

HEATHEN FAMILIES

**Nine Modern Fables
for Heathen Children
and a Collection of Essays
Regarding Heathen Families**

by

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Chieftain of Jotun's Bane Kindred

Temple of Our Heathen Gods

Kansas City Area

First Edition



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Table of Contents

Introduction	1
<u>Section 1 – Heathen Fables</u>	<u>3</u>
The Old Owl and the Young Fox	4
The Hungry Wolf that Slept	5
Four Mice Attend the Feast	7
The Young Rabbit Receives Unexpected Help	8
The Wise Toad and the Fretting Dormouse	11
The Beaver, the Frog, and the Ringed Snake	13
A Guest in the Red Squirrel's Home	16
The Hawk that Fought the Wind	18
The Greedy Fat Ram	22
<u>Section 2 – Heathen Children</u>	<u>23</u>
The Next Generation of Asatru	24
Our Heathen Children	26
Reasons Heathens Should Reject Circumcision	27
Raising up Strong Heathen Children	31
The House Wight and My Daughter	33
Elizabeth Getting to Know Her Grandfather	34
The Transition from Childhood to Adulthood	37
<u>Section 3 – Heathen Families</u>	<u>43</u>
What to Consider Before Marrying a Non-Heathen	44
The Families We Build, the Oaths We Make	49
Protecting Our Heathen Children from Divorce	50
A Conversation with Frigga	52
Kindreds Becoming Tribes	53
Family is Family	55
Involving Non-Heathen Spouses in our Kindreds	58
Men: Prioritize Your Heathen Life	63
Honoring One's Ancestors	66
So, You do not Know Your Ancestors	75
Lightning Across the Plains	78
Temple of Our Heathen Gods Website	83
Mark Ludwig Stinson	84
Other Books for Heathen Children	86

Introduction

Asatru, or Heathenry, is based on the pre-Christian religion and way-of-life of our Northern European Ancestors. During the Christian conversion of Northern Europe, the ways of our People were replaced by the Christian religion, which originated in the Middle East, and was pushed northward by Rome.

Modern Heathens honor the Gods that our ancestors honored, and we honor them in the ways that they did. We also honor our ancestors and the spirits of the land. Heathenry is very family-oriented, and encourages us to live responsible lives of honor. Nothing is more important than our families and the children we bring into this world.

We must constantly work as modern heathen parents to educate our children and pass on to them our Folkway, in all its richness and strength. The modern society and culture within which we live exerts great pressures and influence upon our children, that are often contrary to the world-view and beliefs we seek to teach them.

The modern heathen fables in this booklet are just one piece of a much larger puzzle of finding better ways to share our way-of-life with our children. As you read each fable to your children, discuss the lesson of the fable with them, ask them questions, share your own experiences regarding each lesson, and ask them to share theirs...

The essays included in this book are all of the essays that I've written to-date on the topic of heathen children and families. Some of these essays were previously published in my book "Heathen Gods," and the remaining essays will be published in the upcoming "Heathen Tribes."

With these essays, I am sharing my point-of-view and opinions, and to some degree the approach that Jotun's Bane Kindred takes on these issues. If these essays prompt you to think about some of issues and come to your own conclusions, then they have done their job.

Love your children, gift your Gods, honor your Ancestors, and respect the Vaettir of the land.

Hail our Folk!

Mark Ludwig Stinson
August 2011





SECTION ONE

**Heathen
Fables**

The Old Owl and the Young Fox

All the animals of the forest and fields thought the old Owl to be most wise. The Owl with his eyes and ears was believed to see all and hear all, and though the Owl said very little, all the other beasts spoke of how clever and deep-minded the old Owl was. The old Owl was quite proud of what others thought of him, and did much to promote this belief in his wisdom.



A young Fox in dire need of advice, stayed up after dark and sought out the old Owl in the forest. Spotting the large bright eyes of the Owl among the trees, the young Fox approached in awe and asked the owl many questions. The old Owl's answers were all nonsense, meaningless riddles, and random questions having nothing to do with what the young Fox needed to know.



Thus the young Fox learned that those that are foolish think they are wise, but are shown to be fools when questioned by others...

- Based on Stanza 26 of the Hávamál -



The Hungry Wolf that Slept

A hungry Wolf was hunting at night, when he found a spot by a stream where a herd of sheep had been crossing and drinking during the light of day. The ground there was muddy, and worn, and rough with the hoof-prints of many sheep. The hungry Wolf began to drool at the thought of the big fat sheep he could catch and eat in the morning.



The Wolf crept into the high grass by the muddy path, and curled up to hide and wait for the sun to rise and the sheep to come for their morning drink. The sun began to rise in the east, but the Wolf was tired from hunting all night and soon he had fallen sound asleep in the grass.

The herd of sheep came down the muddy path that morning, drank quietly from the stream, and moved on to greener fields. And still the Wolf slept.

Thus the hungry Wolf learned that the idle, the lazy, and the sleeping don't get what they want and rarely succeed.

- Based on Stanza 58 of the Hávamál -



Four Mice Attend the Feast

Late one night, four Mice approached a house where humans had held a big feast earlier in the night. From three fields away the Mice had smelled the left-over food and drink still out on the feasting tables, and they knew the humans were in bed at this time of night. Reaching the house, the four little Mice climbed up some vines and reached an open window.



Hungry for the left-over food, three of the Mice rushed through the window and ran for the tables. But one careful Mouse remained on the window sill looking back and forth, and all around the room. The careful Mouse felt a bit silly being left behind on the window sill while his friends rushed ahead, but he worried what else might be in the house besides left-over food and the sleeping humans.

