



Faith Family

A Christian resource
for families

Let's celebrate

Lucy was helping her mother prepare for Uncle Oscar's birthday party.

'Why did you do that?' she asked unexpectedly, looking at the oven.

'What? O, you mean why I cut the end off the ham when I put it in the roaster.'

'Um-hum. Why do you have to cut it?'

Mum considered the question and then shrugged her shoulders and replied, 'I'm really not sure why, but that's what my mum always did. Why don't you ask Nana? She'll know.'

So, later, while the extended family was enjoying the meal, Lucy asked Nana, 'Why do you have to cut the end off of the ham?'

Surprised by the question, Nana replied slowly, 'Well you see, Lovey, I always had a small roasting pan. The whole ham wouldn't fit in it, so I cut the end off, to make it fit.'

Family customs are an important way of building family unity and giving children a sense of belonging and security. National holidays help pass on and build national identity. Community celebrations build a sense of community. Ethnic and church traditions help create a sense of being part of a larger family. From infancy children benefit from being part of the togetherness of these activities even though they do not understand what is happening.

At some point, though, it is important for children to learn the reason for what we do. Generally it's more than just 'doing what we always do'. Giving gifts at Christmas time is a way of celebrating God's great gift to us — a Saviour, Jesus. Making a resolution on January 1 is a way of remembering that, through Jesus, God gives us all a second chance and a new life. Hot cross buns remind us that Jesus died on a cross for us and hollow chocolate eggs at Easter time remind us that Jesus came back to life, leaving his tomb empty. Candles on birthday cakes remind us that Jesus brings light to our life.

When you celebrate special events, take the time to share with your children the meaning of your traditions and to talk about your beliefs. You can create a rich tapestry of tradition, belief and celebration which will be understood and alive in generations to come.



A thought from the Bible:

But make sure in your hearts that Christ is Lord. Always be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks you about the hope you have. Be ready to give the reason for it. But do it gently and with respect. (1 Peter 3:15, NIRV)

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GrowMinistries

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FAMILY MINISTRY

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*Caring for the lives and
faith of children, young
people and their families.*





Tickle, snuggle, kiss and hug

Physical affection has an effect on brain chemistry that is conducive to positive behaviour.

Holding babies for feeding and to calm them is a natural part of parenting. They soon delight in finger rhymes like 'Round and round the garden'.

A hand to hold gives toddlers confidence in new situations. As they move and explore their world, they keep coming back to the safety of a parent's arms to reconnect physically. Older children need this reconnection as well, even if it's just a pat on the back or an arm around their shoulder when they return from an adventure.

Couch activities — reading or watching a movie or doing a puzzle side-by-side — invite leaning into, snuggling, touching, and arm-wrapping.

Games such as horsey rides, piggy back rides, wrestling, tickling and dancing involve person-to-person contact. They all promote the release of positive brain chemicals and bring families closer together in an enjoyable, physical way.

Slapping or hitting a misbehaving child seldom calms a situation. But a warm, secure hug can restore the chemical balance in a child's brain. Parents can even make words of discipline more effective by holding a child's hands or placing a gentle hand on a child's shoulder. It tells that child nonverbally, 'I'm here for you — no matter what!'

'Love Languages', time, speech, gifts, service and touch, are different ways we can express love to one another and understand that we are loved. Young children need to receive all these expressions of love. As they grow older they tend to display a preference for one or two. Caring, observant parents will make sure their children receive an extra helping of their love language.



Loving touch

Gary Chapman* in his book *The Five Love Languages* says, 'It seems that many parents are unaware of how much their children need to be touched and how easily they can use this means to keep their children's emotional tanks filled with unconditional love.'

Studies show that many parents only touch their children when it's necessary, but most children need more physical contact. Reaching out with tender touch creates emotional closeness. Babies who receive lots of hugs and kisses have been shown to develop a healthier emotional life than those who are left without much physical contact. They develop an understanding of the comfort and reassurance of touch.

Some parents think that as their children get older, they no longer require physical contact, but the need is still there — even for adults! Particularly for those whose primary love language is physical touch.

Ask 'do you want a hug?' or 'can I have a hug?' and some children, particularly boys, seem to resist. But high fives, tickles, wrestling and roughhousing, particularly with other males are usually welcome. Sitting close on the couch while watching TV or reading a book, holding hands while saying grace before a meal or a bedtime routine that includes a hand-on-head or hand-on-shoulder blessing, can top up their love tank.

