



Koinonia

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Hi EaglePointe Family

Protecting meaningful traditions and Making Whoppers out of Sacred COWS.

As I think of this Christmas and the meaning behind why I celebrate this tradition, as a Christian it is impossible for me to describe. I am a change agent. I stir things up; I make people uncomfortable because I tend to challenge the status quo--and even tradition at times. Don't misunderstand. Traditions are important, and my family definitely has traditions that are important to us--and yes that includes me. When I was a child going to both of my grand mama's houses, our tradition was to have Christmas on Christmas Eve. Grandmother Skinner always had a peanut butter cake made especially for me when I got there. She had no recipe to follow; she just made it. She made a cake and made up a concoction that we know for sure had peanuts in it--she crushed peanuts in a peanut grinder and used the grease from it to make the icing. To some of you reading this, you might be thinking that is one portion of the tradition I can do without.

I assure you it is only because you did not have the opportunity to taste the cake! Those were the good ole days! For me that was pre-diabetes, pre-obesity, pre-cholesterol... pre- all things that are associated with foods--such as that which if measured would have probably been banned by the FDA without a warning label saying "this food will eventually kill you."

Traditions are valuable. They help us to create memories which we associate with positive experiences that have impacted our lives in a transforming way. Sometimes the people celebrating the traditions forget to pass on the meaning of those traditions to their children and grandchildren. We forget **WE** are the ones who experienced those positive memories that made the tradition of Christmas at grandma's house so wonderful and exciting. **The result of such failure is that tradition becomes a sacred cow.** (An excuse for refusing positive change) The children and grandchildren continue to practice the "tradition/ritual" but are simply doing it because "**we have always done it that way.**" When this happens, traditions can become sacred cows.

Taken to the extreme they become divisive issues with dire consequences. Those who are in favor of the tradition begin to demonize those who are advocating a change or break from tradition. In Christian circles, we often say things such as--"They can't be a Christian if they support such as that." "Who do they think they are--God?" Or maybe we demonize the change itself. "That is not Christian music." "Real Sunday school happens at 9:45 am." "Real Christians do not let their kids trick or treat." "Real Bible study MUST happen in the morning." "Real Christians Home School their children." Beware I'm about to hit a sacred cow. "Real Christians believe in the Bible literally"; or "Real Christians speak in tongues."

We have to be careful that we do not substitute tradition, or even traditional Biblical understandings with Biblical truth. It is Biblical Truth that Jesus was the one and only Son of God, and was in fact God Incarnate. He was born of a virgin and died on the cross to reconcile our sins to God; only to rise again three days later. Without this singular sacrifice, humanity has no hope and is therefore lost forever.

The Bible is without error as it relates to these truths. But when we confuse tradition and truth, then our message gets lost amidst the arguing and the pointing of fingers between each other. The result is that those outside of our faith never get the opportunity to hear our message of hope. Even when we begin arguing with those outside of the Christian faith about why they should believe or we condemn them because they do not believe, our message of hope is lost. As I review the Scriptures, I do not find one person who became a follower because He or His disciples were berating a non-believer.

If we want our traditions to remain valuable and retain their meaning to future generations, we must be intentional about teaching our children and grandchildren the meanings and memories behind them.

Christianity is in danger of becoming a victim of its traditions. Our traditions have become so ingrained that we have either forgotten to pass along the meaning behind those traditions to our children and grandchildren or we made the assumption that they automatically understood. **Good teaching is not only modeled and observed, it is also intentional.**

One such example of one of the traditions that has lost its meaning to many Christians is the observance of Ash Wednesday.

For example, many Catholics who observe Ash Wednesday by placing ashes on their forehead in the shape of a cross, cannot tell you the meaning of it except that it is the beginning of Lent and they are only supposed to eat one full meal on that day. The meaning behind the tradition is that it is the day to contemplate on transgressions to save you from the fire of the hell. The ashes come from burning the previous year's palm leaves and are mixed in olive oil. The Cross on the forehead marks ownership to Jesus Christ. Ash is the Biblical symbol of mourning and penance. The olive oil is simply used to allow better adhesion for the ashes.

Christmas is another tradition that we Christians observe because of the meaning that Christ's birth has to us. We have had an experience with Jesus, and understand the coming sacrifice and the irony of God-omnipotent, God-omniscient, God-omnipresent, future King of Israel, and Savior of the World incarnate in a helpless baby born in a stinking stable. **However we must intentionally teach our children not just about Christmas, but about the sacrifice Jesus made for them and pray that they will one day share our experience of salvation.** Otherwise, Christmas is likely to become a meaningless ritual and become just another "holiday."

