



## The Traditions of the Fathers

“Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it” – Proverbs 22:6



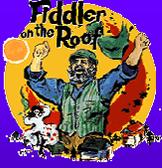
Exploring Keys to Conversion



## Tradition!!

*“A fiddler on the roof. Sounds crazy, no? But in our little village of Anatevka, you might say every one of us is a fiddler on the roof, trying to scratch out a pleasant, simple tune without breaking his neck. It ain't easy. You may ask, why do we stay up here if it's so dangerous? We stay because Anatevka is our home. And how do we keep our balance? That I can tell you in a word--tradition!”*

*“Because of our traditions, we've kept our balance for many, many years. Here in Anatevka we have traditions for everything--how to eat, how to sleep, how to wear clothes. For instance, we always keep our heads covered and always wear a little prayer shawl. This shows our constant devotion to God. You may ask, how did this tradition start? I'll tell you--I don't know! But it's a tradition. Because of our traditions, everyone knows who he is and what God expects him to do. [“Fiddler on the Roof,” in *Great Musicals of the American Theatre*, ed. Stanley Richards, vol. 1 (Radnor, Pennsylvania: Chilton Book Company, 1973), 393]*





## Not including Holiday's, write down five traditions in your family:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_




## Regarding Holiday's, what are Five Traditions your family has:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_




## What is a Tradition?

“Traditions or norms are the standards of behavior and the expectations shared by all the members of a group about how people are supposed to act. Some norms apply to all persons under all circumstances. Others apply only to certain persons or under special circumstances.

“Traditions or norms are handed down from generation to generation and are taught to children by their parents, their teachers, their companions, and others with whom they come in contact. Every society places great emphasis on the importance of teaching children the rules of conduct and the standards of behavior of that society” (James T. Duke, “The Traditions of Their Fathers,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1972, 39).



## What Are Traditions?

- Traditions are closely related to habits—acts repeated so frequently that they become almost automatic.
- Traditions are established patterns of behavior transmitted from generation to generation
- Unfortunately, there are both righteous and wicked habits and traditions.
- Research has shown that the strongest families have the highest frequency of traditions and rituals

## One of the Strongest Traditions

“A study of the development of a “Family Ritual Questionnaire” found that the highest level of family cohesion, or sense of togetherness, was related to nothing more complicated than family dinnertime-sitting down to a meal together” (Lloyd K. Newell, *Marriage and Families*, December 1999).

## Do Any of These Look Familiar?

### TOP 15 FAMILY TRADITIONS

As reported by 84 families and their college-age son or daughter enrolled in introductory marriage and family courses at Utah State University. From Jay D. Schvaneveldt and Thomas R. Lee, “The Emergence and Practice of Ritual in the American Family,” *Family Perspective* 17(3) (1983): 137–143, 139.

- |                         |                          |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| ① CHRISTMAS             | ⑩ FAMILY REUNIONS        |
| ② BIRTHDAYS             | ⑪ FAMILY PRAYER          |
| ③ FAMILY VACATION       | ⑫ HOUSECLEANING ROUTINES |
| ④ EASTER                | ⑬ NEW YEAR'S DAY         |
| ⑤ SUNDAY DINNER         | ⑭ NEW YEAR'S EVE         |
| ⑥ VISITS TO RELATIVES   | ⑮ FATHER COOKING DINNER  |
| ⑦ FIXED TIME FOR SUPPER | ⑯ DINNER-TABLE SEATING   |
| ⑧ THANKSGIVING          |                          |

## The Best and Worst of Times

“When you recall your favorite memories of childhood, probably they center around family rituals such as bedtime, an annual vacation, Thanksgiving, Christmas, or the weekly Sabbath meal. Your worst memories might also be connected with these family rituals. Interestingly, many family researchers and family therapists have learned only recently how significant a component family rituals are to the glue that holds families together. Previously, most researchers and therapists emphasized talk: how couples communicate, how parents verbally praise and discipline children. But as important as talking is, what professionals weren't considering was how we *enact* our family relationships.

## Powerful Traditions

“In the Church, powerful traditions remind us of the strength and sacrifice of our ancestors and inspire our efforts. Among them are industry, frugality, and complete devotion to a righteous cause. Others are based on doctrine and standards which may seem peculiar to the world but are consistent with God's pattern. These include chaste behavior, modesty of dress, unpolluted language, Sabbath observance, adherence to the Word of Wisdom, and the payment of tithes” (Donald L. Hallstrom, “Cultivate Righteous Traditions,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 27).

## The Impact of Righteous Traditions

“My parents loved each other dearly. We had great respect for our mother and father. When I think of my mother and father, I think of them as workers in the temple. We spent a lot of time together. Every Saturday my father worked with us in the yard. Our parents went to Church with us. We prayed together, we studied the scriptures. In the morning, when we got up, we would go and sit against their bed in our pajamas and listen to them read scriptures. We just went in and joined them. There was no pressure to do that; we just did it” (Robert D. Hales, *Church News*, 16 April 1994, 12).