In the dim light of the room, the careful Mouse watched as three clever Cats pounced on his friends and gobbled them up.

He had no time to warn them, and they were all gone with hardly a squeak. The careful Mouse crept quietly away, sad for his friends but glad for his caution.



- Based on Stanza 1 of the Hávamál -



The Young Rabbit Receives Unexpected Help

The young Rabbit burst through the wall of brambles into a hollow spot in a large patch of thorn bushes near a pond. He was huffing and puffing and his heart was racing at an incredible speed. It was there he met an old Hedgehog, a tiny Mole, a ringed Snake, and a three-legged Rat. The Rat lifted his

one front paw and asked, "What's your hurry, friend?"

In between gasps for air, the Rabbit answered, "I'm being tracked by a Wolf that wants to eat me. The Wolf cut me off from my burrow, and while I'm very fast, he's still after me and I'm getting too tired to run."

The three-legged Rat immediately offered his help along with the help of his three friends, the Hedgehog, the Mole, and the Snake. The old Hedgehog, who was apparently deaf, said in a loud voice, "What's that you said? You'll have to speak up you know!"



The Rabbit was in complete disbelief as to the Rat's offer and answered, "What could an deaf old Hedgehog, a blind little Mole, a legless Snake, and an crippled Rat do to protect me from a hungry Wolf?"

The Rat smiled a toothy grin, and began squeaking out a plan to his three friends. Following the Rat's instructions, the blind little Mole warned them when when the wolf was close, because he could feel the earth shake. The deaf old Hedgehog

was hidden on the trail and tripped the Wolf as he made his way into the bramble patch. And finally, as the Wolf lay sprawled on the ground, the ringed Snake bit the Wolf on his nose as hard as he could. The Wolf leapt into the air, fell into the brambles, struggled through the thorns, and ran off into the woods yelping loudly.



On that day the young Rabbit learned what all wise men know. That despite a man's hardships or flaws, whether he be lame, handless, blind, or deaf, he can still have skills, a purpose, and great worth to his family and community.

- Based on Stanza 71 of the Hávamál -



The Wise Toad and the Fretting Dormouse

A Toad and a Dormouse lived very near to one another in two homes among the roots of a tree by a babbling stream. In the Spring it rained heavily, and both the Toad and the Dormouse barely escaped to higher ground as the stream rose and flooded both their homes. When the water fell, the Toad and the Dormouse returned together to survey the damage. They were shocked to see all their belongings in both their homes jumbled every which way by the flood waters. Everything they owned was wet and covered in mud.



The Toad said to the Dormouse, "It is getting dark and we should rest. We have a lot of work to do tomorrow cleaning up both our homes. Let's find a comfortable place to sleep nearby." The Dormouse nodded and followed the Toad, but the whole time he kept looking back at his home and wringing his hands. "What will I do, what will I do? Such a mess, such a mess. I'll never get it cleaned up!"

The Toad led the Dormouse to a comfortable grassy spot, pulled some soft leaves over himself as a blanket, and fell promptly to sleep with a peaceful look upon his face. He had a deep and restful sleep throughout the night. But the Dormouse could not sit still. He paced back and forth, muttering and tittering complaints under his breath about the horrible mess in his house and all the work he must do the next day. He worried and fretted half the night before he collapsed into a fitful sleep.



The Dormouse awoke late in the morning, and noticed that the Toad was gone from his makeshift bed. He climbed to his feet, rubbed his tired eyes, and went looking for his friend. He found the Toad quickly enough, sitting calmly outside his home. He was smiling and enjoying the warmth of the sun. When the Toad saw the Dormouse approaching he said, "Ah, there you are my

furry friend. While you were sleeping in late, I finished cleaning and straightening my home."

The Dormouse was surprised. "You're done cleaning up your home already? I was so worried and upset about my own home, that I couldn't sleep at all!"

The Toad smiled a big grin and clapped his Dormouse friend on the back. "Well no matter how much sleep you lose through fret and worry, your problems remain the same in the morning as they were the night before."

- Based on Stanza 23 of the Hávamál -



The Beaver, the Frog, and the Ringed Snake

The Frog and the Beaver grew up together in the same pond and were the best of friends. They had a real fondness for each other, spoke often, and visited each other's homes. They knew each other so long, that they even shared many mutual friends in and around the pond. Many an evening you would find the Frog and



the Beaver sitting side by side on the Beaver's dam talking and laughing and watching the sun set.

One day, the Beaver was visited by a Ringed Snake, and he found the Snake to be interesting, and funny, and a pleasure to be around. He knew that many of his friends in the pond were scared of the Snake, but the Beaver wasn't scared, because Ringed Snakes don't hunt or eat Beavers. A friendship began between the Beaver and the Ringed Snake and they began to visit each other frequently.

Days and weeks had gone by, and the Beaver realized that his friend the Frog had stopped visiting him. The more the Beaver thought about it, all of his friends in the pond except the Snake had stopped visiting him. The Beaver missed the Frog, so he looked around the pond for him and found him swimming with their friend the Water Rat. The Beaver waddled over and asked, "Where have you been my friend?"

In an angry voice, Frog croaked out, "You've become friends with my enemy the Ringed Snake. The Snake hunts and eats Frogs like me, and you know it. I've seen many tadpoles and frogs become the Snake's dinner, and yet he is now your friend."



The Beaver shrugged, "Frog, I don't see how my friendship with the Snake has anything to do with the friendship you and I share."

It is two different things."

