



Putting up lights or stockings, baking cookies, and wrapping presents may be **JOY-FILLED** traditions your family already practices. **TRADITIONS** can help connect these familiar practices and symbols of the Christmas story to your family's heritage, values, faith and personality. Year after year, these require a higher degree of intentionality. While many of us may not have grown up with traditions like that, their **BLESSINGS** are much worth the effort and planning!

Where do we start? The most enduring **FAITH** traditions (Lord's Supper, Baptism, Weddings) are practiced in community. So, we know that relying on others is a tried and true place to start; Carissa \ I offer below not a formula but some steps that might help your family create and celebrate meaningful family **CHRISTMAS** traditions.

STEP #1: **DECIDE TO DO IT** -----

Let's face it. There are many obstacles during the holidays that must be overcome to achieve meaningful and faith-filled Christmas traditions: busyness, distraction, guilt, and added Christmas duties during the month. So:

1. Gather your family to discuss the benefits of traditions together (family bonding and identity, passing down values and faith, etc.). If you decide together, you will set yourself up for success.
2. Decide as parents and as a family that this is important. Declare that with God's help, you will start some small but meaningful traditions. Ironically, the best time to start is when your kids are 2 or 3, when you are still scrambling and the kids seem too young to understand much. They will pick up more than we realize.
3. Pray for God's help and commit this to God together. It's not about you being responsible for their success!

STEP #2: **START WITH BRAINSTORMING** -----

1. Identify any traditions for your families of origin that you want to continue or adapt (putting up the tree/lights, e.g.)? What does your family already love to do together during Christmas?
2. Identify some family values, Christmas stories, and biblical themes you want to highlight this Christmas season (giving, serving, God as light, e.g.).
3. Identify your family's passions, practices, and personality. What do you already like to do? (love for baking, e.g.) These might contribute ideas to adapting old Christmas traditions or starting new ones.



STEP #3: FIND SOME RESOURCES

1. Resources that identify the original story, legend, meaning behind the symbols and traditions of Christmas.
2. Book or guide that you can use, learn from, or adapt for building meaningful long term traditions (I couldnot easily find one that I liked that would suit this purpose, so I did my own.)
3. Ask for help from others who either already practice holiday traditions, or who might be willing to try newtraditions with you-together in person and/or through technology.

STEP #4: MAKE YOUR PLAN

1. Create your tradition as a couple and whenever possible, as a whole family. Be specific but not rigid about the what, when, where and how of practicing your traditions. If need be, mark the family calendar.
2. Align. Do the traditions fit both your family and the hopes you have for passing on values and faith?
3. Start small. Make the plan doable. It's better to do something for five minutes than try to do too much or do nothing at all. Remember, you are starting year after year traditions.

STEP #5: BE FLEXIBLE

1. Adapt. Anticipate the unexpected. Respond to what comes up spontaneously.
2. Avoid guilt. When it doesn't go as well or as often as you expected, resist being disappointed.
3. Let these traditions grow and develop over the years. Guard the core purpose of you traditions but adapt them to the changing age, energy, personality and circumstances of your growing family.