## The Making of Prophets

“One of the conditions of getting my drivers license was that I would drive Mother, who was Relief Society president, to distribute welfare to the poor and the needy.” What great training this must have been for the future presiding Bishop of the Church.

## A Lesson from His Father



"Robert," he said through interrupted short breaths, "do you realize an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ is coming to my home? The walks must be clean. He should not have to come through a snowdrift." He raised his hand, saying, "Oh, Robert, don't ever forget or take for granted the privilege it is to know and to serve with Apostles of the Lord."

## Rock Solid Traditions

"I would invite all of us to take a moment to reflect on the traditions in our lives and how they might be affecting our families. Our traditions of Sabbath day observance, family prayer, family scripture study, service and activity in the Church, as well as patterns of respect and loyalty in the home, will have a great effect on our children and on their future. If our parenting is based on the teachings of the scriptures and of the latter-day prophets, we cannot go wrong. If every time there is a challenge our hearts turn first and always to our Father in Heaven for direction, we will be in a safe place. If our children know where we stand and we always stand on the Lord's side, we know we are where we need to be" (Cheryl C. Lant, "Righteous Traditions," *Ensign*, May 2008, 13-14).

## Traditions of Righteousness



"Of all the traditions we should cultivate within ourselves and our families, a "tradition of righteousness" should be preeminent. Hallmarks of this tradition are an unwavering love for God and His Only Begotten Son, respect for prophets and priesthood power, a constant seeking of the Holy Spirit, and the discipline of discipleship which transforms believing into doing. A tradition of righteousness sets a pattern for living which draws children closer to parents, and both closer to God, and elevates obedience from a burden to a blessing" (Donald L. Hallstrom, "Cultivate Righteous Traditions," *Ensign*, Nov 2000, 27-28).

## What Are Rituals?

"Family rituals are repeated and coordinated activities that have significance for the family. To be a ritual, the activity has to have *meaning* or *significance*; otherwise, it is a routine but not a ritual. For example, most families' bathroom activities are routines rather than rituals because they do not have much symbolic importance, although such an activity can become a ritual" (William J. Doherty, *The Intentional Family: How To Build Family Ties in Our Modern World* [Addison-Wesley Publishing Co: Menlo Park, California, 1997], 10).

## Our Charge

"Build family traditions. Plan and carry out meaningful vacations together, considering our children's needs, talents, and abilities. Help them create happy memories, improve their talents, and build their feelings of self worth" (Robert D. Hales, *CR*, April 1999, 33).



## Nephites and Righteous Traditions

- Read 2 Nephi 5:5-20. What were some of the righteous traditions of the Nephites?
- Nephi is one of the great leaders in the Book of Mormon. Many of the great prophets we read about in the Book of Mormon are direct descendants of Nephi. His posterity reads like a "Whose Who" in the scriptures. Alma, Alma the Younger, Helaman, Mormon, and Moroni.

## The Lamanites and Wicked Traditions

- Hate, laziness, greed, idolatry, robbery, jealousy, and no written records were some of the traditions of the Lamanites.
- Read 2 Nephi 5:3 and look at some of the “great” traditions that Laman started.
- Read Mosiah 10:12: What were some of the other traditions of the Lamanites?
- Read Alma 54:17 What is Ammaron still stewing over from years before?

## The Mulekites and No Traditions

- Typical of a people with no written records, the Mulekites followed the path of least resistance
- Look at Omni 1:17; what does this verse teach us about a group of people with no traditions?

## Traditions can make or break us

- If we have not had the blessing of righteous traditions in the past, we must begin our own.
- Do not be discouraged; you can make your own traditions right now!

## What Are Some Possible Traditions To Consider?

- What are some traditions that you think would help sink the gospel deep into the hearts of your children?
- What have you seen other families do?
- What do you feel compelled to do in your family?
- What is the Spirit urging you to do?

## A Lesson from a Prophet

When President Spencer W. Kimball was fifteen years old, he heard a speaker at stake conference ask how many people had read the Bible from cover to cover. Only five or six hands went up, so the speaker urged the people to go home and begin. “The meeting over, Spencer walked the block home, took down the family Bible, climbed the stairs to his attic room, lit the coal-oil lamp with a match, and began at Genesis. Night after night, by the flickering light of a kerosene lamp in the unfinished attic where he slept, ...

## Lesson (Cont.)

he plowed through the pages. At some points Spencer had only half an idea what he was reading, but he had made up his mind. It did not matter if long stretches were boring; he plodded on. He was sure it was a worthwhile project. At least he would have some idea what the Bible contained. He kept at it for about a year until he could shut the book with great pride, finished. The experience built his confidence. He had learned he could count on his own resolution” (Edward L. Kimball and Andrew E. Kimball, Jr., *Spencer W. Kimball* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1977], p. 56).

