

FAMILY TRADITIONS FOR THE HOME

Presenter: Kay Meyer, President, Family Shield Ministries

Created for a MOPS presentation

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WHY ARE YOU THANKFUL?

Why not take the letters THANKSGIVING or CHRISTMAS as your family gathers during the holidays and brainstorm words that share why you are thankful? Write the words down the side of the page. Here are two examples:

- T Our family is thankful for times to talk together, teachers who tell us about Jesus, tasty turkey, the thief on the cross that came to faith in Christ, that we trust Jesus for our salvation, and that the tomb is empty!
- H That God knows each hair on our head, for ham, for hands that serve each other, for happy times together, the plentiful harvest, healing, that we can hear the word, heaven, helpers, hope, home, and the High Priest, Jesus.

A THANKSGIVING TABLECLOTH

Another activity for families with younger children is to put a plastic tablecloth on the table or floor and allow the children to draw a picture of why they are thankful for family and faith. Make sure you write their name and the year next to the picture. Allow them to explain their picture to the family. Reuse the tablecloth each year. It will become a treasured memory.

POTATOE OR APPLE TURKEYS

Here is a project that you can allow little hands to do on Thanksgiving Day or in preparation for the Thanksgiving dinner. Use them as the centerpiece for the table or as a favor for each place.

Materials:

- Large brown potatoes or apples
 - Toothpicks
 - Assorted fresh and dried fruits, nuts, vegetables, and mini pretzel sticks and twists, for decorating.
 - Black and green olives
 - Peanut butter
 - Eyes (optional)
1. To stand each potato or apple upright, create a tripod by pushing three toothpicks into the bottom, leaving 1/2 inch protruding.
 2. Designate the top of the potato/apple as the head, or attach a separate, smaller potato/apple head with toothpicks.
 3. Put out an assortment of things to decorate it with.

Feathers: Trimmings: carrots, bell peppers, summer squash, cut into long strips.
Wedges of red onion, apple, and orange peel for wings.

Eyes: raisons, dried cranberries
Wattle: wedge of red pepper or radish
Beak: cashew or almond, or tip of a lemon
Feet: carrot slivers or pretzels.

CINNAMON APPLESAUCE ORNAMENTS

Make cinnamon applesauce ornaments. They're fun to create and make great gifts. Use them also to embellish a ribbon on a package or a homemade baked item. Tie them onto a garland or wreath. Here's the recipe:

1 cup ground cinnamon
4 Tablespoons allspice or a mixture of ground cloves and nutmeg
1 cup applesauce
2 Tablespoons white glue

Mix together until you reach a stiff consistency. Add more applesauce if needed. Dust a cutting board with cinnamon and roll the dough to a half-inch thickness. Using cookie cutters or patterns, cut into a holiday shape. If creating hanging ornaments, poke a hole in each with a drinking straw before baking. Place onto a cinnamon-dusted cookie sheet and bake at 350 degrees approximately 25 minutes (time may vary, depending on the size of the pieces). Note: *These are non-edible.*

FRUIT FLAVOR POPCORN

8 cups unsalted popcorn
½ Cup margarine
¼ Cup light corn syrup
One package 3 oz. flavored jello (any color)
¼ tsp. Baking soda

Precook popcorn and put aside.

Cook margarine in one quart glass bowl 30—45 seconds on high or until melted. Stir on high or until melted. Stir in jello and corn syrup. Microwave jello and corn syrup on high uncovered 2—3 minutes or until mixture comes to full boil, stirring once. Mix in baking soda until well blended. Mixture will foam up. Pour over popcorn and toss to coat popcorn evenly. Cook on high 4—5 minutes (microwave) until mixture is evenly coated, stir every minute. Turn onto wax paper, spread out to cool, break into small pieces.

ONGOING CHRISTMAS VIDEO

Make an ongoing family Christmas video. Include footage of the preparations as well as the

actual day. Be sure to video tape the decorations and as many candid moments as you can. Play a different holiday song in the background each year.

HOLIDAY SLUMBER PARTY

Have a family slumber party one weekend with sleeping bags in front of the Christmas tree.

NEW YEAR'S EVE GAME NIGHT

Spend New Year's Eve with your family playing games. Set up several game tables with a different game at each one. Set a timer to signal the end of each game. When the timer goes off, whoever is ahead wins! Then everyone switches to a new table. This is one way to keep everyone awake until midnight. Prizes might be small inexpensive gifts.

CHRISTMAS COOKIES

"Christmas cookies" - Mom Jander would make the dough and the children would help cut out the dough. She would place the uncooked cookies on cookie trays and lay them on the table with lots of sprinkles and edible decorations. The family would gather round the table and decorate the cookies before they went in to the oven. They still ask to do this today when they are together for the holidays.

ORGANIZE A BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION FOR JESUS

Invite several families and friends to a birthday celebration for Jesus at your home or congregation.

Ask those that attend to bring an unwrapped gift which will be donated to a prisoner's child, a Seminary student's child, or another Christian ministry that gives gifts to children during the holidays.

Why not create your own wrapping paper at your celebration! Using butcher block paper create potato printing or decorate the wrapping paper with fingerprint art using a stamp pad. Magic markers and crayons can also be used. Encourage families and groups to work together.

After you've completed the wrapping paper invite guests to create a homemade card to put inside their gift. Remind them that the child who receives the gift may not know the Lord. Think about ways your card can communicate God's love.

