

Summer Rituals

By Susan Vogt



Traditions and rituals are repeated acts that carry meaning. The word “ritual” often puts the act in the religious realm. Rituals have power, even when they might not explicitly refer to faith and God, because they connect us with memories of important events. Since, as Christians, we believe that God is everywhere and in our very being, let’s consider how many of our summer traditions can awaken us to God’s presence.

For

Adult / Couple

Season

Summer

Needed

An attentive spirit to see God’s presence in ordinary things and ways.

Prepare in Advance

Ask your family if they would be willing plan with you how you might have fun this summer. If they are not available, or not in the mood, go to the “Solo Variation” below.

Activity Plan

1. Start with calling to mind how, on the seventh day, God rested. “So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.” (Genesis 2:3). Say this prayer.

Dear God of the Sabbath. You know about the need to balance work and rest. Sometimes we humans forget and think that we must work tirelessly, lest the world fall apart. We remember that You are responsible for the world, not us. Yes, we work hard and that is good (even though we are not always paid for it), but let us not forget to take time to rest and play together as a family. Amen.

2. Gather the family and brainstorm typical summer activities that you have enjoyed in the past. Examples include taking a vacation by car, boat, or air; going to a beach, waterpark, amusement park, cottage; catching lightning bugs in the evening; running through a sprinkler; sleeping late or staying up late; playing a sport, hiking, biking, or other ways of enjoying the natural world; picnics.
3. Decide:
 - How much time the whole family has to be together this summer?
 - When you would like to take your “Sabbath Time” together?
 - How much money you have to spend?
 - Whether it will involve a trip or a “staycation” (an intentional vacation at home)?
 - Whether you want to repeat a traditional summer activity that everyone enjoys?
 - Whether you want to try something new and perhaps start a new tradition?

4. If your family identifies a vacation idea from the past that they want to repeat, fine. Do it.
5. If your family wants to do something new, like a “staycation,” here’s a way to do it that needn’t cost much money. It can be done over one day but works better if you have several days or a week so you can also decompress and not just run from one activity to another – unless of course you find that kind of invigorating pace refreshing.
 - Each family member chooses one activity that they’d really like to do together. Put a cost limit on it. It could be as simple as everybody sleeps in or has unlimited tech time, FOR ONE DAY, or it might mean playing miniature golf together or taking a family hike.
 - Assuming the activity isn’t dangerous or illegal, everyone agrees to join in each other’s chosen activity – even if it isn’t *your* favorite.Result: You play and laugh together. You will probably also learn some new things about other family members and build some humorous stories for retelling at a later time.
6. Debrief by pondering the following connections. Use your own judgment on how to best discuss these connections with family members.
 - Anything to do with water can remind us of our Baptism.
 - Anything to do with eating together can remind us of Holy Communion and Jesus feeding the people.
 - If someone gets hurt and needs a band aid or, God forbid, a trip to the hospital, it can remind us of the many people Jesus healed.
 - Appreciating the grandeur (and freedom) of nature can remind us of Matthew 6.23-33 (the Lilies of the Field)

Solo Variation

If it is not practical for your family to do a joint Sabbath time, don’t neglect your own need for rest and recreation. If you can, take at least a day for yourself. Consider what is most restful and will refresh your spirit. Do it.

