

What's Your Family's CHRISTMAS TRADITION?

Family traditions create memories and bridge gaps between generations.

By Sarah Hanson

When you hear the phrase “Christmas tradition,” do you think of making a special dinner, going caroling, or hosting a family gift exchange? Or maybe you think of your funny neighbor who dresses up as Santa Claus each year, false beard and all? I know I do—especially that last one.

Do you also think of your family? Think about it—you probably have more traditions involving family than you realize! These traditions are an important part of celebrating the Christmas season. They create memories and provide a sense of family identity. And traditions not only connect you with your immediate family—they also bridge the gap between generations.

In the following stories, youth share how family traditions bring them closer to their families and the Savior.



Christmas Temple Trip

Each year, my family goes to Manti, Utah, USA. We cut down a Christmas tree, we watch the newest family movie, and we go to the Manti Temple. I love this tradition because I get to spend time with family that I don't get to see very often, like my great-grandma, great-aunts, and second cousins. It is also special to me because I get to learn about my family history in the place where some of my ancestors lived and experienced trials that they overcame through the Savior.

The first time I went inside the Manti Temple was a spiritual experience for me. I could feel the Spirit so strongly as I performed saving ordinances for family members with my grandparents and great-grandma. I love this memory because it is a testimony to me that the gospel is true.

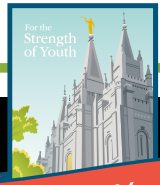
Anne R., 16, Utah, USA



A GREAT BLESSING

“Being part of a family is a great blessing. Your family can provide you with companionship and happiness, help you learn correct principles in a loving atmosphere, and help you prepare for eternal life.”

For the Strength of Youth (2011), 14.



FAMILY



BUILD FAMILY TRADITIONS

“If we will build righteous traditions in our families, the light of the gospel can grow ever brighter . . . from generation to generation.”

Elder L. Tom Perry (1922-2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Apr. 1990 general conference.

Decorating Grandma’s House

My favorite Christmas tradition is decorating my grandparents’ house. My favorite memory from this Christmas tradition is helping to decorate the tree each year. The older grandchildren help the younger kids to place ornaments on the higher branches until all the ornaments have been put up. I like this tradition because it helps me spend time serving with my family as we help my grandparents. When I serve them, it helps me focus more on others and not on myself. It fills me with love for my family and for my Savior and brings me closer to them.

Aspen L., 15, Nevada, USA



Remembering the Savior

Every year, my family does what we call a “Christmas Ceremony,” where we review the events surrounding Christ’s birth and His atoning sacrifice. Each year the ceremony is exactly the same, but I learn something new. Our tradition brings such a wonderful experience into our home that brings our family together. I love this tradition because we talk about the love of God and Christ for us. It brings the Spirit to the Christmas season. We celebrate Christ’s birth and the great gift He gave to us through His Atonement. The tradition reminds me of that gift and how I can use it to become like Him. I’ve gained a greater perspective from this tradition. At the very least, it has shown me that Christ loves me more than I can imagine. Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ are always there and always listening.

Matthew W., 16, Texas, USA

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Secret Gifts

Every year, each member of my family picks another family member's name out of a hat and secretly gets a gift for that person. We first got the idea from the movie *Christmas for a Dollar*. We tried it, and now it's been a tradition for the past couple years.

This past year, I picked my brother's name.

At first, I thought, "Oh, great," because we had been butting heads. But looking for a gift he would like really humbled me. After Christmas, we were best friends again.

I like our tradition because it changed my perspective on Christmas. I used to always focus on what gifts I'd get and what I wanted, but after we started this tradition, it made me focus more on thinking about my family members and the looks on their faces as they opened their gifts. I put more time and thought into giving gifts. Even before Christmastime, I try to look for things my family members will like and what I could get them.

Makenna B., 16, Oklahoma, USA

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Christmas Scavenger Hunt

My great-grandma didn't have much money growing up, so she and her family did scavenger hunts for Christmas because the only presents they could afford were little things like pencils and erasers. The scavenger hunt made up for not getting a lot of big or expensive gifts.

The tradition has been passed down, and now every Christmas, my family does a scavenger hunt. My siblings and I make scavenger hunts for each other and hide clues—I even hid a clue on my dog once. I like it not only because it's fun, but because it brings my family together and I get to connect with my great-grandmother, even though I've never met her.

This tradition helps us understand that Christmas isn't about the presents you get. It's about Christ, His birth, and everything He's done for us. I know Christ's Atonement is not just used for repentance; we can use it because Christ knows exactly what we're going through. We're never alone, and Jesus knows what we're going through because He went through it too. **NE**

Rachel B., 16, California, USA



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