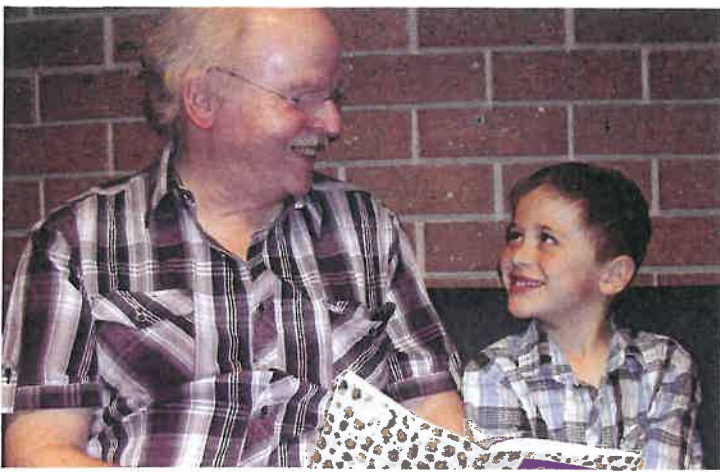
Showing physical affection towards adolescents in public may embarrass them. But definitely continue it in the family home. Sometimes fathers think it's inappropriate to cuddle a daughter who is fast becoming a young lady, but she needs physical contact as much as ever. Teens who feel they are too big for kisses and cuddles may be satisfied by back rubs, arm stroking and massages.

Sometimes parents and children have different preferred love languages. You may have a touchy-feely child when that is not your preferred way of expressing yourself. You may have grown up in a family where physical touch was avoided, but you can learn to speak this language. It's easiest to start when your child is first born, but you can start with an older child with a simple pat on the back or gentle box on the arm, and enjoy the response you get.

In today's climate of concern about physical and sexual abuse, some parents may withhold the valuable love language of physical touch from their children. There is a line between appropriate (loving) touch and inappropriate (harmful, abusive) touching. If you have concerns about your own ability to make the distinction, please talk with a counsellor. If you are concerned about inappropriate touching of your child by another adult, talk with your Child Abuse Hotline.

Another expression of love is helping your child to understand what is appropriate and what is not. Encourage them to say 'no' when someone touches them and they feel uncomfortable. Develop a relationship that will allow your child to talk to you about touching and any other issues that concern them.

*Dr Chapman is an internationally respected marriage and family life expert and a husband, father and grandfather. See www.Slovelanguages.com. This is one of a series of articles about love languages in Faith Family.



Remembering who we are

It's my turn this year.

I'm the youngest kid who has learned Hebrew well enough to read the Passover questions.

Grandad and me practice reading the *Haggadah* — that's Hebrew for 'Passover script'. See, I do know some Hebrew!

Grandad often says, 'It's important to know who we are and whose we are.' Having a *Seder* helps us remember we are special people because we belong to God.

The *Seder* is all about God bringing us out of slavery to freedom. That happened ages ago to Moses, Miriam and Joshua! At the time God told us to remember what he did — to act it out every year. And that's what we've been doing ever since.

Here's what happens in our family.

All the aunts and uncles and cousins and everybody have this meal together. The ladies prepare special food. The kids help set the table and make decorations. We set an extra place in case a stranger might come. Everybody wears our best clothes and the men and boys wear *yarmulkes* (special caps).

When we're all ready Grandad starts it off with *kiddush* — a blessing — and we have our first cup of wine. Kids' wine is mostly water, though.

First we do things that remind us of the bad times our people had while they were slaves in Egypt.

We take some parsley and dip it in salt water — that reminds us of tears.

We eat the matzot — the bread of suffering.

Then comes my part. I ask, '*Mah Nishtana?*' — why is this night different from all other nights and why do we eat different food from other meals?

Grandad gives the answer. When we practice, he just says 'yadda, yadda, yadda'. But at the real meal he tells the story in his special way that makes us feel that we are right there with Moses and the others.

Us kids' favourite part is when God sends plagues to Egypt so they'll let his people go. We say each word after Grandad and put our fingers in the wine and flick drops on our plates — blood, frogs, lice, flies, sick livestock, skin sores, hail, locusts, darkness, slaying of the first-born.

Grandad announces that the final plague passed over our people and helped us to escape. That's why it's called 'Passover'.

Then we do things that remind us of the good times of freedom that God has given us.

We fill up our wine glasses for another drink and have our main meal — yummy roast lamb and flat bread — just like our ancestors ate when God took them out of Egypt.

Mum hides the dessert bikkies. The really little kids find them and give them to us.

Grandad leads thanksgiving prayers and then Aunt Sarah leads us in singing some songs praising God.

There's lots more, like washing our hands about a zillion times. It's all here in the book — but it's in our brains and hearts as well.

This year I'm the kid who asks the questions. Some day I'll be the grandad who says, 'Blessed are you, Lord, our God, King of the universe,' and tells the whole story.