The Water Rat sneered at the Beaver, and said, "You should never be friends with the enemy of a friend. We've all seen your lack of loyalty to Frog, and none of us trust you anymore. Go away."

The Beaver swam home and thought, "Well I've lost all my old friends, but at least the Ringed Snake is still my friend." When the Beaver arrived home, the Ringed Snake was waiting for him. The Beaver smiled, "Hello, my Friend."



The Ring Snake laughed. "I'm not your friend. I've been visiting you these past few weeks because I saw you had friends that I could eat. I've eaten a belly-full of your little friends, but the one's that remain have stopped visiting you...and so shall I."

- Based on Stanza 43 of the *Hávamál* -



A Guest in the Red Squirrel's Home

As the sun rose and began to dry the night's rain from the plants of the field, the young Field Mouse exited his burrow and tried to warm itself in the morning light. His burrow near the edge of the field had been cold and damp during the night's storms, and he was shivering and wet.



The young Mouse watched in amazement as an old grey Mouse climbed down a tree on the edge of the Field and began to make his way home to his own wet burrow. The old Mouse was dry, happy, and whistling a tune between his teeth.

The young Mouse ran over near the old Mouse and asked, "You spent the night in a tree?"

The old Mouse nodded. "Yep, I spent the evening and night as a guest in the Red Squirrel's nest in the tree, feasting on seeds and hazelnuts. I have to admit, his warm little home in the hollow of the tree is much nicer than our damp burrows."



The young Mouse was still shivering as he walked alongside his dry neighbor. "But, the Red Squirrel is selfish with his food and sort of a grump. He never invites me to his nest. Why would he invite you?"

The old Mouse stopped and faced the wet young Mouse. "I bring lots of seeds and nuts with me when I visit. You'll get many more invitations to visit the warm homes of others if you don't eat up all their food, or if you bring with you twice as much food as you plan to eat yourself. A generous guest is always welcome in other's homes."

- Based on Stanza 67 of the *Hávamál* -



The Hawk that Fought the Wind

All the worlds, including our own, rest in the branches of the world-tree, Yggdrasil. A very old Jotun named Hræsvelgr, or Corpse-Gulper, sits at the top of the world-tree in the form of an eagle, and the flapping of his tremendous wings cause all the winds that blow across the land and seas of our world, Midgard. When our world was young, Corpse-Gulper was already old. There were bare-patches on his body where his feathers had worn thin with age. His body was bent and gnarled and he squinted to see where he was directing the wind from his wings.



It came to be that Corpse-Gulper's eyes were so damaged by age, that ships with sails received no wind at all. The boats of fishermen were blown onto the rocks and broken to pieces. Precious farm animals were scattered by random gusts and lost. Homes were blown down, good soil blown away, and no one could say what the winds might do next to hurt the lives of men.

Hawks depend on the wind more than most. They follow the air currents, using them when they hunt, and they depend on their knowledge of the winds for their lives. But Corpse-Gulper's bad eyes and horrible aim caused wild and unpredictable winds and the hawks suffered even more than men. Many hawks were carried far from where they wanted to be, hunting became impossible, and many hawks starved to death or were blown to the ground and to their deaths. For this reason, all the hawks became fearful and would not take to the sky.

But there was one Brave Hawk who was not afraid. He cared not if the winds were uncontrolled and wild. He scolded his cowardly kin, and told them that he would soar, and hunt, and fly despite the danger. The other hawks tried to talk him out of it and said to the brave hawk, "See...even the men hide from these wild winds. They know that death awaits any that defy the furious blasts from Corpse-Gulper's wings, and they no longer travel in their boats or fish upon the sea, for fear of what will happen to them. They've stopped building homes, planting their crops, or putting their animals in the field for fear of losing everything they have."

The Brave Hawk refused to bow to fear and told the other hawks, "Am I not a hawk? I am young, and strong, and I am meant to fly. I will not cower from these winds." He took flight and began to hunt. But the Brave Hawk was buffeted by the winds, and the air churned and whipped all around him. He fought with every bit of his strength against the deadly gusts, diving and catching new currents when the old ones failed him or threatened to drive him toward the ground. With all his skill and his might he strove courageously against the poorly aimed gusts from Corpse Gulper's wings. But after hours of struggle, a mighty wind drove the Brave Hawk downward onto the rocks and there he lay, broken and dead.

The Goddess Freyja, beautiful Freyja, had seen the Brave Hawk's

fearless battle against the wild winds. She gently lifted his broken body from the ground and held it in both her hands. "So great was your might and your main, young hawk, that you should be rewarded with a victory of sorts. It was a simple thing for Freyja to repair the Brave Hawk's body and restore him to life. She set him on Corpse-Gulper's great beak, right between his old squinted eyes.

Freyja told the Brave Hawk, "The winds are not always kind, but neither should they always cause harm. Stay here with Corpse-Gulper, and lend him your eyes. Help him to properly aim the wind from his great wings. Men will call you Veðrfölnir, or Wind-Witherer, for you will calm the wild winds. Give men enough wind to travel to far off places and let them return to fishing, and harvesting, and building their homes without the constant threat of death. As for hawks and the other birds, give them winds to take them where they wish to go and to bring them safely to their prey."



This was long ago. All these years later, the gnarled and ancient eagle named Corpse-Gulper still sits in the uppermost branches of the world-tree, flapping his great wings and sending winds across

our world. Some men know that a hawk named the Wind-Whitherer sits upon Corpse-Gulper's beak, though all but a few have forgotten why...

- The fable "The Hawk that Fought the Wind" is not based directly on the Lore, for the Lore does not give a reason why there is a hawk sitting on the beak of the Eagle at the top of Yggdrasil, the world-tree. Whatever story or myth that once existed among our ancestors regarding the hawk's purpose in sitting there has been lost.