- How did President Kimball establish a righteous tradition in his life? How might this have affected his children and grandchildren?

## The Rising Generation and Traditions

- **Mosiah 26:1–4.** What happened to the rising generation who did not understand or believe the traditions of their fathers?
- Reread verse 4, How the behavior of the unbelieving people affected the generations that followed?

## Jewish Families

- The Jews live by traditions
- They indoctrinate their children
- They keep their traditions in place by celebrating special events
- At 8 days old a Jewish boy is circumcised
- At 13, he becomes Bar Mitzvah, a full member of the community. He chants a portion from the Torah at a special ceremony in the Temple
- A similar ceremony for girls is called a Bas Mitzvah
- Families go to great lengths and expense to make these events unforgettable for their youth
- There are traditional holidays to celebrate, such as the feast of the Passover, Yom Kippur
- In our LDS Faith, do we have similar rituals and traditions that help cement our faith?
- What about in our families?

## Possible Traditions to Consider

“Build traditions in your families that will bring you together, for they can demonstrate your devotion, love, and support for one another. For each of the members of your family, these events would include blessings of children, baptisms, other priesthood ordinances, graduations, missionary farewells, homecomings, and, of course, marriages. If distance, missions, or ill health prevent personal reunions, write one of those special letters that will be treasured in family histories. Sharing these occasions as family will help us build a foundation established upon a rock” (Elder L. Tom Perry, *Ensign*, May 1985, 23).

## Traditions to Build Family Unity and Strengthen Testimony

1. **Journal Writing**
2. **Always Be Where You’re Supposed to Be; when you are supposed to be there; doing what your supposed to be doing!**
3. **Do Your Duty**
4. **Be Punctual**
5. **Be Positive**
6. **Celebrate Special Events**

## Traditions to Build Family Unity and Strengthen Testimony

7. Daily Devotionals
8. Special Greetings
9. Yearly Gift for Christ
10. Priesthood Ordinations
11. Family Testimony Meeting
12. Sunrise Service
13. Special Dinner
14. The Dating Years
15. Special Ring



## Traditions to Build Family Unity and Strengthen Testimony

16. Reduced Copy of Patriarchal Blessing
17. Special Temple Pouch
18. Missionary Traditions
19. Opening the call
20. Special Trip
21. Special Feast
22. Appreciation Notebook
23. Mounted Map
24. Attend Farewells and Homecomings
25. Invite the missionaries into your home
  - What else? (Randal A. Wright, *A Case for Chastity* [National Family Institute, 1993], 30-33).

## Disneyland or Temple?

- It is amazing how few of our members have been to the Sacred Grove, Nauvoo, Kirtland, Winter Quarters, Independence, Martin's Cove, and yet so many have been to Disneyland, Sea World, Magic Mountain, Las Vegas, etc.
- What message does this send to our children about priorities?
- What if we went to Orlando to visit the Temple, and as a side excursion, visited Disneyworld, instead of the other way around?

## A Witness and a Warning

"Family patterns and traditions are sacred. However, regardless of how well-established and beloved they may be, they are not indestructible. Often selfishness, an unkind word, an altered circumstance can cause them to collapse, never to be rebuilt or reclaimed. So we aim not only to build, but to preserve" (Belle S. Spafford, *Women in Today's World* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1971], p. 232).

## The Lord's Side of the Line

"The challenge to each one of us, a challenge we came to the earth to experience, is to choose between good and evil. Many traditions in our society lead us to sin, while others lead us to righteous conduct. If we place ourselves on the side of righteous traditions and if we allow them to have an influence in our lives, we can be strengthened in our testimonies and in our receptivity to the Spirit. If, however, we give ourselves over to the wicked influence of evil traditions, we make it more difficult for the Spirit to find a place in our hearts" (James T. Duke, "The Traditions of Their Fathers," *Ensign*, Nov. 1972, 41).

## Wicked Traditions

"A beautiful revelation in the Doctrine and Covenants on the nature and influence of the Spirit of Christ upon men is followed by this significant passage: "And that wicked one cometh and taketh away light and truth, through disobedience, from the children of men, and because of the tradition of their fathers." (D&C 93:39.)

"One of the most important means by which Satan can corrupt and deceive the children of men is through the traditions of their fathers. If these traditions are corrupt and lead to evil rather than righteousness, then the evil one has a powerful tool to corrupt the children, for they usually follow the traditions of their parents.

"Because of their traditions, the Lamanites long remained in a state of ignorance. They knew little of Christ and of his teachings. What gospel truths had been retained by them were so encrusted with errors that they had great difficulty in recognizing the truth (James T. Duke, "The Traditions of Their Fathers," *Ensign*, Nov. 1972, 39).

## Do Traditions Make a Difference

What family traditions have strengthened your testimony and solidified your conversion?