'Remembering who we are' is based on the story of the Passover in Exodus in the Bible. The *Seder* is a formal way of passing on the story from generation to generation.



Passover and Easter

It was during a Passover meal that Jesus initiated Holy Communion, the special meal in which Christians remember Jesus' death. Many people see parallels between the Passover rescue of the Hebrew people from slavery in Egypt and Jesus' rescue of all people from slavery to sin and death.

Easter is a long weekend in church practice as well as in our holiday calendar. We look particularly at Jesus' death on Good Friday and Jesus' return to life on Easter Sunday.

To help your children know the significance of Easter you might begin with an illustrated children's Bible that contains these two stories.

Read the stories several times during the Easter period. After children have heard it several times, they may help tell or read the story themselves. Ask 'and then...?' to prompt children to continue the story in their own words. They might enjoy using puppets or figures to act out the story.

Look at illustrations and ask questions like: What do you see? Who do you see? What are they doing? What do you think they are thinking and feeling? What would you think and feel if you were there? Children may answer those questions with their own artwork. They may draw their own pictures modelled on illustrations in the book. They might give their pictures as gifts to friends and family.

Look around your house to find things that can remind you of the story. Consider what parts of the story you think of as you prepare and eat your meals.

Books shown above are: *The Beginner's Bible* (Candle Books), *Easter A to Z* (Abingdon), *Happy Easter board book* (Concordia) and *The Lion Children's Bible*.

Australian citizenship

The pledge

From this time forward (under God)
I pledge my loyalty
to Australia and its people,
whose democratic beliefs I share,
whose rights and liberties I respect,
and whose laws I will uphold and obey.

The democratic beliefs (core values)

- freedom of election and being elected
- freedom of assembly and political participation
- freedom of speech, expression and religious belief
- rule of law
- other basic human rights

The responsibilities

- obey the law
- defend Australia should the need arise
- serve on a jury if called to do so
- vote in federal and state or territory elections, and in a referendum

The privileges

- vote in federal and state or territory elections, and in a referendum
- apply for work in the Australian Public Service or in the Australian Defence Force
- seek election to parliament
- apply for an Australian passport and re-enter Australia freely
- receive help from an Australian official while overseas
- register children born overseas as Australian citizens by descent

This information comes from www.citizenship.gov.au



is produced by people from several Christian churches in Australia — Anglican, Baptist, Catholic, Lutheran, Salvation Army and Uniting. We share an understanding that faith is formed by the Holy Spirit through trusted human relationships, most often in the home. Faith Family is intended to encourage and support parents and carers in their vital role in the lives of their children.

Raising good citizens

Being a good Australian citizen is more than living in the 'sunburnt country with droughts and flooding rain'. It's more than speaking a particular brand of English and loving the beach or a particular football code. It's more than enjoying long summer holidays and long-weekend holidays or knowing the words to the national anthem.

The pledge made by new citizens speaks of loyalty, democracy, rights, liberties, respect, responsibilities and obedience.

The Bible tells us that we are to love our neighbours and to respect the rulers that God has given us (Luke 10:27, Romans 13:1–4). Australian citizenship sits well with these attitudes.

How can we, as parents, help our children develop as good citizens?

As in all things, we teach our children by our example.

If we want our children to obey the laws, we must obey them ourselves. Beyond that we must teach our children about rules and obedience in our immediate family, helping them to understand that obedience is for their own good and the benefit of the group, not simply a way of avoiding punishment. As they move into school and into group sports, we will encourage them to understand and obey the rules and those who enforce the rules.

If we want our children to love Australia's unique natural environment, we must love it, spend time in it and protect it. And take our children with us, getting them involved and helping them to understand why we do what we do.

If we want our children to respect people and the rights of all people, we will demonstrate that respect in our attitudes, speech and actions. We will encourage our children to develop friendships with people of different cultures.

If we want our children to understand their right and privilege of participation in democratic government, we will keep ourselves informed and involved. We will limit expressions of disrespect for the government, its leaders and its agencies. Instead, we will communicate positively to leaders and about them. We will help our children do the same — from our two-year-old waving a greeting to a police officer, to our twelve-year-old writing to their Member of Parliament about an issue that concerns them.

On the home front, we will also help children, as they are able to do so, to play an active role in family discussions and family decision making, to learn to compromise and to go along with the group's decision even when it isn't their own first choice.

In the Citizenship Pledge, people have the option of inserting the words 'under God'. For Christians that means, that our allegiance belongs first to God. Our allegiance to this country and its people comes under this. The phrase acknowledges that the rights and responsibilities of citizenship come from God and our willingness and ability to live as good citizens comes from God.