While attempting to give a modern explanation to this question, the fable is also crafted to teach a lesson about bravery and perseverance and to explain the hawk's name in the Lore, which can be translated as "wind-whitherer."

For the purpose of this story, we have brought together into one character the nameless jotun in the form of an eagle at the "top of Yggdrasil" and Hræsvelgr, the jotun in the form of an eagle at the "top of the sky" who forms all the wind with his wings. Despite some strong parallels between these two jotuns, there is no conclusive evidence in the Lore that they were one and the same. -



The Greedy Fat Ram

The flock of sheep left the relative safety of the area around the herder's house and spent the morning walking to a wide round hill where they often grazed on the thick tender grasses that grew there. One fat ram barely kept up with the flock, waddling as he did, with his great belly swinging to and fro.



When they arrived at the grassy hill, the ewes, rams, and little lambs grazed in relative silence, carefully choosing the plants they knew tasted the best. The fat ram was so greedy, that he would often push other sheep out of the way to get to an especially tender clump of green grass. While other sheep would occasionally stop to chew their cud and properly digest their food, the fat ram gorged and gorged never stopping for anything.

As the sun began to go behind the hills and dusk approached, the flock of sheep turned toward home and began their trip back to the fields surrounding the herder's house. But the fat ram was so busy grazing, that he hardly noticed they were gone.

Alone on the grassy hill, the fat ram continued to eat and eat. He never even heard the wolves approaching. While all the ewes, and rams, and little lambs rested safely near the herder's house, nine wolves gobbled up the greedy fat lamb for their evening meal.

As it is with sheep, it is also with men...the foolish man never knows how much to eat.



- Based on Stanza 21 of the *Hávamál* -





SECTION TWO

**Heathen
Children**

The Next Generation of Asatru

I feel the next generation of Heathens will be our children, who we have raised to know our Gods and our Ancestors. But what about the non-Heathen youth that feel drawn back to our Folkway?

We need strong local groups and communities, so when the non-Heathen young people in our communities are drawn back to our ways, by Heathen music, and books, and exposure to Heathenry on the internet...they have Tru Heathens in their local area to turn to for learning and guidance.



As our youth turn away from Christianity, we are losing many of them to foreign religions and neo-religions (i.e., Wicca). Why? One reason, sadly, is that it is easier to find a Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, or Wiccan group in our local communities than a Heathen one. We need beacons in the darkness...strong local Heathen communities, to help these young people find their way home to their Elder Kin and their native Folkway.

For several years prior to 2008, if a youth became interested in Heathenry in Kansas City, there was no local group to turn to for information or support. Many communities here in the United States are still in that condition. How can we expect the youth to find their way back to their native Folkway, when no Heathen groups are located near them? Depending on “internet-Heathenry” for this task is not going to work. We need real people...real Heathens...building kindreds and tribes

in every medium to large sized community here in the Heartland.

Does your community have a local Heathen group that young people, 18-25 years of age, can turn to for support, information, and fellowship? Why not?



Our Heathen Children

The welfare of our children is one of many reasons I am Heathen. What is more important than our children? Yet, you have these children out there that are completely ignored by their parents. The kids grow up alienated, alone, and with no guidance. Some of them become frustrated and self-medicate with drugs and alcohol. Some build bombs and stockpile guns in their own homes without their parents even noticing - a school shooting or murder spree just on the horizon.

It is a sign of our decaying culture that parents have abandoned their own children. Yes, they clothe them and feed them, but emotionally they withhold time and attention to pursue their own selfish goals or entertainment.

We should share what is important to us with our children. We should go to parent- teacher conferences, ask our children how school went everyday, help with school parties if we can, or volunteer in their classroom. We should take them to museums, historic locations, sporting events, fairs, festivals, and learning opportunities. We should share our faith with them, and teach them Heathen beliefs and Heathen values. We should hug them, and kiss them, and cuddle up with them to watch television now and again. We should take them to Heathen events and Heathen gatherings.



Mark, Nathan, and Jennifer

The most important thing in our lives should be our children. A house can burn down. We can lose our job. People can betray us. We can wreck a car, or suffer an injury. We can survive all that pretty well if forced to do so. But children hold a special place in our lives. They are our legacy. They are the future of our Folk. Heathenry is the answer to the widespread emotional abandonment of children within our failing culture, and our children are the future of our native Folkway.



Reasons Heathens Should Reject Circumcision

The topic of circumcision might be seen by some as too personal or too intimate to discuss. But, when you consider the impact of the topic and the fact it deals with our beloved children, I think it is well worth discussing. Especially among heathen parents.

Our heathen ancestors in Europe did not circumcise their

male children. Actually, a little reading suggests circumcision was something done to adults in Egypt, then spread into the Semitic peoples as something they performed on their children, and has had varying popularity among Christians. I think a Germanic heathen of old...one who honored the Aesir and the Vanir, would have either laughed his ass off or killed someone over the suggestion that a part of his son's penis be sliced off shortly after birth. On the day of the son's birth, or nine days later, I do not think it would have mattered much. Even the suggestion to circumcise would probably have ended in someone dead.

I have real trouble picturing the heathen women of old suggesting or allowing this be done to their male children. It does not seem to fit with my understanding of the history of paganism at all. Druids cutting skin off their son's penises? Mass penis-trimmings as part of Sabbat celebrations? I mean, it is hard to even consider, is it not? Just the suggested symbolism of removing part of a male child's penis is sort of striking, if one thinks about it a bit. Can we all agree that Odin, Thor, and Freyr are intact? Seems like a safe bet.

