

Sharing the Faith Journey in your home

Spiritual Traditions Part 6: Incarnational Tradition

By Beth Barnett

Richard Foster's book *Streams of Living Water* and the *Renovare Spiritual Traditions Workbook* for small groups encourages us to reflect on the different ways that people have practiced their discipleship in different ways, in different times and places, contexts and challenges over the centuries. Six major 'traditions' or 'spiritual orientations' or 'ways' are identified:

Contemplative
Incarnational
Holiness

Evangelical
Social Justice
Charismatic

We are invited to consider the strengths and weaknesses of the traditions we have been fostered in, followed or found. And we are resourced to draw on patterns other than our own. Together, all six of the traditions reflect an image of Christ. And we do well to pursue and respect each of them, as well as accept our limitations in them and recognise that we are only part of the body of Christ, and genuinely need others who function differently to us to complete the whole incarnation and presence of Christ in the world.

Over these months we will explore the opportunities on each of the traditions through adopting its ways (or disciplines). Pick one or a few of the following activities and try it with your household, and see what happens. Let us know how you go, or if you have a story to share.

You will need:

Various websites
Bible passages printed
Bread rolls

Practicing the Incarnational Tradition

The motto of the Incarnational Tradition could well be John 10:10 with its celebrative cry 'I have come in order that you have life – in all abundance.' This is not to claim that all of life is hunky dory all the times – but that all of life is God-life. Or, if you prefer the Christmas word 'Emanuel', proclaiming God is with us. This is the tradition

in which busy parents discover the grace of God in changing nappies, gramps picks the fruit of the spirit up a ladder and takes it into granny who preserves it for the neighbourhood in her Fowlers Vacola, and every drop of sweat from their wrinkled faces is a prayer. A fourth grader meets God face first into the turf on the footy oval. As we practice the Incarnational tradition, we are humbled in recognising that there is not an atom of this plant or of our existence that is sourced from anywhere other than God – and in the words of Paul, quoting his contemporary pagan philosopher ‘He is not far from any one of us. In him we live and move and have our being.’

Read together:

God is God of everything right? Nothing is beyond God? So our table and our letterbox and our ipod are all part of God’s world and life. So let’s get noticing how God shows up in our everyday. What’s more ‘incarnation’ means ‘in the flesh’. This means we acknowledge not just God hanging around – but actually living in our bodies. We think of our bodies as something good God has made and is involved in – as we remember Jesus time as a real flesh and blood baby-boy-teenager-bloke.

What are the activities of the Incarnational tradition?

Breathing, eating, working, playing, laughing, lamenting, trying, failing, celebrating, noticing

Some things to do together

What did God do today?

Make a series of cards with the question

What did [mum] do today?
What did [Granny] do today?

etc...for each member of your household.
Include an extra Card saying

What did God do today?

At the end of each day spend sometime answering these questions and celebrating each other and God in your midst

Arrow Prayer Song

This is a classic Colin Buchanan song that celebrates God’s presence in our everyday life. Have a go at writing another verse for your household:

“In the middle of whatever you’re doing...
at ... when you’re
When you’re
You can talk to [name for God]”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rxz9P-KsARU>



Leviticus And Deuteronomy: details, details!

Have a read of some of the Mosaic law together with your 'incarnational' tradition glasses on...have a good laugh at imagining what the rules might have looked like in practice – and think about how practically God was involved on the way the Ancient Israelites did life. Start with Lev 13:40...then Lev 11, Deut 22:1-12

Psalm 139

Print or write out this psalm. Cut it up into sections, and then set out around your house and car/bike/scooter and find places to stick the different parts of the psalm that correspond to different parts of your life.

Eg.

'You know when I sit and when I rise up' attached to chairs

'You search out my path' – chalked on your driveway or path

Body

Trace around one person in your family to make a body outline – use butchers paper or newspaper or if you have a full length glass window or door or mirror, use permanent marker on that (It wipes off easily with methylated spirits).

Each day for a week encourage each person who is in your household, and anyone who visits, to write or draw the things their body has done.

This can include bodily functions like yawning, breathing, sweating...and I guess you can imagine the rest!



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