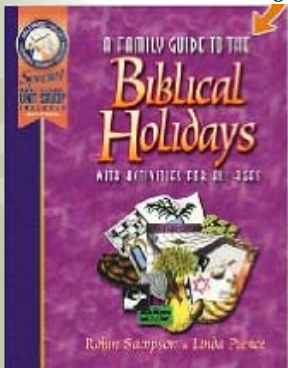


Understanding biblical traditions

by Maureen Driedger

You've no doubt heard some variation of the story of the young wife who was questioned why she cut the ham in half and put it into two pans before placing it in the oven to bake. Her reply, "That's the way my mom always did it," caused her own curiosity to be piqued, so she put the same question to her mother. Her mother's response mirrored her own; when they then asked Grandma why she had always baked ham that way, Grandma's answer was revealing: "I never had a pan big enough to hold a whole ham!" Years of tradition can be passed down without understanding the reason the tradition began or without even understanding whether it was necessary to do things in exactly the same manner in perpetuity to keep to the tradition.

Our family's quest to discover the heart of the celebrations and traditions we kept began as innocently and unsuspectingly as the young wife's. Wanting to honor our Savior as best we could, we began to search for ways to place Him at the center of our celebrations. This led us through numerous resources and books, including



Why Not Celebrate! by Sara Wenger Shenk and *Family Celebrations: Meeting Christ in Your Holidays and Special Occasions* by Ann Hibbard.

Finally, the question everyone is familiar with, WWJD? (What Would Jesus Do?) led us to ask "What DID Jesus Do?" The answer was just as surprising as Grandma's to her daughter and granddaughter and called us to look at the traditions we were celebrating. In doing so, we discovered

that our former traditions were based on a reality that didn't reflect our present reality any more than Grandma's reflected her descendants'. Upon realizing this, we began to look at what scripture calls "the appointed times of YHWH" which God says are His appointed times, times set aside for special celebrations. As we began to study

these, we realized that not only did they place Jesus at the center of our family celebrations, they were pictures of Him that reveal not only salvation history (both on an individual level and a historical one,) but also, they are rehearsals of things to come!

One of the most helpful resources we stumbled upon as we began to learn about and celebrate the biblical holidays was an impressive book aptly titled *A Family Guide to the Biblical Holidays with Activities for All Ages* by Robin Scarlata Sampson and Linda Pierce. Including both the history and meaning of the holidays, it also shows how they picture Christ and his saving work on our behalf. (For those who home school, there is also a “Special Home School Unit Study included.”)

While giving enough information to satisfy the scholar in the family, this book also contains hands-on activities designed to draw young children, tactile, or visual learners into the celebrations. One of the projects—a table centerpiece—is designed to carry a bit of the last celebration forward into the next, giving a sense of continuity from one holiday to the other.

Beginning with the introduction, which contains information on what the book is about, how it is organized, how to use it, and descriptions of all of the appendices, the reader is impressed with the organization and attention to detail the authors employ.

The organization and meticulous attention to detail are carried through in the next section of the book entitled “God’s Holidays,” which includes answers to the questions, why study the biblical holidays?, what happened to the biblical holidays historically?, and numerous explanations of various aspects of the Hebrew roots of our faith. In addition there are explanations of the Hebrew calendar which help us to gain understanding of the biblical appointed times.

Besides offering a wealth of information, activities, and craft projects, each holiday enumerated in the book provides the purpose, how it was celebrated in biblical times, how Jews celebrate it today, the Messianic significance for today, and suggestions for celebrating the holiday,

If you want to learn about and celebrate the biblical holidays, this is a great one-stop resource. But don’t be intimidated by the comprehensive nature of the family guide. It’s easy to do as much or as little as you make time for. Believe me, I didn’t use nearly all of the resources when my first family was young, and, I’m not sure I’ll be able to exhaust them now that we seem to be raising a second family!📖