I was circumcised as a baby. The vast majority of male children in my age-group were circumcised. I do not feel victimized or anything of that nature. My parents made the decision 40 years ago, at a time before the internet, when all the doctors pushed for the procedure, and back then people tended to treat what their doctors said as absolute truth. So, my parents decision to have me circumcised is what it is. It is unfortunate, but it cannot be changed.

But, it would have been nice to make that choice for myself. I think people should make choices about alterations to their own natural body. Especially when those alterations have nothing to do with health, or risk of health, or life-saving necessity.

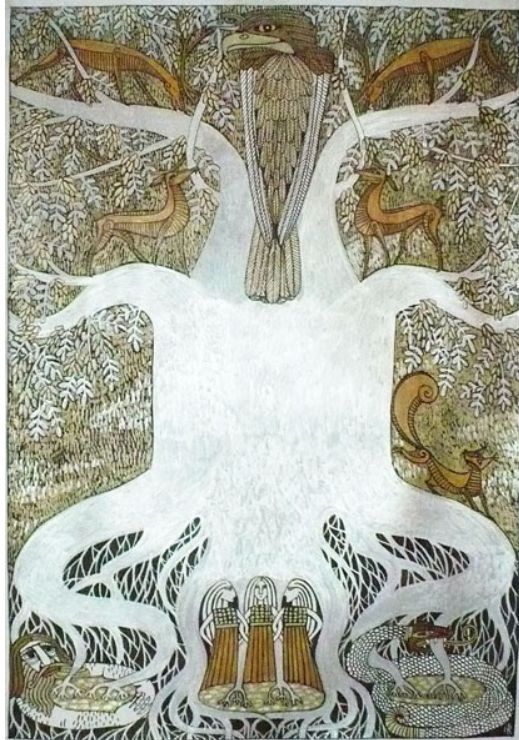
Parents today have enormously easy access to information. We have a healthy skepticism of what the medical establishment pushes on us and the rest of the Western World (everywhere except the United States) knows exactly how pointless and

possibly destructive circumcision really is. I feel comfortable saying that parents should know better today, and should learn everything they can about circumcision before letting this be done to their male children. While I am not upset with my parents for the decision they made (nearly every kid of my generation in the U.S. was circumcised), I am very happy to have made a different decision for my kids

My wife and I chose not to circumcise our boys. It just seemed incredibly unnatural to have a doctor alter our sons' bodies with a sharp blade a few days after each were born. When they are 18, if they want to get circumsized, then more power to them, I guess. Given the choice of what to do with their own bodies, I am guessing they will not choose to be circumcised!

I cannot imagine a grown man that was left uncircumcised being angry about not being circumcised. I mean, try to picture an adult male yelling angrily, "I cannot believe my parents left my genitals intact!" In the off chance someone was upset about being intact, I suppose that anger would be easy to fix. The uncircumcised man can go get it done. But it is much easier to imagine a grown man that was circumcised being upset or disappointed about it. There is no easy fix once what is done is done. It is important to understand, if you make the decision to have your male child circumcised, what is done truly is done.

After doing our



research, we were determined to NOT circumcise our boys. But, there was a lot of pressure from the doctors and nurses to go ahead and circumcise them. For each boy, we had to tell nurses and doctors "no" multiple times. We had both doctors and nurses attempt to talk us into it. They seemed dead-set to circumcise our boys, and I was surprised at the amount of time they spent trying to convince us.

It is funny, because I know people who would not dare get their cats declawed, but do not even blink at having their male children circumcised. People who talk about eating and living natural, but are willing to let a doctor cut the foreskin from their son's penis. I think because none of us have memories of being circumcised, we tend to think it is not a big deal. But they have to hold the male babies down during the procedure...and the baby is awake and has no pain-killers. The alteration to their body is not an insignificant change. I will not post links to anti-circumcision website, or to photos of the circumcision procedure. I am sure you are all intelligent enough to find them on your own if you want to. But what is done, is absolutely barbaric and unnatural.

You will hear some people in the United States argue it is "normal" to have your children circumcised. The fact that something is the "norm" does not make it "right." Otherwise, all us heathens would be Christians I suppose.

You will hear some people say the procedure is necessary for hygiene purposes. But, worries over whether my teenage son will keep the area under his foreskin clean, does not seem like a legitimate reason to cut the skin off his penis when he is a baby. It think it is a bit simpler to buy him some soap and a washcloth.

People hold rallies and throw a fit over the mutilation of the genitalia of females in Africa, but the mutilation of the genitalia of our male children right here in the United States continues. It is a strange world.

I think people at least owe it to their children to read just a little bit about it before they choose to circumcise their male

children. I would think heathens especially would be a little suspicious of a practice with origins outside of our traditional culture and Folkway and promoted by the big-three Middle Eastern religions throughout history. A procedure which is unnatural, and has no parallel in our pre-conversion way of life. A procedure which unnecessarily injures and alters our male children. As a final thought, think about these eight points about circumcision:

1. Circumcision is a Jewish and Muslim Religious Tradition
2. Circumcision has no parallel in Northern European culture among Heathens
3. Circumcision removes a natural part of a male's penis
4. Circumcision is essentially irreversible
5. Circumcision is normally performed on child within days of birth
6. Medical reasons for Circumcision are not compelling
7. Circumcision is rarely done elsewhere in the world, except by Jews and Muslims
8. If an intact adult male really wants circumcision, he can make that decision as an adult



Raising up Strong Heathen Children

I do think it is a parent's responsibility to teach their child about their religion. I think the idea that a parent will not share their religion with their child and will instead “let them figure it out on their own” is somewhat harmful. Children need to be taught spiritual beliefs in the same way they are taught how to behave in public.