BIBLE CHARADES

Bible Charades was a favorite Bible activity at the Meyer's home when our three children, Kevin, Coreen, and Jeffrey, were growing up. You can play Bible charades with your family and friends. Write several Bible stories that can be easily acted out on slips of paper. Suggestions include: Mary and Joseph travel to Jerusalem, The Magi follow the star, The Angels Announce Christ's Birth to the Shepherds, Moses brings the 10 Commandments down from Mt. Sinai and sees the people worshipping Baal, Noah Builds the Ark, Jonah runs away from God, Elijah and the Prophets of Baal, Jesus feeds the 5,000, Joseph and the Coat of Many Colors, Judas betrays Jesus in the Garden, Jesus appears to Thomas. Put the slips of paper into an envelope. Divide your family or group into two teams. Let one team select a slip. Encourage them to use as many members of their team as

possible in acting out the story. The other team tries to guess which story they are acting out.

A CHRISTMAS MIXER

In Advance: Select a holiday theme or phrase like "Merry Christmas" or "Happy Holidays." Write one letter of your theme or phrase on small sandwich bags. You might select "Happy Holidays." On the first paper bag you would write a large "H." After you have written letters on all the bags, begin to search your home for items which begin with the letter on the bags. Inside the "H" bag you might put a small play "house" from your children's toy chest, a hairpin, or a handkerchief. The next letter is "A." You might put an apple into this bag. Then look for items that begin with "P" until all the bags have items in them. Staple or tape the bags shut.

To play the game: Hand out the bags to various individuals in the group. Then give each participant a piece of paper with the phrase "Happy Holidays" written on it.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

What is it?

Can you think of a way this item relates to your faith?

1. H =
2. A =
3. P =
4. P =
5. Y =

And so on...

Tell participants they are to guess what's in the bags and write it on their paper. Explain that the items in the bag begin with the letter on each bag. You can have everyone work independently, but it's more fun to assign teams to work together. You can also help the younger children participate by using groups. Include one or two difficult or funny items in the bags. The "A" could be air, so there would not be anything in the bag. After everyone's had time to guess what's in the bags, open them up and see which team had the most answers correct. Have small prizes like candy bars or sticks of gum.

The challenge question comes last. Ask each group if they can think of a way each item relates to their faith. This can often be very difficult! At times you may not be able to think of anything. Encourage them to think creatively! A house might remind them that God supplies all their daily needs; an apple might remind them of their sin, and so on.

EDIBLE MANGER SCENE

Objective: Kids will have a multi-sensory experience of Christ's nativity.

What's needed?

- Graham crackers

- Animal Crackers
- Elfwiches
- Shredded wheat biscuits
- Chocolate stars
- Miniature pretzels
- Marshmallows
- 8 x 10 piece of cardboard per child
- Foil
- Blunt knife (parents must supervise children)
- Frosting glue

Make frosting glue by mixing ½ pound powdered sugar, 2 egg whites, and ¼ teaspoon cream of tartar. Beat 7 to 10 minutes. Refrigerate in a tightly covered container.

Text: Luke 2:1-20

Tell kids to: Create a nativity scene that you can eat.

- 1) Wrap foil around your cardboard to use as a base.
- 2) Use the frosting glue to create a graham cracker table on your base. Dip the edges of your crackers into the frosting glue and hold the edges of two crackers together for one minute while the frosting sets. Build three walls first before you add the roof.
- 3) For the manger, take a graham cracker and break two pieces off it. Glue it in a V shape, place shredded wheat in the manger, and place three miniature marshmallows in it for baby Jesus.
- 4) Use the other foods to decorate your scene. Add all the people and animals that were there before and after Jesus was born. Crumble the wheat biscuits to add hay.
- 5) Use the frosting glue to attach a marshmallow to the center of a pretzel for your angel. Glue the angel and chocolate star to the top of your stable.
- 6) Keep working on your nativity scene until you've added everything you want to add. Once you've finished, you can eat your scene or just parts of it.

Talk teasers: (Read the Scripture). Where were you born? Why do you think God allowed Jesus to be born in a stable? If you could've chosen a place for Jesus to be born, where would it have been? Which holiday do you think is more important to our faith—Christmas or Easter? What difference has Jesus' birth and life made for you?

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PO Box 230015

St. Louis, MO 63123

(314) 772-6070

www.familyshieldministries.com

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Discussion questions for small groups:

1. As you heard the speaker discuss traditions and memories, what thoughts and feelings about your childhood came to mind?
2. What memories do you savor? Share a memory or tradition from your family that is important to you.
3. Did you hear the speaker share ideas that you want to try? Which one was it? Why do you want to begin that tradition?
4. Time is always a challenge for today's busy families. Share how you are going to make time during the upcoming holiday season to begin a new tradition or re-establish an old one.
5. What is a family meant to be? In *What is a Family?* by Edith Scheffer the author talks about the home being a Museum of Memories. The concept is that a museum has a selection of things worth preserving. A family is to be a museum of memories--collections of carefully preserved memories and a realization that day-to-day memories are being chosen for the family museum. She suggests that someone in the family needs to be conscious of the fact that memories are important so they plan memories just as someone might plan a museum. This involves taking lots of pictures and organizing them. Think about how you, as a mother of a preschooler, might create a museum of memories. Remember that what is done today will become tomorrow's memories!
6. How can creating family traditions help you build a strong, healthy family?
7. Take a few minutes to jot down something you heard that you want to begin in your home. Share what you wrote with a partner.