



# 018: Christian parenting mindsets for holiday celebrations (Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving)

INTRO AUDIO:

The holidays are upon us and we Christian families love to celebrate. But what does the Bible say about celebrations? How much celebration is too much celebration or is there such a thing? And what about practices for various holidays that are rooted in pagan practices? How should the Christian family think about those things? Those are the things we're going to address on this episode of God Fearing Kids and the Parents Who Raise Them

MINDI:

Welcome back, dear parents out there, wherever you are, we are happy to be with you at this time.

CAREY:

I'm Carey Green.

MINDI:

And I'm Mindy

CAREY:

And we want to talk to you today about Christian parenting mindsets for holiday celebrations here in the Western world. Anyway, we are approaching what we call the holiday season and so we thought this would be a good opportunity for us to give you some thoughts from the scriptures and from our experience about how families can really make the holidays a special time that honors the Lord.

MINDI:

First point we want to bring up is that celebrations are biblical and pleasing to God. All the biblical feast and celebrations are examples of this.

CAREY:

Yeah, I mean think about all the times the Lord would tell them to feast sometimes for six, seven days. I mean, can you imagine a six or seven day feast?

MINDI:

I would like to do that

CAREY:

<laugh>. That sounds fun, doesn't it? We were talking about this last week, how fun it would be to do those sorts of things and have a dinner at a different family member's home if you all live nearby, you know, for the whole week and, and just the different activities and celebration you could do. That would be really fun.

MINDI:

Yeah. And there's no reason why you couldn't.

CAREY:

No,

MINDI:

Not at all. I know some people that

CAREY:

Do. Yeah. And so the Lord loves for us to celebrate his goodness. So holidays are an opportunity for us to do that around a specific focus or topic, Birth of Jesus, resurrection of Jesus Thanksgiving in the, in the United States. We have, those are opportunities for us to center around a certain theme and really celebrate the Lord's goodness and his greatness. Now it should go without saying, but let's just say it anyway. Any celebration that we do, Jesus should be the center.

MINDI:

Amen. And why do we say that? Because Jesus is the center of our

CAREY:

Life. That's right.

MINDI:

He is the one that gives us opportunity and reason to celebrate anything in life.

CAREY:

Yeah. Not only is he the center of our lives, he's the center of everything. I mean, let's look at Colossians one 15 to 18. Mindy, would you like to read that for us?

MINDI:

He is the image of the invisible God, the first born of all creation. For by him all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible. Whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities, all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things. And in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He's the beginning, the first born from the dead that in everything he might be preeminent.

CAREY:

Now after reading that, I hope what I'm about to say is kind of laughable to you when you hear it because it is laughable. But we, we sometimes get our minds in this place where we see Jesus as this cut out image on a Sunday school final graph board or a video. And we don't think of him for who he really is. He's not just a man who was born and had divine quality to him and that sort of thing. He is the God of creation. And this passage just fills in the blanks for us on how central he is. Not just to history but to everything. And so for us not to celebrate him at a holiday is like, you know, having a new show called World News tonight. And yet you never talk about Jesus. He's the center of all history, is the center of the world.

CAREY:

He should be central to our holidays. So one thing that I wanted to spend a little bit of time walking through because I know it's an issue of concern and an issue of confusion for a lot of families, ours included at one point is some of the holidays that we celebrate in modern day have practices and things involved even sometimes the date that we celebrate the holiday that are factually rooted in pagan practices or pagan holidays. And so discerning Christians and Christians who want to do the right thing are concerned about that rightly so. We should be concerned that we are worshiping our God in the proper way. So how do we respond to those kinds of things? Well, I want us to think about when Jesus came, he fulfilled the requirements of the old covenant. He fulfilled them on our behalf. And so the application of old covenant principles to us has changed.

