

# Importance of Family Traditions

by Moe & Paige Becnel

Think back to when you were a child. Recall some of the things that made your family special when you were growing up. It may have been how you celebrated birthdays, Thanksgiving, or Christmas, a special meal shared by your entire family on a certain holiday, or an annual summer vacation that evolved into a family reunion, as your family grew older.

For several consecutive years, Moe's family held a long weekend at the same hotel on the Gulf Coast. Mom cooked a turkey with special meat stuffing every Thanksgiving, and a large pot of Chicken – Andouille (smoked sausage) gumbo with rice and potato salad every Christmas.

Paige's family had different traditions when she was young. Her mom took out the best china to serve Thanksgiving and Christmas dinner. Her family spent every Christmas Eve at the bonfire festival along the Mississippi River in Gramercy, Louisiana. It is a custom for bonfires to be lit to light the way for "Papa Noel" coming down the river. For many years her mom made fruitcake to give out as gifts. Every family member took turns stirring and stirring and stirring the batter!!

God established several traditions for the Jewish people in the Old Testament. God purposely established festivals so that the Jews would remember what God had done for them. The Passover feast is one example of a celebration that Jews held annually to remember when God spared the lives of 1<sup>st</sup> born Jewish sons when they were in slavery under Pharaoh. Jews still celebrate this feast each year. By this feast, the Jews remember who their God is and what He did for them and their nation.

Every major city in the world is made unique by special traditions, events or monuments that were founded for a purpose in each city.

In a similar way, family traditions "define" your family. They make your family unique, special, and fun! And they will hold a special place in your family member's heart for the rest of their life.

Usually, a blend of the traditions of your childhood family and your spouse's family are carried into your marriage and family. Every year since we married, Paige bakes several loaves of banana-nut bread (yum!) between Thanksgiving and Christmas, wraps them in aluminum foil and puts them in the freezer.

As needed, we pull them out to bring to parties, to bless some friends or to share as a snack for coworkers. This was a tradition she carried from her childhood, as her mother did the same thing.

Often when a family experiences divorce or death of a spouse, everything changes, including traditions of that family. Trying to carry the same family traditions of your former marriage into your future can produce painful memories of the broken relationship. Also, doing so fails to make your new family unique and special. Because of this, former family traditions should probably be abandoned or at least modified.

As you have moved into a new family through remarriage, it is very important to establish new traditions unique to your new family. As we said earlier, new traditions will bring uniqueness to your family. They will make your children feel they belong to a special family. Traditions make family time a more special time and they will enhance your children's enjoyment of being a part of your family.

Establishing new traditions around holidays and birthdays can be difficult, but not impossible. It is easier said than done, since your children may now have 2 sets of parents and 4 sets of grandparents. Special holidays become more than a challenge --- often resulting in a competition with a former spouse to have all your children with you for Christmas, or Easter, etc. So it is time to use your imagination and turn an unpleasant situation to your advantage.

Need an example? Christmas does not have to fall on December 25<sup>th</sup>, if you cannot get all of your family members together on that day. You can have Christmas dinner and open presents a few days earlier or later. Having all of your new family together is what's important. Besides, opening presents a few days earlier or later makes the holiday last a few extra days!

Here is another. Let all your family members pick each other's names in your family (known in Louisiana as Kris Kringle) and take a family trip to Wal-Mart to let them buy their \$5 gifts. It is always fun watching them avoid each other in the store as they make their selections!

When preparing a special holiday dinner, make each child's favorite dish. That way, there is something special about your family dinner to each child. (Most dishes can be prepared and frozen ahead of time.)

With the holiday season upon us, use your imagination to develop new traditions for your new family. Do not let your former spouses or circumstances stop your plans. If necessary, work around other's plans. Your family will not benefit from an argument with the former spouse; your family will benefit from seeing you overcome the obstacles that arise in your family. Your children will sense stability and soundness as you overcome each obstacle in spite of the interference thrown at you.

Live your life with an overcoming attitude. Be flexible! Palm trees can weather hurricanes on the coast because God designed them to be extremely flexible. You will live a more abundant life if you strive to live your life with the characteristics of God's Holy Spirit. These characteristics are described in the book of Galatians.

*Galatians 5:22 says, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control."*

As you work on these characteristics in yourself, they will become a part of your new family.

We pray that your family grows together in a great way during this time of year, as we celebrate the greatest gift ever given to humanity --- the birth of God's only begotten Son, Jesus!

Have a Blessed Christmas and an Awesome 2002!

*Moe and Paige Becnel*

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