



“Brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle” (II Thessalonians 2:15).

Family Traditions

Central Truth: Each family should establish and maintain Christian traditions.

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A tradition is a custom or belief handed down from generation to generation. It might be a silly superstition, or it might be a spiritual truth.

Every family has traditions, whether they are aware of them or not. It is important for Christian families to establish traditions which will testify to their faith and lifestyle. The purpose of this study is to encourage you to establish Christian traditions in your home. Your children will never forget them.

Pass on to your children and grandchildren the traditions (customs) you learned from your parents and grandparents. And make sure those traditions reflect your faith in Jesus Christ. This study seeks to encourage you to establish and maintain Christian traditions in your home.

The Value of Family Traditions

Family traditions establish a sense of what is significant in family values and religious heritage. Traditions are established by repetition. They are practices that are repeated over and over. One family always reads the Christmas story about God's gift of his Son before opening the family gifts at Christmas. An adult remarked, “Something seems missing if we do not read the Christmas story in my family before opening family gifts.” That is the unspoken influence of a family tradition. The things that are considered important are repeated time after time. They become a part of the

family culture and thus a tradition is established. Football and feasting on Thanksgiving Day (allowing no time to meet with God) says something about what is important in your life and in your family. Football and feasting after a time with God establishes the correct priority for a Christian family. How will your children remember family observances of Christmas, Thanksgiving, Easter, and other significant holidays?

Family traditions call attention to the significant works of God. A devout Jewish family observes the Passover each year. There is a certain menu served. There are certain questions the child is to ask of the father. There is a game in which children search the house for any leaven. The event would not be Passover without those elements. It was a religious observance that grew into a sacred tradition. Many of the traditions of Israel are related to the works of God in her history.

Traditions of the Christian family should reflect their faith. Consider what you can do in your family to leave a testimony to your children and grandchildren of your loyalty to Christ. Give serious thought to it and establish some traditions in your family which will bear fruit for Christ.

Family traditions give occasion for religious instruction of the children. Joshua built an altar on the bank of the Jordan River at the place where Israel crossed by a miracle of God opening the waters. In years to come children would ask, "What is the meaning of these stones?" Parents would use the occasion to tell of God's involvement with His people.

Your family traditions can be an occasion for you to inform your children of the work of God on behalf of your family. What are you doing in your family that your children or grandchildren will remember in years to come (perhaps after your death) and have a testimony of your faith in Christ? You can leave no greater heritage than that.

Family traditions bear witness to people outside the family. Joshua's altar beside the Jordan was built so "*that all the people of the earth might know the hand of the LORD, that it is mighty: that ye might fear the LORD your God for ever*" (Joshua 4:24). Children talk to their teachers and friends about things in their home. They will bear witness to your Christian traditions. You will reflect those traditions in conversations with friends and business associates. Guests who come to your home will note your family customs (traditions) and recognize your witness for Christ. You do not need to parade your faith. Make it a part of daily life, and the witness will be established.

The Types of Good Family Traditions

Patriotism should be a part of your family traditions. It is no longer encouraged in public schools as in former years. Therefore, love for God and country must be instilled in the home. Hang the national flag on special days—July 4, Memorial Day, Veterans Day, etc. Stand in respect when the national anthem is played at public meetings. Salute the flag when it passes in a parade. Pray for officials in the government. Show respect in attitude and in speech toward peace officers. Build patriotism in your children and grandchildren. In “one nation under God” develop “one family under God” as loyal citizens of that nation.

Church should be a part of your family traditions. Attend church together. (Please, adults, do not send your children to church. Go with them and participate heartily.) Make church attendance a time of joy to which the children look forward. Prepare the Sunday School lesson of all the family during the week. Prepare your offering on Saturday evening to give to the Lord through His church on Sunday morning. Layout your “Sunday clothes” and shine your shoes on Saturday evening to be ready for dress on Sunday morning. Establish church traditions.

Family customs should be established early in life. Show family unity by participating in homecomings. Let the father carve the turkey at Thanksgiving. Prepare a birthday gift for Jesus at Christmas. Have Bible reading and prayer in the home. Put an appropriate Scripture reference at the end of each letter written to a family member. Leave your wife a Genesis 31:49 note when you have to be away. Give Jesus a place in your home life.

The Time to Set Traditions

Yesterday! Set traditions while the children are young. Pass on traditions received from your parents and grandparents. Even the “old fashioned” traditions can have great meaning. Paul called Timothy's attention to the godly Christian lives of his mother and grandmother. They set a tradition of devotion which was a challenge to him long after he had become an adult. It can be so with your family.

My family is a musical family. We love to sing while driving down the highway on family outings. We sing religious songs and appropriate secular songs. It has given opportunity to instill good things in the children's minds.

Today! Have customs unique to your family. Make them the “property” of your family alone. Continue what you have begun. I close each letter to one of my children with these words: “Take care to keep well. Stay close to Jesus.” Then I place an appropriate Scripture verse after my signature. Recently I was interrupted as I closed a letter to one of my

daughters. She wrote on her reply, “You did not give me a Scripture.” After years of being away from home, she still looks for that Bible verse. That is a tradition between her and me. Genesis 31:49 is a tradition between my wife and me. When I am away from home I leave a note to call her attention to its statement: “*The LORD watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another.*” That is a good tradition.

Tomorrow! Watch for new things to add to your family traditions as God works in your family. Special occasions (the birth of grandchildren, for instance) can be a good time to start a new tradition. Be consistent to keep your traditions going so that they become established in the minds of your children and grandchildren. The tradition is not important; its message is.

A tradition becomes a kind of habit — a good habit. It will not be forgotten through life. The children will say, “I remember back at home when. . . .” This Lord's Day, the Sunday before Thanksgiving, is a good time to begin to observe family traditions.

Questions for Discussion

1. What is a tradition?
2. How are Christian traditions different from other traditions?
3. What traditions do you already have in your family?
4. How do traditions reveal family values?
5. Why should we establish traditions which speak of our faith?
6. What patriotic traditions are appropriate for Christians?
7. What church traditions have you developed for your family?
8. What “private” family traditions do you have?
9. What tradition will you begin to establish in your family?
10. How can you be sure your traditions are “good” ones?