If you do not teach your children about spirituality, the Gods, their Ancestors, and the way to live their lives in relation to the divine - then someone else most certainly will. If you do not teach your children your belief system as the basis for which they live good and honorable lives - then someone else most certainly will.

It might be their classmate, their Uncle Bob, their first girlfriend or boyfriend, or even some television show. But, when we leave a spiritual hole or emptiness in our children, they will find someone willing to fill that hole. When that happens, you will have very little input or control regarding how they fill that emptiness.

Some will say that teaching your child about your spirituality or belief system, is somehow “forcing them into a religion.” I believe that much of this reaction is based on negative experiences with being forced to go to Christian church or being forced to pray as a child. It is not about “forcing” your children to do or believe anything.

It is about communicating, sharing, explaining, and letting them know what you believe.

I know that if I do not teach my kids about heathenry, no one will. I reached the age of 37 or so, without even HEARING of heathenry. I had no idea heathenry even



existed.

Heathens describe being drawn back to our Folk Soul. Heathen talk about the Gods calling us back to our native Folkway. But, our ancestors taught their children our Folkway from the day they were born. They did not remain mute about their Gods and Ancestors, and just let the Gods call their children when it was time. Our ancestors shared their culture directly with their children all through their lives. It should be no different for us as modern heathen parents.

We live in a world and culture with an immense amount of Christian pressures and indoctrination. There is also all this pressure from Science, which in many ways encourages a strong agnostic or atheist point of view. If we do not teach and share heathenry with our children, there is an immensely high chance that they will end up Christian or Agnostic. Having been Agnostic for 25-plus years, I can attest that it gave me a very empty and cold feeling about the world. I do not want that for my children.

If you are a parent and you are new to heathenry, take your time. Work your comfort level up, while also improving your own understanding of our native Folkway. When the time is right, share with your children the wonders of the world that you now know. Our Gods are amazingly inspiring, and your children deserve to have that inspiration in their lives. Our Ancestors are an amazing foundation, and your children deserved to have that foundation in their lives. The Vaettir are a wonder all about us, and your children deserve to have that wonder in their lives...



The House Wight and My Daughter

My 5 year-old-daughter came to me and said that she had lost her bunny hair clips again. She informed me that she had lost them a few days before, but had asked the House Wight to help her find them. She told me that the bunny hair clips were out in plain view the day after she asked for help...but now they were lost AGAIN!

So, my daughter told me she wanted to give the House Wight coins for helping her the day before, and then give the House Wight additional coins for some additional help finding the bunny hair clips again.

So she went and found some quarters. We gifted the House Wight for its prior help and then gifted it more coins for some additional help. My daughter kept bringing this topic up with me for the rest of the day, and she kept asking if the House Wight was going to come through for her. I told her to wait and see.

Anyhow, the next day she found one of the bunny hair clips out in the open, and she was pretty sure the House Wight found it for her. When she asked me why the House Wight only found one of the bunny hair clips, I told her the House Wight probably found them both, but decided to keep one of them to teach her a lesson for losing them a second time. She appeared to accept this as a reasonable answer.



Elizabeth Getting to Know Her Grandfather

When my daughter Elizabeth was six-year-old, she came to me and said she wanted to see photographs of my father, Glen Stinson. She knew that he died when she was not-yet-two-years-old, and she did not remember him. I have talked about him a lot, and she's seen many photos of him, but she wanted to see them again - and more of them.

So we got out the photo albums, and I showed her more pictures of Dad. She really enjoyed seeing him, and I pointed out how he and I look alike, and how we do not look alike. And I pointed out to her that she has his (and my) smile and his (and my) nose, to some degree. We talked about Dad's sense of humor, and how strong and kind to me he was.

She wanted to see a photo of my Dad holding her. She had seen lots of photos of Dad holding our oldest son, Nathan...and she was insistent that I find a photo of Dad holding her. So we



looked and looked. It took awhile but we found several. One of him holding her as a new-born, one of him holding her and looking right into her face, and one of her crying in his lap and him making the same face as her pretending to be crying as well. She loved the photos.

I did not tell her, but the photo of him pretending to be crying just like her was taken just two days before he died.

Elizabeth had tears in her eyes, and she said, "Nathan was lucky...because he remembers your Dad. I don't remember him and he's gone." So I assured her that while he was dead, he was absolutely not gone. I told her that he watches her all the time...and that I know he is very proud of her. She said, "Oh yeah, he's up in heaven and can watch us."

I said, "No...he's right here with us. He's in this room right now watching us look at these photos. He's here right now seeing the tears in your eyes. He was at your big dance recital. He watches you play with your little brother and teach your little brother things. He watches over you at night, to ensure you are safe. Dad absolutely adored you and Nathan, and I am sure that he is around you almost all the time. He did not get to meet Joshua when he was alive, but I am sure he watches Joshua just as much as he watches you guys."

Elizabeth asked where he was in the room. I said, "He's probably right next to you...right there on the couch looking over your shoulder at the photos. Or he's sitting over in that chair, watching the two of us talk about him. But he's right here...and he's not going away ever."

I told her that Dad visits me in dreams, and that when she goes to bed that night, she should think of him and ask him to visit her. I also told her that she could talk to him whenever she wanted to and that he would listen, and maybe someday when she really needed it, he might just answer.

