

THE IMPORTANCE OF RITUALS

If the pandemic has taught us anything, it is about the importance of rituals in sustaining social-emotional well-being. We normally take for granted the rituals in our lives, but begin to note their absence once we are denied participation. Our students have been subjected to the loss of a variety of rituals this past year and are anxious to have them re-introduced.



It's the perfect time, then, to discuss with students the significance of rituals and what each ritual represents, why we celebrate each one, and how we should practice them. We'll focus primarily on religious rituals, but there are other important rituals to consider as well.

First, let's differentiate among routines, rituals, and traditions. Routines are events that occur regularly, in a certain order. Rituals are routines that are infused with deeper meaning. They are intentional ways of approaching a routine, with careful consideration of the needs of the individual within the routine. Traditions are meaningful events or experiences that a class or program has created (Gillespie & Petersen, 2020).

Christian rituals, in particular, help students maintain and develop their faith and enhance their spiritual lives. "Christian rituals are important because they provide a sense of belonging and spiritual identity in the present as well as a sense of connection with the past, and point with confidence to the future" (Fisher, 2020, p. 4). In this blog post, we will focus on three such rituals—prayer, personal quiet time and Bible study, and Sabbath rest.

It's important that we provide our students the opportunities to learn about prayer. Some of our students will come to school with little or no experience with prayer. Participating in the ritual of prayer introduces learners to a personal lifeline that connects them to a living and listening God.

The ritual of personal quiet time and Bible study engages the student in a conscious filling of his or her mind with Scripture with the objective of connecting with God. Again, many students will not be familiar with this ritual. Developing a personal devotional time is one way that students can experience God on a daily basis in their lives.

God created our world in six days, and on the seventh day He created a holy rest day for us to celebrate time away from our daily routines. The Sabbath rest ritual provides our students with time away from academic studies, so they can spend time in worship and community and have time to enjoy God's other book—nature.

“Growing in Christ and experiencing God are enhanced when students actively engage in Christian rituals” (Fisher, 2020, p. 8). Participating in Christian rituals, then, can have a life-transforming impact on learners. As educators, we have the opportunity to introduce, model, and engage students in such experiences.

References

Fisher, B. J. (2020). Age-appropriate experiences and rituals that help students encounter God, part II. *The Journal of Adventist Education*, 82-2, 4-8.

Gillespie, L., & Petersen, S. (2020). *Rituals and routines: Supporting infants and toddlers and their families*. Retrieved on 5-28-21 as <https://tecribresearch.wordpress.com/2020/07/19/the-importance-of-rituals-and-traditions-in-early-learning-now-more-than-ever/>.