

Satan's Agenda: 2 Timothy 3:5

To separate the truth from the tradition so deceptively that sincere people would diabolically "hold to a form of godliness, but deny its power."

A case study – Acts 7

- **The Scene** - Stephen seized and accused.   Acts 6:8-15

- **The Accusations -**

    o Blasphemy against God and Moses
    o Speaking against the Holy Place – The Temple
    o Speaking against the Law of Moses

- **The Historical Setting** - The Jews in Jesus' day had come to venerate and worship the _____ (Palestine), the _____ (given by Moses), and the _____ (unique location) more than **the purpose** of the land, law, and temple.

- **Stephen's Defense** - He challenges the "status quo" tradition concerning the land, the law, and the temple with the _____ that demands faith, radical change, and following God's promised deliverer and Messiah _____.

- **Stephen's Defense Hinges on Three Timeless Truths:**

    1. God's agenda has always been based on His _____, which necessitates progression and _____.

    2. God's _____ and purpose have never been restricted to Palestine, the Temple, or the Jewish people.

    3. God's people have historically and repeatedly _____ **God's man** (prophets) and **God's plan** (deliverance).

LIVING ON THE EDGE™

Stephen's Message: Truth vs Tradition

Acts 7:1-8

Abraham

Location - **Mesopotamia**
Promise - Land and _____
Focus - To bless all nations
Faith means… _____

Acts 7:9-16

Joseph

Location - **Egypt**
Promise - A dream and a position
Focus - Joseph's rejection and God's _____
Faith means… _____

Acts 7:17-43

Moses

Location - **Midian**
Promise - You will _____ My people
Focus - God's Law given and rejected
Faith means… _____

Acts 7:44-50

Joshua

Location - **Wilderness**
Promise - Victory over enemies
Focus - Tabernacle's purpose, temple's limitations
(Isaiah 66:1-6)
Faith means… _____ _____

Acts 7:51-59

Jesus

Location - Our **Hearts**
Promise - Eternal life, _____ from
sin and death, fulfillment of the Law
Focus - Rejection and killing of Jesus Messiah
Faith means… _____

Summary = You received the law (tradition), but did not obey it (truth).

LIVING ON THE EDGE™

Lessons from Stephen's life and message:

1. Truth demands _____.   James 1:22-25

2. The basis of God's blessings is relational, not ritual.   Matthew 15:1-20

3. Perverted traditions must be _____ and abandoned.   Acts 7

4. Truth-bearer's refuse to accept the _____ _____

   in their life, their relationships, and their sphere of influence.

Application Questions for Personal and Small Group Use:

1. What positive traditions have helped you experience and walk intimately with Christ?

2. What "status quo" issues need to be evaluated in your life and relationships? How have they subtly thwarted your growth?

3. How specifically can you focus on God's promise for your life and walk by faith? Who or what is holding you back?

4. What habits aren't wrong, but are unprofitable for your spiritual growth and development?

5. Is there a situation that needs you to be a truth bearer? How can you do it with humility and gentleness?

LIVING ON THE EDGE™