CAREY:

Now, I'm not saying we do away with the morality of the old covenant, but how we apply it changes in Jesus himself. Made that clear. Let's think for a moment about what he said in John chapter four, verse 19. Now to paint a picture for you, he is going through some area. He sent his disciples to go and get food and he stayed at the well. And this woman comes out in the heat of the day, which is not when women usually came. She's an outcast in the society because she's been immoral. She's had many men she's lived with, she's been married many times. And in their culture she would've been an outcast. And so she comes out to the well and Jesus interacts with her, which again, him being a Jew, her being the Samaritan, that just never would happen for a Jewish man to interact with a Samaritan woman like this.

CAREY:

So Jesus is very intentional here and he's talking to this woman and he's gotten into the conversation. So in John four verse 19, she says to him, Sir, I perceive that you're a prophet and now she's going to bring up a religious practice issue. She says, Our fathers meaning the Samaritans and their ancestors worshiped on this mountain. So it's where she and Jesus are. But you say meaning the Jewish people say Jerusalem is the place people ought to worship. Now let's hit the pause button for a moment. That's exactly what the Jewish people said and they said it because the Old Testament said it. God said it. Jerusalem is the central place for worship for Jewish people. That was the way they worshiped and that's what was acceptable and what God had condoned. So in verse 21, listen to what Jesus says, Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father you worship.

CAREY:

What you do not know we worship what we know for salvation is from the Jews, but the hour coming and is now here when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth for the Father seeking

such people to worship him. So you see how Jesus said, Because I've showed up, I I'm the new covenant. I'm the one who's initiating a new thing between men and God. Practices of worship are changing. No longer are people going to worship here or in Jerusalem. That's not the issue. Now it's the heart from which that worship comes, right? Let's fast forward many years, let's go to Romans chapter 14. The apostle Paul is dealing again with a specific practice of his day that is tied to worship. And in this case it's tied to worship of pagan idols. So the issue before us is meat that had been sacrificed to idols.

CAREY:

And the question among believers was, can a believer in good conscience eat meat that's been sacrificed to an idol? Because it was used in idol worship. And that to me sounds a lot like, can I celebrate Jesus' birthday on a day that originally was a pagan feast December 25th, Can I use things like Christmas trees and things like that that may have originally been used in pagan practices? Can I do that? Is that okay for me as a Christian? Now look what Paul says in Romans 14, one through six. He says, As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him but not to quarrel over opinions. Now notice Paul is saying, we're talking about opinions here. These are the ways people view certain issues. And this one being, can we eat the meat or not? Verse two, he says, One person believes he may eat anything while the weak person eats only vegetables.

CAREY:

Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats for God has welcomed him. So let's pause again for a moment. He's saying on both sides of this issue, people have deep conviction and they should not be looking down their nose at the other person because of the conviction that they hold. Let's go on in verse four. Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It's before his own master that he stands or falls and he will be upheld for the Lord is able to make him stand. One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike, each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. So he changes his analogy. He's saying this not only applies to whether you can eat meat, this also applies to days of religious observance or days of religious worship.

CAREY:

We could say days of religious holidays. He's saying the day is not what is important. Each one has to be fully convinced in his own mind. In verse six, he goes on and he elaborates on that principle. He says, The one who observes the day observes it in honor of the Lord, the one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord since he gives thanks to God while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God. So you see the principle here is that our hearts in the right place. We're giving thanks, God's the center just like we mentioned earlier. And then in verses 13 and 14 of Romans chapter 14, he summarizes, he says, therefore, let us not pass judgment on one another any longer. But rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother.

CAREY:

I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean. So friends, this is an issue of conviction between you and the Holy Spirit. If you feel, because December 25th was originally a pagan practice day and they worshiped to a certain kind of sun God on that day. And you don't want to have anything to do with it. You should be true to that conviction. But if you feel like, no, Jesus has changed the way we applied these things now and he says nothing's unclean. So I feel free to worship Jesus on December 25th and celebrate his birthday. You're

free to do that. But don't look down on each other. Don't be condemning and criticizing each other for what you do.

