

Tim's Top Ten Family Times & Traditions

Holidays

10. **Christmas Card Prayer Box** – have your kids decorate a shoebox with Christmas wrapping paper and homemade art. Place this in a prominent spot. As you receive Christmas cards, place them in the box. Before meals, take out a card and pray for that family when you thank God for the food. (FT 61)

9. **Holiday De-stress Plan** – The holidays can quickly become over-scheduled. To avoid this, have a family meeting in the late fall. Ask each family member to write or draw on 3 x 5 cards two events or activities they would like to do during the holidays. Collect the cards and say, "We want to plan the holidays to be fun, but relaxing. We can't do it all. Let's decide, as a family what our Holiday Plan should be. Go through the suggestions and place a cross on the ones that help us focus on Christ at Christmas, and place a smiley face on the ones that are the most fun. Choose a number that seems like a balance between the two categories and display them on green construction paper as "Our Family Holiday Plan" in the shape of a Christmas tree. (FT 60)

8. **Thanksgiving Corn** – Give each person five kernels of corn, reminding them that the pilgrims did the same thing at the first Thanksgiving with the Native Americans. Each person is to come up with a *thank you God* for each kernel. Go around the table, before the meal and share. Record these in writing as people share. (FT 67)

7. **Mom & Dad's Anniversary** – Kids get birthday parties. The parents should get one too to celebrate their wedding day! This teaches our kids the importance of love and commitment. Have a "We're Still In Love" family party. Bring out the wedding album, videos of the wedding and memorabilia from your big day. Serve a candlelit dinner at home. Tell a story about how you met and the qualities that first attracted you to each other. If you have teenagers, they'll complain; but be amused and re-affirmed internally. Serve a small wedding cake and verbally re-commit your vows in front of the kids. (FT 89)

6. **New Years Eve Family Party** – Set the clocks way ahead and get ready to celebrate with the kids when the clock strikes "midnight." Serve chilled sparkling apple juice in plastic champagne glasses and propose a toast to your healthy family. Present certificates of achievement for the old year like "learned to ride bike," etc. (52 FTI – 152)

Everyday

5. Family Creed (or mission statement) – Develop a short, memorable phrase that captures the top values that you want to define your family. Display this in a prominent place in your home, or paint it on the walls. Ours' is, "Grace finds beauty in everything." Thanks to Bono of U2 for the inspiration!

4. Restaurant Spying – Waiting for a table can be trying for kids and parents. Here's a lobby game you can play, "Who's Next?" Try to guess the age, gender and type of clothing of the next person to enter the door of the restaurant. (FT 107)

3. We Need Reminders – grab a Bible and ball of yarn and gather your family. Read Deut. 6:6-9 and say, "It's easy to forget good things. We need reminders. Today we are going to remind each other of what we appreciate about each other." Stand in a circle and say, "Hold on to yarn. We are going to make a Spider Web of appreciation. Say something nice about a person, then throw them the ball of yarn. They do the same thing until we have a huge web." (52 - 17)

2. A Peaceful Family – Help balance the stress in your family. Gather 2 small slide lock plastic sandwich bags; a pants hanger with clips, masking tape, pen and fifty pennies. Read to your kids John 14:27 about peace; and say, "In this bag (marked 'Worry') are going to be some of the things we are worried about. Grab a penny, share your worry and put it in the worry bag." After each person has done this; say, "See how lopsided it is? If this is our family, we are very worried and stress. So let's balance worry with God's truth. Let's put a penny in the bag marked 'Truth' for each person." Repeat process. (52 FTI -120)

1. Cheap Shopping Spree – To challenge the ever-growing sense of entitlement that is common with our kids; take them to the dollar store. Give each person one dollar and say, "Buy something, just for fun for someone else in our family." (Draw names for assignments.) "Find something that fits your person. It can be silly or useful. Keep it a secret until we get home." When you return home, take turns sharing the gifts and why it fits the recipient. (52 FTI - 105)

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Adapted from books by Timothy Smith:

Key: FT = Family Traditions (Cook Communications/Focus on the Family; 1998)

52 FTI = 52 Family Time Ideas (Bethany House; 2006)