

Keeping "Thankfulness" In Thanksgiving

Four Ideas From Family and Friends

(If you have a special Thanksgiving tradition which you feel might be a blessing to other families please send it to jamhon@gciweb.org and we will add it to these and other helps on our website at gciweb.org)

- I. **Becca Welch:** Becca is our oldest daughter and she and her husband Aaron have four wonderful children which they are raising in a Christ centered home. When I asked her for her ideas she responded... "We make a thanksgiving tree out of a branch that the boys pick out and we put in a vase. everybody cuts out a leaf from paper and then we write things we are thankful on them and hang them on the branch to make a tree. We read our leaves together sometime around thanksgiving."
- II. **Sam and Anne Mahon:** Sam, our second child is married to Anne and live here in Houston. They have two wonderful children which they are raising in a Christ centered home. Here is how they responded to my request. "Dad - we're still developing our traditions but we definitely do the classic thanksgiving meal with kids. Anne will a lot of times make some fun pumpkin dishes and have the kids help out with making the food. We will usually read stories about early Americans, pilgrims etc and emphasize God's provision and our thanksgiving. We'll share at the table what we're thankful for. We often will try and do something outdoorsy and fally with the kids - walk through the trees that are changing colors, go to park - that sort of thing. We've often invited people over who didn't have a place to go - one year we had over several airman when I was in the USAF. I also try to have a notebook where the adults we celebrate with can write something they are thankful for in, and then I can look back to years past and remember the blessings"
- III. **Jessica Cheek:** Jessica was in our ministry at Oklahoma State University (then Jessica Roberts). I was privileged to co-officiate at her wedding when she married Ron, who has since been to Belarus with me as well as hosting the FDS a number of times in their church. They have two delightful daughters whom the are raising in a Christ-centered home. Jessica responded with this great idea... "In October mail a letter with a leaf cut out of yellow construction paper which goes on a "Thankful" tree. They ask families to write what they are thankful for on the leaf and mail it back to them...requesting...please mail it back so our tree won't be bare. The leaf had typing on it The _____ Family is thankful for: And then room to write out your list. We received a letter like this and one night for dinner we sat down and wrote what we were all thankful for and then mailed it back to them.....so that tradition blesses the family who does it...but it also blessed us because we sat down and began to think about what we're thankful for....a little sooner than we normally do. Now this is a part of our Thanksgiving tradition. Also, the girls memorize Psalm 100....we are going to make a wreath and put that passage in the middle and put the paper leaves on it or on a centerpiece and let people fill out what they are thankful for who come to our house and we'll stick it in the wreath/centerpiece. Also, we have begun to read some of the history of the Thanksgiving holiday to our kids... it is a uniquely American holiday that has a Christian message behind it. So we talk about the original history upon which it is based to remember its original meaning and purpose."
- IV. **Lana Wilkens:** Lana is married to Matt Wilkins and is the daughter of Ron Brown who serves on our Board of Directors. I had the privilege of officiating at her and Matthew's wedding. They have attended our FDS as well as applying it to their family and teaching it in their church. Lana answered as follows... "Little by little we develop some traditions for our family, but it's certainly a work in progress! So far this season, we carved pumpkins & had a harvest party where we invited friends and family to bring crock pot chili in October. Several of our neighbors came and we had a lot of fun building friendships with them. We cut out different shape leaves on different color paper and taped them up all over the house. Then, when anyone comes over we ask them to "leave a need/take a need" - we call it The Giving Tree. We're trying to talk about what thankfulness means since our kids are so young. So it's an interesting process. What I hope to do this year is to take the week of Thanksgiving and reflect on what we're thankful for so it might become a habit instead of a once a year thing."