Tradition...Don’t Leave Home Without It!

“From ages fourteen to nineteen, our oldest was rebellious. There was a lot of contention between us. It’s always difficult when you’re faced with a wayward son. We’re still not exactly sure what brought him back to us and the gospel. It may be that, because the family was so close and did so many things together, when he began to stray, the others helped call him back.”

“Even when he was most rebellious, he’d say, “Well, aren’t we going to do this? or Aren’t we going to do that? when it came time for a tradition. Later, after he had returned to the church and was serving a mission, one of his missionary companions came home and told us, “I know every one of your traditions. I can tell them to you word for word.” They were that important to our son. Now as we visit our children’s homes, we find that he is continuing those traditions more than any of the others.”  The Framptons, Ensign, February 1988

When I heard this story, my feelings on the importance of family traditions took on a much deeper meaning. Traditions are more than just fun-filled activities that we can look forward to on a regular basis. Traditions are more than just delicious foods that we can plan on eating at certain events.

“Family traditions are like spiritual and emotional cement in the foundation of a happy home. They create fond memories and those memories bond us together as nothing else can.” Traditions Worth Keeping, Ensign, March 1986

Elder Richards L. Evans counseled, “Oh parents, we would plead, give good and happy memories to your children – not pampering or overindulging, not satisfying everything they take a fancy to – but memories of love, encouragement, of peace and harmony and happiness at home – memories that will bless and lift their lives wherever they are, always and forever.” Improvement Era, December, 1970

As we help our children travel through life, we want to pack their luggage with fond memories of family traditions that they can take with them wherever they go. Traditions that will also keep them connected to the family. Leaving home for college, missions, marriage or just living on their own can be a difficult adjustment. So many things are uncertain in their lives. But one thing that can be a constant is their family’s love and the traditions that they have shared together over the years.

We have put together a suggested packing list of traditions that have been a part of our family’s lives and some that others have shared with us as well. It is our hope that this list might be helpful to you if you are looking for some traditions to start in your home or to add to existing traditions. Or maybe these suggestions might spark some ideas of your own. Remember there are no rules and there is no “right” way to do this. Every family is unique; do what works for you. Get creative, make it happen and most importantly have fun!

Suggested Packing List

**Spiritual Items:** Among the most important traditions you establish should be those that are gospel oriented and help bring your family closer to God.

1. Pray together – Sing a quiet song before family prayer or a big family hug right after.

2. Hold regular family home evenings. Try different settings like out on the trampoline or on a blanket on the lawn during summer months.

3. Study the scriptures together. Go around the circle each family member reading a verse or two.

4. Attend meetings together on the Sabbath.

5. Discuss Sunday School or Primary lessons at dinner.

6. Father’s blessings at the beginning of each school year.
7. Attend tithing settlement together as a family.
8. Make General Conference weekend a special weekend. Have a special breakfast, take a drive through the canyons or a family craft or project in between sessions. During the Priesthood session mothers and daughters could gather together for some girl bonding time. Have family members take notes, and then discuss them in family home evening.
10. When a child turns eight years of age, present him/her with their own set of scriptures.
11. Plan a special trip to the temple to do baptisms when a family member turns twelve years old.
12. Attend Relief Society or Young Women General Meetings and then go out for ice cream.
13. When on a family vacation where there is a temple close by, take the family to do baptisms, or at least visit the temple if you have young children.

**Personal Items:** The expression of love should be an important part of your traditions

1. No one can go to bed until they’ve told each member of the family “I love you.”
2. Let each person choose the dinner menu for his or her birthday.
3. Read to your child every night in the same comfy chair.
4. ‘Special Plate’ - Designate a plate that will only be used for ‘special’ occasions (simply buy or make your own). Pull it out for: good report cards, awards at school, winning a game, a good performance, graduation, promotions, pay raises, birthday’s, anniversary’s, etc.
5. Tuck your children into bed each night, even when they are teenagers. We have college daughters that still like to be tucked in when they come home for a visit.
6. Allow each child a regular time to stay up fifteen minutes longer than the other children to spend time alone with parents, or plan a “night out” with each child.
7. Dad’s Saturday Breakfast – Let Mom take the morning off - Dad and the kids make breakfast on Saturday’s!
8. Support each family member participating in athletic events, musical performances, or other productions.
9. Kiss each other good night.
10. Ice cream after the first day of school.
11. Share the best and worst parts of each family member’s day around the dinner table. A great way to connect and get to know your children a little better.
12. ‘Donut Day Saturday’. Load up the kids and head to the donut store then sit eat and chat.
13. Send off your college students with a good luck party.
14. Have an official “birthday hat.” Get a hat that is well suited for your family. Each person wears it at their birthday dinner, whether that be at home or out in a restaurant. The crazier the hat the better.
15. When someone in your family gets a new job, a promotion, or a raise, they take you out for dinner. Nothing fancy or expensive.
16. ‘Friends Night’ - Be involved in your kid’s lives, create an ‘open home’ environment, and help your children feel comfortable inviting friends over into your home. Once a month, have a ‘friends night’ where your kids can invite over any friends – and just allow them to have fun, play games, and just enjoy being together!
17. ‘Growth Wall’ – Use a wall in the house as the ‘growth chart.’ As children grow, mark their growing heights as the years pass by.
18. Monthly Reach Out to Family Day - Set aside a few minutes once a month to simply stay in touch with family. Pick up the phone and make calls, send some emails, write a few letters – do something. Call parents, grandparents, siblings, cousins, niece/nephew, etc.
19. ‘Saturday Work Hour’ - Each Saturday morning, set aside one hour where the whole family helps with work around the house. From cleaning rooms and the house, to vacuuming, to mowing the lawn and yard work – just establish the tradition that for one hour every Saturday – it is ‘family work time.’
20. Daily Chores – Make it a tradition (although the kids may not see this as that ‘fun’ of a tradition) – to have each child have a daily chore. It could be: make bed, clean room, vacuum, straighten bathroom, set table, etc. Establish a tradition of work and helping the family.
21. ‘Stay Up Late Friday Nights’ – Each Friday night – the kids get to stay up (and then sleep in on Sat. morning). Just stay up as a family and play games together, tell stories, watch a movie, etc.