I went to work that night, and Jennifer told me later that Elizabeth was sitting in a nearby chair an hour or two after I left, and that she also told Jennifer that Nathan was lucky,

because he remembered dad. She had tears in her eyes again.

Well the next day, Elizabeth came to me and told me that she had done what I said, and that she had had a dream about Dad. I had been in the dream as well. She couldn't remember what happened in the dream, but she was very excited that she had dreamed of him. She came to me the next day as well, and said that she had dreamed of him a second time.

I think of my three children, Elizabeth is the one that most connects most with the unseen. She seems to have a real connection with our House Wight, one that has developed independently of me. She does things with the House Wight that I do not even hear about until weeks later and she seems to be developing a strong connection with my father. I could not be prouder of her...



The Transition from Childhood to Adulthood

In our modern American culture, at what point do we mark the transition to adulthood? At 16 when a teenager gets a driver license? At 18 when a teenager can vote, or when young men must register for the draft? Is it at 21, when the legal drinking age is reached? The truth is, in our modern American culture, there is not clear point where childhood ends and adulthood is reached. No dividing line. No rite of passage. No signal to everyone that this human being is now considered a full-adult, and must meet the responsibilities of a full-adult.

Our definition of when adulthood begins is blurry, at best...and even then, the blurry line keeps getting moved further and

further along into the lives of young people. We are at the point, where we have "children" living at home at the age of 22, 26, 30, and many of these children have never really taken responsibility for themselves. They do not hold steady jobs, have their own place to live, pay all their own bills, or make decisions in the way that an adult can and should. I think at times, the transition to adulthood can be enormously confusing, and a methodical well-thought out transition can ease some or most of the confusion involved.

THE TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD WITHIN OUR KINDREDS

Our kindreds and tribes are an excellent place and mechanism for providing this guided transition to adulthood. A healthy kindred that includes families, is likely already organizing activities and learning opportunities for the children involved in the kindred. By purposefully shaping these children's activities and learn opportunities into a process of learning and action, we can provide our children with a guided process that logically and inevitably leads to their roles and responsibilities as adults. This process and the rite of passage at the end of such a process, make it very clear to a child that it is time to take on the role of adult. The process itself is a proving time, with the rite of passage as the final test that communicates to them that they have learned, they are capable, and that their relationship and participation in the kindred or tribe will be different from this point forward.

The rite of passage also clearly marks for all the adults of a tribe, that a child has made the transition to adult. It makes it clear what the expectations of this new adult in the tribe will be. It marks the point in time, that the thew for adults now applies to this young adult, and that they have proved themselves ready for those responsibilities.

The rite of passage is not something that you can throw together over a weekend, and think it will have much of an impact on the anyone. The rite of passage itself should be the culmination and completion of years of learning from and interacting with the tribe. It should incorporate the things the boy or girl has learned, and it should incorporate things that

will be expected of them as adults. It should reinforce the thew of the tribe, and set the young adult on the right course within the tribe. But it takes time, resources, and effort on everyone's part to make this happen properly.

THE ACTUAL PROCESS OF MAKING AN ADULT

So, how should this process work? What should be included in it? That is going to vary greatly from kindred to kindred. Every kindred is different...sometimes enormously different. Thew varies from kindred to kindred. The responsibilities, activities, and deeds expected from adults in each kindred are different. There is no cookie-cutter way to do this.



This process and the rite of passage that marks the point of transition is not simply for the boy or girl in question. It is something that serves a purpose for the entire tribe. Jotun's Bane Kindred is in a position, where we need to seriously start looking at this. We have two boys and two girls who are at a

point, where we need to begin a process of transitioning them to adulthood within the tribe. We have been trying some things, to see what works, and really examining what we hope to accomplish in this process.

Here are some thoughts on the matter, that we have considered...

1. Whatever method we choose, it should have a male and female path. Boys growing into men, need different knowledge, responsibilities, and experiences than girls growing into women. To some degree, there will be variations in the process, based on the needs and personality of the child who is going through it as well. Just as some adults are more spiritual, or intellectual, or physical, or crafty...so do our children differ in their skills and strengths.

2. There has to be a methodical build up to the rite of passage. It cannot just "happen one day" out of the blue. I think years of methodical preparation are needed, with the last year or so featuring an increase in the rate of learning and activities. There are skill sets to be taught and learned. Mental conditioning applied and learned. Lore, Thew, and the expectation of the tribe to internalize and understand.

3. The rite of passage itself should be over a weekend. Perhaps a long weekend, but it should be a weekend. The rite of passage should include the application and of skills and mental conditioning that the boy or girl has learned up to that point. This is a test to ensure they have learned and can apply what they have learned, and a way of showing the boy or girl in very concrete terms exactly how much they have learned and what they are capable of...

4. There should be symbolism and a certain level of drama involved. It should mean something, and truly communicate to all involved exactly how important that moment in time is. A child has become an adult within the tribe.

5. There should be a clear understanding and expectation of behavior put in place, that EVERYONE understands and agrees

to follow from that point forward. The new adult's responsibilities and privileges should be spelled out, and everyone should clearly understand them.

6. The new adult, should from that point forward be welcomed into adult activities. After the right of passage, the new adult should sit in Symbol with the other adults from that point forward. They should participate in the Fainings. Participate in the Study Groups, the kindred meetings, etc. If we train a child to be an adult, and then ritually transition them to adulthood, then they need to fulfill the adult role and responsibilities from that point forward. They should also enjoy certain privileges and trust in return for fulfilling these responsibilities.