We Christians often lament how Christmas has become so commercialized, how the stores simply send out "holiday" cards, sell "holiday trees"; and others protest the placement of manger scenes and Christmas trees in public places. Why? They have not shared our experience and therefore do not know the meaning behind the tradition. For stores and their shareholders, the experience of Christmas centers on profit. Christmas sales often determine whether they will be profitable for the year; and, therefore, the tradition of Christmas for them is to sell as much as possible to as many people as possible. Those people include Jews, atheists, Muslims, agnostics, and, yes, Christians, too. (That is to say everyone.)

This Christmas let us as Christians focus on making a difference in the lives of Jews, atheists, Muslims, agnostics, and, yes, Christians, too. (That is to say everyone.) If we add this tradition of sharing the hope Christ brings to our Christmas tradition, then maybe it will create some positive experiences for those who have not yet associated the Christmas "holiday" with the transforming experience of God's saving grace. Instead of joining the chorus of Christians who are complaining about "secularists" ruining "our tradition," let's be intentional about praying for them, and teaching them about the meaning of the tradition. God gave us the free will to choose Him.

This freedom extends to them. Jesus said, "Go and tell." He did not say legislate me or complain about others not understanding me. We can be passionate about our Lord but let's not be belligerent. In fact, He tells us that if we do not have the Spirit, we will not understand the things of the Spirit. (John 3:6) In this context, why are we so surprised that they do not understand our traditions?

Many of our Christian traditions in America are "under attack," on the verge of extinction, or worse becoming meaningless because we have become too dependent on our founding fathers' historical document which we refer to as the Constitution and the liberties provided therein. **We should be depending on the historical book called the Holy Bible and the truth found therein.** The Holy Spirit gives us courage, and "power from on high" to bear witness to our neighbor and allow him to participate in the tradition of bearing witness to Jesus birth. Many of us assume that because our traditions were modeled and observed by others that we no longer have to be intentional about teaching and sharing the meanings behind the traditions and the experiences that make those traditions meaningful. We assume we no longer have to pray for our neighbors and friends and to share the experiences that make the Christian traditions meaningful. Meiosis is a fact in biological science but is not a very effective form of teaching.

This Christmas insure your special Christmas traditions remain meaningful by sharing your experience of hope and redemption with your family, friends and neighbors. Be intentional not just about observing the tradition but about teaching the meanings and truth these traditions are built upon. Don't let Satan distract you with rabbit trails of negativity and frustration with others, and lose our message of hope. Simultaneously, let's use this time of reflection to evaluate and judge our own lives and examine our own short comings as closely as we evaluate and judge others. We might find that our some of our traditions have become sacred cows. If this is the case evaluate how we can resurrect those traditions by rediscovering meaning behind those our traditions and we might discover a few traditions that have become so bloated that they have become a sacred cow. Let us have the confidence and courage to turn those sacred cows into whoppers and use them as Jesus did--to feed the crowds and teach them about HOPE!

Thank you,

Pastor Jeff

• Dare to SOAR!

Our mission:

is to seek opportunities to build authentic relationships in order that we may earn permission to share Christ.

Our vision:

To SOAR beyond the mediocrity of mere Christianity.

In-reach

We continue to seek out others in need within the community

Prayer Station We will be setting up the prayer station at some public events in the community and simply asking people if we can take their prayer requests and pray with them.

Foster/Adoptive parent Seminars

Families 4
Alabama's Kids



Lee county foster parents are in desperate needs of someone to help equip them to meet the needs of some of these foster children from DHR. Many of these children suffer from attachment disorders, Oppositional Defiant disorders and many others. These seminars will equip these parents with strategies and expectations for dealing with these various behavioral disorders.

Judy Hardy- LPC has agreed to be our speaker for these seminars.

This will be an additional outreach to the community. If you know a foster adoptive parent in the Lee County area; inform them of these upcoming seminars.

A date is yet to be determined so keep an eye on your email or the Eagle-Pointe website for news related to this.

PRAYER REQUEST



Hello Friends, I have several prayer requests that have crossed my desk in the last few days.

