

MAKING MEMORIES

by Vicki S. Norris

The Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's holidays are quickly upon us. Are you taking time to make them memorable for your children? Or are you so busy getting ready for them that you don't make time for what really matters most - family?

If your family doesn't already have a tradition (or two or more) associated with each of these holidays, then this is the year to start. Decide what you want your focus to be for each of these holidays and then go for it! Thanksgiving is not just about being thankful FOR (family, health, possessions, etc.) but it is mainly about being thankful TO. Ultimately we must be thankful to God for everything we have and everything we are. Consider what tradition you can start that will best emphasize this in your family. It can be something as simple as cutting out fall-colored construction paper leaves and a tree trunk and placing it on a door or the refrigerator. Daily, for the month of November, have each family member write on a leaf something they are thankful to God for and then start growing your "tree." And/or you can join hands during the Thanksgiving meal and have everyone present share what they are thankful to God for. God is the Giver of all good things.

For Christmas, one of the most meaningful things you can do is celebrate Advent and it usually starts right after Thanksgiving. Advent is a time of expectant waiting and builds up the excitement about Christ's birth. Do an Internet search for Advent and you'll come up with various ways of observing it. Most involve weekly Scripture readings and the lighting of the Advent candles. As a family, you can make it a nightly Scripture reading. Another option is the Jesse Tree. Again, do an Internet search for the hows and whys. Evaluate your method of celebrating Christmas. If a stranger walked into your home, would they immediately know that to you Christmas is Jesus? Or would they conclude that Santa Claus is given a place of higher honor in your home? What do your decorations and traditions reflect? Whatever you do as a family, whether it be Advent or the Jesse Tree or something else, make sure that the "Reason for the Season" is obvious. Make it a tradition to start out with reading The Christmas Story (the Bible version) on Christmas morning. Have a birthday cake for Jesus. Limit the number of gifts - some people only give their children three gifts each Christmas to represent the three gifts specifically mentioned in the Bible - gold, frankincense and myrrh. It is more blessed to give than receive - so make it a tradition to help a needy family not only at Christmas but throughout the year. Read some favorite Christmas books. Pick some favorite Christmas movies and watch those every year - maybe one every Friday or Saturday night beginning after Thanksgiving.

New Year's Day should be a time of reflection on the previous year and planning for the new year. Decide what needs to be "put off" in your life and what needs to be "put on." Have each family member do the same. Make it a tradition to hold a family meeting on that day. Some things to discuss/decide would be what you want to accomplish as individuals and as a family for the coming year - what are some ways you can continue to minister to that needy family? Put it on the calendar! Plan for vacations and each person's milestones - birthdays, graduations, etc.

Put it on the calendar! Have New Year's Eve be the time for fun.....fireworks (with adult supervision, of course), board games, jigsaw puzzles, movies, etc.

Take time to make memories with your family NOW.....we are not promised tomorrow. And if YOU don't do it, who will?

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