
The Loss of Rituals

Thoughts of the Month: July 2008

I'm afraid that you folks may not even know what I mean by rituals. Life is so scattered these days. Every member of the family is subject to CFI (Cell Phone Interruption) at any moment. The cell phone and the internet are basically individual and disconnecting in nature.

We are driving along having a wonderful family connected experience and someone's cell phone "goes off" and the experience of connection is broken; temporarily destroyed (because, of course, you *always* have to answer when a phone "goes off".)

The family dinner is interrupted by work calls, text messaging, or marketing calls. We take our kid to soccer practice and spend the time watching while lining up our next production meeting on a cell phone conference call.

I believe our couple and family connections are in competition with so many things these days, many of which are accelerated by technology.

Back in the day...a family had rituals that held them together. Many of these were survival in nature, such as gathering crops or hunting together. Some were religious in nature.

Even in my early days, we all had a cow to milk at the same time; we all hauled hay together and went swimming in the Shenandoah River together afterwards. I didn't always enjoy picking butter beans as a family or hauling manure as a family but I must admit...it bonded us together and was a meaningful time of connection. We also all went to church together *every* Sunday (even when it was a "strange" church along the road as we traveled to a Washington Senators ballgame on a Sunday morning.)

Couples (and families) these days are going to have to be very intentional about creating times of being together (which, by the way, is the definition of a ritual.) It can be as simple as having a meal together (doesn't have to be dinner...because we work so many evenings, our family ritual became breakfast...without newspapers or news) or playing miniature golf or any activity that includes the whole family.

Parents, be advised! Your children are **hungry** for these rituals....even when they may say or act like they don't ("I'd rather be with my friends!"; "Can't I bring a friend?"; "It's boring being with family!") They need regular, consistent and ritualistic connection with their family more than they need another swimming medal or another camp to attend.

Parents, take charge! First, develop your own meaningful, uninterrupted rituals as a couple and then pull your family into times of connection that everyone will love. (I loved the card games my family played all together on those snowy winter Sundays.)

Please stay in touch!

With great encouragement and hope,
David and Donna

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