Various requests from the pastors of ASD and their churches

Some requests as a result of Halloween Outreach

- AnnaBeth Gatlin
- Jameka Nunn-Freedom
- Lotomera Bridges
- Gergella Carrin
- Pat cooper-Mother is terminally ill
- Linda Beatt-Her big brother
- Earline S. Cobb
- Susanne Barfiled's husband very ill Dr's have not been able to determine his illness
- Debra Hunter
- Latasha Purter
- Tiffany Beatty-Soldiers in Iraq
- Doven Carlisle-Financial increase
- Cindy Hutchinson
- Charles Hall-His family
- Niki Locke
- Alice Dowdell
- Michael Campbell
- Bonnie Powell

Rod Marks-

This is the brother of a friend of mine from Oregon.-He is suffering from a drug resistant pneumonia and since he is not "critical" he will be dismissed from the hospital-Look for this type of thing to happen much more of we have socialized medicine.

Michael Balsar-

A Parishioner in the church who is suffering some health related problems.

Angie and Michael Brown-

Foster family that has Hayden's brothers and sisters. Her oldest brother has become unmanageable. The state is threatening to remove them all if they ask for Michael to be removed.

Shelley Berry

"Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life; you stretch out your hand against the anger of my foes, with your right hand you save me. The LORD will fulfill [his purpose] for me; your love, O LORD, endures forever — do not abandon the works of your hands." Ps 138:7-8

Tuesday was another good day for Shelley. She awoke from sleeping when I walked into the room. Her eyes were the size of saucers. For the first few minutes she was trying so desperately to adjust to being awoken by her late husband. Usually I visit earlier in the day!

About a month ago I mentioned to you on Caring Bridge that we only had a week before Shelley would be forced to come home. Well, here we are a month later and we are more prepared for Shelley's home coming. Her various infections allowed time for Shelley to become more awoken and grow stronger. **What a marvelous answer to prayer. God promises that He will not place more on us than we are able to handle.**

Today Shelley showed persistent gains. **No set backs!** She moved both feet on command and squeezed both of her hands. The respiratory therapist told me that Shelly is gaining strength in holding up her head and neck on her own. PTL! It appears she is gaining new physical ground every day. Please keep praying that her progress continues daily. **Pray that her return home (biggest event in her life for the past 6 weeks) does not wear her out or sit her back physically.**

WOW MOMENT: Before I left her room today I paused at the door and called out her name. I could see her eyes rolling back my way, tracing my voice. Emotionally it was so hard to leave her, knowing that as she becomes stronger she is beginning to understand our absence. I could not help myself, I walked back into the room and did what I had done a thousand times. I puckered up my lips and bowed down to kiss her on her lips. What a surprise. . . . she puckered her lips ever so slightly and tried to kiss me back. **Wow**, that was the best exit I've had with Shelley in over 10 weeks. PTL!

Well, forgive me for being a little sentimental and romance. But it's been over 10 weeks since I've had any response from the "love of my life". *I don't know about you, but I think there must have been a celebration in heaven today over a simple "pucker"!*

PRAYER NEEDS:

- Keep praying for Shelley to keep making progress. We don't want her to stop at any level. *"God, please hear our prayers. . . continue to give Shelley more strength and mobility every day".*
- Pray for our family as we still prepare for Shelley coming home. There are so many things to get accomplished to make the room just right.
- This weekend is the Christmas District banquets for the pastors of the district. *Pray for mom and dad Berry who will be sitting with Shelley in Dan's absence this first weekend home.*

Thanks to more of you good folks around the country who are praying and volunteering to sit with Shelley. Both I and my mom and dad know this is a big undertaking for Shelley to come home. *But everyday Shelley improves means the caregivers support becomes lighter. Also, as soon as Shelley makes sufficient progress we can have her enrolled in The Shepherd.*

<http://www.caringbridge.org/visit/dan-shelleyberry>

Dan and Linda Tradewell-

Linda is still having a myriad of health issues, and they are facing some other challenges as well.

Lisa and I-

Hayden has a big brother. (Blaine) It has multiply the stress in mine and Lisa's lives. We wanted two children when we began this process. Just pray for God to give us, energy, wisdom, strength, courage, and discernment to make the right decisions for EaglePointe and our lives.

Jack Chandler Family -

This is the grandfather of Gwen and Ross Bearden. Gwen works for a customer as the CFO. You will recall we requested prayer for Ross during the summer as he almost lost an eye due to an accident at work. Please continue to keep this family in your prayers.

Auburn Opelika Community-

Much of the Auburn economy is dependent on the real-estate and developer market. The current situation with the mortgage market and the credit crunch could pose serious problems for many of the small businesses in the Auburn area. Many of them are dependent upon each other and if one falls it can have a domino effect.

