

A Family Tradition

Stephanie Wolfe

I don't have to tell you about the commercializing of Christmas. I don't have to convince you of the need to keep Christ in Christmas. I don't even have to ask you if you plan to attend special services for the celebration of our Savior's birth! As Christian parents, we wrack our brains to create a great Christmas atmosphere in our homes, and search for a way to present the time-honored message to our kids to keep the value of it alive in their hearts. Competing with the newspaper ads and television commercials offering the latest video games, the newest advanced technology, gigs, mp3, pixels, and the likes of things I can't begin to explain.

Our Christian heritage is a spectacular one, and we need to be reminded from time to time about the history of our faith. Christmas is one time of year where we are reminded of God's incredibly loving gift which changed our lives forever. God knew exactly what the "perfect gift" was for each of us. It is a one-size-fits-all, but not in the least bit generic. When we receive earthly gifts that meet a need in our lives, we say things like, "How did you know?" or "This fits perfect!" And though it can be a surprise when we actually get something that is "just right" from our early friends or family, it is not a surprise at all that God knows exactly what we need, what size we are, and of course, what would be the "perfect gift" for each of us.

It isn't that easy to buy gifts for our loved ones. Finding just the right color, size, and item to fit the need or desire of the recipient can be a stressful mission! Lord knows, we don't need another knick-knack, body lotion, or specialty coffee! Taste in clothing is too tough to match, and a gift certificate seems so impersonal. These challenges led our family to change our approach toward Christmas about 18 years ago. We made our Christmas more about Him and less about us! After all, it isn't OUR birthday, is it? It's His!

Our family loves making memories, so we created a special family tradition. On Christmas Eve, after enjoying a delightful dinner together, Dad would read the Christmas story from the book of Matthew. We would then go around the room sharing what we called "love stories." Always a special time for us as we would verbally share specific thoughts to express the love we have for one another. Some written, others spoken impromptu, but all from the heart of the deliverer. We would end this special time by having communion together and closed in prayer. Then we'd have dessert, and opened our few presents.

Now that our sons have their own families, for more memory making, our gift to our two sons, their wives and our grandson, is a Christmas trip! We take the kids and go away for a few days. One year we took a trip to Chattanooga, TN. We visited the Chattanooga Choo-Choo, the Aquarium, ate at some great restaurants, and just had a blast! Last year we went to Pigeon Forge, TN and got a great cabin in the hills of Sevierville. We went shopping in Gatlinburg, and attended the famous "Dixie Stampede" horse show! We are making plans for our trip this year, and though our budget will be tight there is one thing I know – no matter where we go or how much we spend, we will be making memories and honoring a "family tradition" – one of loving each other and proving it by spending time together just having a good time!

So don't allow the busy season and its many expectations on your schedules keep you from making the most of this very special family time. Go ahead, create a great Christmas atmosphere for your home, design a great twinkle light show for your neighborhood, it's a part of the festivities! But by all means, remember the reason for the season. Explain to your children the meaning of songs like "Silent Night" and "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing." Whatever you do, make this Christmas a memorable one for you, and for your family. You'll find that "special" doesn't have to be expensive – it only has to be meaningful. It is never too late to start a "Family Tradition!"