



Traditions, Part 1
November 25, 2020
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It hardly qualifies as green bean casserole. My husband fixes this traditional dish every Thanksgiving, but in a non-traditional way. He skips the cream of mushroom soup. (Only Campbell's thought that was a good idea. Cream of celery, maybe, but not mushroom!) Then, he adds cheddar cheese and bacon. The bubbly goodness of melted cheese and bacon, with fried onions, makes my mouth water. His version of the recipe has very little to do with green beans, but it's delicious!



We can count on a green bean casserole each November. This holiday tradition is a mainstay, even in a pandemic. It turns out well without much fuss; the ingredients are always on hand. It's dependable, and the aroma tells us the celebration is upon us.... We just have fewer people eating it this year.

The truth is, we could make green bean casserole all year long. It's been our tradition for holidays, but it doesn't have to be. There's no reason to limit it to a special day, but we do.

In our family, the other thing we can count on for holidays is that someone will end up in the hospital. It might be an illness or an accident. We often remark that it wouldn't be a family get-together without a trip to the ER.

We don't, however, label that unfortunate eventuality as a tradition. Traditions are marked because we intentionally set them aside for special events and times. We *choose* to make them important or revered or beloved. Something that could be ordinary or tiresome if done every day becomes a delightful holiday tradition by its intentional scarcity during the rest of the year. We choose our traditions.

Sometimes a new tradition is created by happenstance, like when we have to substitute another soup in the green bean casserole to avoid a mushroom allergy. We can choose to claim the tradition by repeating it.

And, I have faith, some traditions are created by the happenstance of a pandemic. Some new food or activity or decoration can become a beloved tradition. We'll remember years from now why we started the tradition in 2020. We'll recall the grief and fatigue that surrounded us in that year and how we intentionally carved out something special -- how we chose to mark a new tradition.

I can't wait to hear what you chose. On this Thanksgiving, a day of gratitude to God and for the many blessings we've received (even in 2020!), I pray you and your family will stay out of the hospital and celebrate in new ways. May you hold fast to those ways that delight, declare them special, and bring them out as favored traditions year after year. Tell the story of 2020 and remember again God's faithfulness and goodness.