Julia Garbe-

This is the daughter of Linda who is new to our church. Julia fractured her growth plate in her ankle, She will soon get her leg brace off.

Hayden's court date-

Pray for God's will. The state is very confident in its case. I am less confident in the State but Very Confident in God.

Dixie, Scott and Dylan-

Another family we are working with. They are good friends with Dan and Linda.

Rebecca Ibrahim-

That school goes well for her and she has a positive experience in Auburn.

Jim Garner-

This is another guy we are working with to get into church. Satan used some very difficult experiences to discourage him in his journey.

CFC Church-

This is the church we are meeting in. They are looking for a new pastor.

Rick Hagen-

Literally does his entire ministry in the community. Sosanna's Home-Hopes inn, HIS place, and Celebrate Recovery on Saturdays

The Berry's - Our new D.S.-

Pray for their transition to continue to go well and pray as he leads our district.

Kyle and Loretta Felts-

Kyle's health problems. Loretta is having kidney complications as a result of diabetes.

Holley Felts-Unspoken

Outreach activities-

Adoptive parent seminars, Prayer Station.

Workers for the Harvest-

More people to minister to and help us minister

EaglePointe-

Workers for the harvest and God to bring us to the harvest.

Missionaries to help disciple others-

People who may have a church home but feel God is leading them to help Eagle Pointe get off the ground and then return to their home church.

New Start churches on ASD-

Lighthouse, Eagle Pointe

NEWS

Thank you to everyone who participated in giving to the Lee County Foster Children's association Gwen Adams, the President of the association asked me to inform you that you were an answer to prayer! They had contacted all of the schools and asked them to have a toy drive, and several other churches and individuals. Last week they were only getting a few toys from the schools, and things were just not flowing. They began to pray for god to fill their need so these foster children could have Christmas.

You all prayed and listened to the Holy Spirit and obeyed. Thank you! To have such a small congregation and for you to respond so overwhelmingly to such a need is a true blessing.

Thanks to your efforts, we were able to give \$250.00 and a good number of toys and clothes to Gwen. Several of you have indicated you will have your Sunday and that is also appreciated. I will meet Gwen Monday morning and deliver the remaining toys and gifts to her.

Thank you again for your commitment and dedication. One of the Core Values of Eagle Pointe is that we want to be relational. Another is Spreading Hope. Your compassion for these children fulfilled two of our core values with one simple act of kindness.

Pastor Jeff

- [The D.S. Asked me to forward this to you guys.](#)

Jeff,

We applaud your effort to get involved in the community. Please express my gratitude and appreciation to your congregation as well. Our ministry is beyond the walls of the church. May God bless your faithful stewardship to the district and your investment in the community. We pray that God will honor the faithfulness and compassion of your people by bringing new souls into the church. We look forward to being with you and your family Tuesday night.

In Christ,
Brother Berry

It's Christmas night.

The midnight hour has chimed and I should be asleep, but I'm awake. I'm kept awake by one stunning thought. The world was different this week. It was temporarily transformed.

The magical dust of Christmas glittered on the cheeks of humanity ever so briefly, reminding us of what is worth having and what we were intended to be. We forgot our compulsion with winning, wooing, and warring. We put away our ladders and ledgers, we hung up our stopwatches and weapons. We stepped off our race tracks and roller coasters and looked outward toward the star of Bethlehem.

More than at any other time, we think of him. More than in any other season, his name is on our lips.

And the result? For a few precious hours our heavenly yearnings inter

mesh and we become a chorus.

A ragtag chorus of longshoremen, Boston lawyers, illegal immigrants, housewives, and a thousand other peculiar persons who are banking that Bethlehem's mystery is in reality, a reality.

For a few precious hours, he is beheld. Christ the Lord. Those who pass the year without seeing him, suddenly see him.

Emmanuel. He is with us. God came near.

Soon life will be normal again. But for the moment, I want to savor the spirit just a bit more. I want to pray that those who beheld him today will look for him when the gifts are history and carols are quiet. And I can't help but linger on one fanciful thought: If he can do so much with such timid prayers lamely offered in December, how much more could he do if we thought of him every day?

For after all, the One who came that Christmas morning so long ago, still comes. He comes every time a seeker turns his face heavenward and says "Yes!" to the Savior. A Savior sent by a God who "so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (Jn. 3:16).

Christmas blessings to you and yours,



Max Lucado

If you wish to share your experiences in Koinonia please email article to wdhsh1952@gmail.com

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