

Repellent

by Pastor Dave Smith

While in Mozambique this past November, I would cover myself each morning in *Deep Woods OFF!* to repel the vicious African beasts known as mosquitoes. **There were two things I noticed:** 1) *The mosquitoes kept coming,* 2) *People stayed away from me.*

In Mark 7 we find Jesus once again confronting the religious teachers of his day, showing that their traditions (i.e. cleanliness before eating) were merely external, having no internal substance.

Echoing Isaiah's words he says:

“These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. 7 They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.’ 8 You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men.”

Jesus then follows up His verbal teaching by showing that the radical, preserving faith of God's grace in Gentiles will instead receive His favor. Jesus breaks through the barriers of the rituals and went to the people whom you would least expect...*the Gentile “dogs”* (27).

It was in reading this chapter I saw how the traditions of the Pharisees not only failed at bringing people closer to God, but they actually drove people away from Him. *They not only deny, but repel.*

I wondered what traditions I am holding on to that act in the same fashion of repelling people **to experience the redemptive touch of Christ.**

A few obvious ones I immediately thought of:

- The tradition that they have to “go to church” and “listen to a sermon” to learn about God or hear The Gospel.
- The tradition that they have to “have it all together,” before pursuing him.
- The tradition that they should have adequate biblical knowledge before entering a “biblical community.”
- The tradition that they have to enter into a gather where music and singing is conducted to “experience God.”
- The tradition that immediate change should occur in ones life following ones trusting in Christ.
- The tradition that a certain attire is needed when the church body gathers.

Any other traditions (**repellent**) that you or the church-at-large assume people must uphold to receive God's gift of grace?