MINDI:

I love how you explained all this because it just, it makes so much sense and I think some of the key things we want to take away from this is that what Paul said at the very end in 14, he says, I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself and that is encouraging. I mean that Paul is saying that the new covenant has erased all the, the old baggage and mindsets of things. Everything is clean, Christ made it new, it's clean. So we're starting afresh. And then he's saying before that, that we need to be thinking that we're, we're going to stand or fall before our own master. So we, we need to be seeking the Lord, what is his will for us? And be confident in that. That's the standing, that's in verse four. And it says, and he will be upheld for the Lord is able to make him stand. So if we hear from the Lord what our conviction needs to be about how to celebrate holidays, then we can be confident. God will help us to be confident in that because we're thinking of what he's wanting us to do as we are joyfully doing it with our family, not criticizing those who do it differently. And hopefully we aren't being criticized by others. But it's like you're saying Carrie, it's between us and our father. Us and our master. So I think this just lets off the pressure

CAREY:

And let me add something to that that maybe you haven't thought of. But what I hear Paul saying here is that because of Jesus there in verse 14 where he says, I'm persuaded in the Lord Jesus. He's saying because we are in Christ, this issue has changed. But to practice may or may not have changed. God may give you the conviction. You should not celebrate using the items that were used once in pa and worship. That's fine. He's leading you that way for a reason. Maybe there's something in your family's dynamic, maybe there's something in your history, maybe there's something in the way your psychology is that he wants to teach you something through that abstinence from those practices. Walk that path gladly do it full of joy and understand this is God's will for me and for my family. If you're free to do things in your conviction and he hasn't given you those same restrictions, walk that path joyfully. Do it knowing he's given you freedom.

MINDI:

And it doesn't mean that if we have a conviction from the Lord, we, we can't share with other people outside our family who has that same conviction. I think it's great to share what we feel like the Lord is leading us in because God might want to lead them in the same way. But if he doesn't, that is totally fine. You rejoice in the differences

CAREY:

Because to his own master, he stands or falls right? Paul says, Right,

MINDI:

So,

CAREY:

So mom and dad, single mom, single dad, whoever you are that's leading your family, plan your holidays in a way to make Jesus central and to celebrate, truly celebrate. I mean, think about the things we

celebrate. We celebrate weddings, we celebrate at birthdays. We make this party, we get decorations, we do this big cake, we do whatever is special. Let's do that for these holidays with Jesus at the center.

MINDI:

And notice if you are feeling reserved, for example, at Christmas giving gifts, is there a reservation there because you don't want to be too overboard or you think it might be wrong to give too many gifts or you know, whatever. I know that finances has a lot to do with that, but don't see it as a guilt thing. See it as giving gifts. If you feel like the Lord wants you to do that shows God's generosity. I mean, let generosity be a part of your life. It needs to be because that's who God is. So as the Lord leads you in different things, connect it with a character of God, with and teach your children that we give gifts because Christ was our greatest gift. But also because God is generous, He wants to give us good things. So there's so much in scripture that you can give meaning to all of your traditions that you as parents come up with. And God wants us to do that. God is big on symbols. Let's make the way we celebrate our holidays. Symbolic of God's great character.

CAREY:

Amen. Have fun doing this together as a joyful celebration of whatever holiday it is so that you and your family together can make Jesus central. That's really the gist of what we want to say. Friends, thanks so much for listening. Remember there are opportunities on the website for you to leave a specific question. We hope someday to do some q and a episodes and answer a handful of questions. So you can look at God-fearing kids.com to do that. And as we wrap up, let's pray together for each other. Lord God, thank you for giving us clarity in your word about how Jesus brings change to us through this thing we know as the new covenant. We call them that old covenant and new covenant because one is old and it's fulfilled in Jesus. And the new one is one that is so gracious and so full of mercy and dependent on his work at the cross in Jesus. We thank you for your work. We thank you for being our substitute not only in taking the price of our sins on yourself, but also in carrying out the holiness we couldn't carry out. And now by your Holy Spirit, you lead us in a, in an attitude of freedom to worship you and celebrate you every day of our lives. We pray that especially at the holidays, we could set a tone in our families that brings you great honor and great glory. It's in your name we pray. Amen.

CAREY:

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