**Seasonal Items:** Traditions give children and parents something to look forward to, as well as something to count on during the holiday seasons….and throughout the year.

2. Valentine String Game – Each child has a different colored string (yarn) that we maze throughout the house, upstairs and downstairs. They follow along their string until they come to the end where a valentine surprise awaits them.
3. Have a red dinner for Valentine’s Day with red jell-o, red mashed potatoes, beets, cherry cake, etc.
4. Draw names for secret pals the week before Valentine’s Day. Perform small acts of service and kindness for that person, and then reveal your identities on Valentine’s Day.
5. Visit the graves of family members early on Easter morning and talk about Jesus Christ’s resurrection.
7. Summer Ice Cream Cones - To make sure summer doesn’t pass your family by without doing much of anything, have your children cut out ice cream cones out of construction paper using different colored paper for different flavor scoops. Let each member of the family write an activity they would like to do on the back of each one and then tape them to a wall in your home. Each day take turns picking an ice cream cone and see what your family will be doing that day!
8. Have a campout in your backyard. Put up the tent, bring out the sleeping bags, goodies and games and if possible hook up a T.V. to watch a family movie.

9. Find a city with spectacular fireworks and plan to be there each year. The Taylorsville Dayzz fireworks are a must for our family! Go early, bring a little dinner and put down a blanket to sit on and await the show!

10. Bring the family together for sporting events such as BYU/UTAH games or the Utah Jazz playoff games. Wear their team colors and cheer on your favorite team.

11. Go on a traveling dinner. Prepare 6 items for your meal, such as the main course, rolls, drinks, jell-o, fruit and dessert. Label the sacks 1 – 6. Put one meal item into each sack not letting the family know what is inside. Drive to a park close by, get out of your cars, and roll the dice. Whatever number comes up, that is the sack you pull out and eat whatever is inside. The kids then play at the park for a bit then off to the next park for another part of your meal. It is so fun to see how your dinner unfolds. Many times dessert is the first thing eaten to the delight of our children. We have many parks around our home, but you could choose other locations for your stops.

12. Enjoy an evening of “Supermarket Sweep” with your family. Divide into two teams and drive to your local grocery store. Give each team a list of items to find and designate a finish line. Each team takes a cart and their list and works as a team throughout the store finding all their items then quickly make their way to the finish line. The winning team gets ice cream cones and the losing team must put away all the groceries.

13. When its time to plant the family garden, make it a family event. Take the whole family to the greenhouse to pick out the vegetable plants they desire. We always let our children pick a pony-pak of flowers to bring home and plant somewhere in the yard along with planting the garden. They spend the summer taking care of the flowers they had picked and planted themselves. We still have perennials that return every year that our college daughter planted years ago.

14. Visit the pumpkin patch together and help each other find just the right pumpkin.

15. Make chili and doughnuts on Halloween with homemade root beer.


17. Act out the nativity scene each Christmas Eve assigning different members of the family to be the director each year.

18. During Christmas break, have a family basketball game at the church gym.

19. Drive around the neighborhood looking at Christmas lights and present your families favorite with a small award.

20. Have children put a piece of straw in the manger for every act of service they do in December. By Christmas it should be soft and comfortable for the baby Jesus.

It has been said that traditions are the “we always” of families. It is our hope that we have helped you catch the vision of traditions and see the important part they can play in your families and that you too will want to become a “we always” family. In his book The Intentional Family, family scholar William Doherty says that as family bonds are weakened by busy lifestyles, families can stay connected only by being intentional about maintaining important rituals and traditions.

The Family: A Proclamation to the World states that wholesome family recreation is important in building successful families. By creating traditions that bring family closer to God, parents can strengthen the bond between family members, fortify commitment to religion, and teach important principles they want their children to understand and live by.

…so to rephrase our theme…

Traditions!...Don’t Let Them Leave Home Without Them!

References:
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