

Preserving Valuable Traditions

Traditions Reinforce Teachings, Provide Security

Traditions within the home have always been important and have played a role in the lives of believers. In the time in which we live, it is even more important to strive to create and preserve valuable traditions. Our lives are busy with many distractions that can take our focus away from faith. The world around us is ever changing. Traditions serve to bring our families and loved ones together, strengthening the family bond. They provide security for the children, something they can count on. They learn to expect these things. The core of teaching living faith begins in the home. Establishing traditions can help reinforce these teachings.

When considering traditions we tend to think right away of those festive holidays of Christmas and Easter. Traditions at this time teach the children and remind all of us of the true meanings of these holy days. The children see that we value these traditions and these days are different than other days.

Time to Focus on What's Important

We asked several people to share the traditions they have in their homes around these festive times. Many send cards to friends and loved ones to especially remember them at Christmastime. One related that from these greetings they feel the love of fellow believers. On Christmas Eve, families sing songs and read the Christmas gospel before opening gifts. Some do this Christmas morning. Many visit the graves of loved ones who have passed away, to sing songs and remember them. Families attend services and dress in their best clothes. One man shared how in his childhood home his father visited about the happenings of the past year and spoke to each child individually, reminding them of the gifts the Heavenly Father had personally blessed them with that year. He said this helped him to realize the true importance of Christmas and not the world's commercial focus.

Several people noted that they often invite friends who don't have family of their own or can't be with their loved ones to join them for these holidays. "This is a rich addition to our festivity," a mother said, and added, "When we gather for different occasions and festive times, we stand and sing a song of praise before we eat. I think it's an important reminder that our Heavenly Father gives us all our blessings. It also serves as a reminder for our unbelieving friends and relatives in our midst." Another mother said that as some of their children are now married and can't always be home at Christmastime, their family has started to celebrate a "half-Christmas" when they can all be together.

God's Word Adds to Home Celebrations

Easter is a festive celebration in the lives of believers. A father said that Good Friday is such a special day, that it's nice if we can try to not work and instead focus on the importance and significance of the day. We can easily get caught up in the busyness of life and forget what great significance Good Friday has in our lives. Most LLC congregations have special services on Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday. Many spoke to the importance of attending these services and how this tradition is an important one to teach our children.

At Christmas and Easter home celebrations, believing families often pause to read from Christmas and Easter Bible texts. But we could also observe other church holidays, such as Advent, Ascension Day, Michaelmas, and so on. The LLC church calendar lists the texts that are set-aside for each of these days, and we could take a few moments to read those

texts. At LLC's 2012 Home and Family workshop, a mother related that their family reads the Bible texts set aside for each week. Although many of the weeks aren't associated with a church holiday, yet they have a theme, and the family can visit about them. Then when they go to services they've already had the time to focus on the week's theme. She said she wishes they had started this tradition when the family was young so the little ones had become familiar with seeing the Bible read regularly.

Although Thanksgiving isn't a church holiday, it's still a time when we gather with close ones and thank God for His blessings. A father said that before they eat the Thanksgiving meal, they read from Deuteronomy 8:7-10: "For the Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; A land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey; A land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack any thing in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass. When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God for the good land which he hath given thee."

He explained that this portion reminds us that when God has brought us to a good land and given us our blessings, we want to make sure we don't forget Him. We also don't want this goodness to separate us from God. It's good if we can center our attention around God's blessings, and if we can find ways to establish such traditions, it allows us to do this.

Special Times at Home

One family has the tradition of a weekly family night. The father said that once the children started moving into the teenage years of independence, they found themselves with many requests for their time, including their own personal interests. At a congregation discussion they heard of the importance of family time and decided to set aside one night each week to have everyone home together without other distractions. At first they wondered if it was necessary but soon they became accustomed to it and have enjoyed it. Even though most of the children are now married and have families of their own, the children have even wanted to continue this and they still get together each week. This tradition has been in place for many years, and they've found many blessings of such an evening and look forward to it each week. The evening doesn't have a formal agenda but has allowed for singing songs and discussion on timely topics. In general, it's been a time of fellowship and activity, whatever the group would like to do.

Some of the things we do in our everyday lives serve as traditions without even thinking about them in that way. Evening prayers and singing at bedtime are examples. Often we can feel that this is just a habit. In our home we've sometimes experienced that we feel we just don't have time to sit down and say prayers with the children. We try to hurry them to bed so we can do what we need to do. Our children teach us that it's important to take those few moments to sit down, pray, preach and hear the gospel, and sing; they don't want to go to bed without it. It brings them comfort and they go to sleep much easier.

A mother said that she feels it's important in our everyday lives to make church activities a priority in the week's schedule. "We're not saved by church attendance, but it's a healthy habit," she said.

Todd and Ruthanne Anderson

Discussion Questions:

1. What traditions does your family have? What do these traditions mean to you?

2. What do these traditions mean to your family members? Why are they special?

3. What new traditions could you consider establishing in your home?

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