7. This should be done at a fairly early age, by today's standards. 13, 14, or 15. Males and females are capable of exercising adult responsibilities within a kindred at these ages. A 13 or 14 year old at a heathen gathering, should be participating with the adults, rather than running about the whole time with the little ones.

IT REALLY COMES DOWN TO RESPONSIBILITIES AND PRIVILEGES

The whole process really comes down to preparing our children to fulfill their adult responsibilities, and to be mature enough to enjoy adult privileges without abusing them.

When I have talked about this in the past, there are some that like to point out that among our ancestors, it was often the norm for children to grow up and remain living at home at the age of 30 and beyond. You might live on the same land and the same grouping of homes until your parents died, and then you would take over as the patriarch or matriarch of the family and land.

But even in these situations, the grown children were working the land and fulfilling enormous responsibilities. They were expected to act as adults, provide as adults, and contribute as adults. They would often build an addition to the homestead

for their family (wife and kids), or a separate building nearby.

They were not underachieving. They were not sponging off their parents. They were not in a perpetual state of childhood, wifeless, childless, and without adult responsibility. In our modern world, there is a stigma on adults living at home with their parents, because in a majority of cases, 30-year-old children still living at home are not great examples of success, responsibility, and achievement. Certainly there are exceptions to this rule. There are adult children who temporarily stay at home, working and saving up for a house. Some adult children move home temporarily while recovering from some crisis, after getting laid off, etc. But, beyond these exceptions there are a lot of people not acting their age.

THE CHILDREN OF JOTUN'S BANE KINDRED

Jotun's Bane Kindred has reached a point, where we need to make some decisions about this issue and plot a course. Obviously we cannot just wait for our oldest children to be 13, and then start worrying about it. We need to start forming our plans on this, and putting them into action. We already take our children camping throughout the year, and teach them skills we feel adults should know. We involve them in Fainings and Symbol. We read lore to them, and now that they are getting older, we are giving them materials to read on their own. We are already preparing them for adulthood.

But we need to create a more organized and systematic way of preparing them...so that we do not miss anything. So that our training of our children is a little more complete and consistent, and that we do the best job for them that we can. I envision that this is going to take a lot of time and effort on our part, but like all things worth working for, the results should be well worth it.





SECTION THREE

**Heathen
Families**

What to Consider Before Marrying a Non-Heathen

The spouse we choose to spend our lives with, to have children with, and to face all of life's challenges with is one of the most important decisions we make in our life. The oath of marriage is one of the most serious oaths we will take as Asatruars or Heathens. Maintaining that oath in a healthy way, affects our life, our spouse's life, our children's lives, the lives of our families, our kindreds, and our friends.

The optimal situation within a family, is when both parents share the same religion. This avoids conflict, confusion, misunderstandings, and all manner of problems. When two spouses have two different religions, there are differences in world-view, priorities, goals, how to raise one's children, how to live one's life, the seriousness of the marriage oath, and all areas of your life together. That is not to say it cannot work, but if one had to generally define the optimal situation for stability and workability, it would involve both parents sharing the same religion.



For single Heathens, meeting another Heathen that you want to marry can be difficult at this time of Reconstruction for our Folkway. There are not a lot of Heathens to choose from. The single Heathens you do meet, may not fit the bill, so to speak. When two single Heathens in a kindred begin dating, it can lead to all sorts of drama and hurt feelings if it does not work out. There are many factors at work that make it difficult for single Heathens to find a Heathen spouse.

So, many single Heathens end up dating and considering marriage with atheists, agnostics, Christians, Buddhists, Wiccans, etc. There are some serious issues to consider when you begin dating non-Heathens, that should ultimately have a huge impact on whether the marriage with the non-Heathen is right for you.

How many times have we read on Heathen message boards the post from the Heathen father whose Christian wife will not let me teach the children about his Gods and their Ancestors? The post from the Heathen wife, complaining that her indifferent agnostic husband is frustrated with the time she wants to spend with the kids at kindred events? The post from the Heathen father, who does not want his children baptized in a Christian church, but his Christian wife's family is insisting on it? I have read posts like this innumerable times.

So here are some questions to ask your self about a non-Heathen you are considering marrying. These are questions that should be 100% considered, discussed, and asked about before marriage.

What non-Heathen religious activities are you willing to participate in?

What Heathen activities is the non-Heathen willing to participate in?

What non-Heathen religious activities are you willing to let the non-Heathen go do his/her own?

What Heathen religious activities is the non-Heathen willing to let you go and do on your own?

What Heathen knowledge and practices will you be allowed to teach your kids?

What non-Heathen knowledge and practices will you allow the non-Heathen to teach your kids?

Where will you be allowed to take your kids?

Where will you allow the non-Heathen to take your kids?

Will you have to hide your Heathen beliefs from the non-Heathen's Family?

Will the kids be Baptized and Confirmed in a Christian Church, or some other non-Heathen tradition?

Will the kids be named, blessed, and made men or made women in a heathen fashion?

Will you be able to have a location in your home and yard to honor your Gods and Ancestors?

Will you be able to have a location in your home to honor and gift your house wight?

Will the non-Heathen be able to have statues of saints, or other non-Heathen religious symbols/statues?

Will your marriage ceremony be completely non-Heathen (i.e., Christian)?

Will your marriage ceremony be completely Heathen?

Will your marriage ceremony be a mixture of the two?

Will the kids know only Christianity or the non-Heathen religion?

Will the kids know only Heathenry?

Will the kids be brought up to know both?

Will the kids attend only Church or non-Heathen events?
Will the kids participate only in Heathen Fainings and Symbel?
Will the kids participate in events from both religions?

These are some pretty basic questions. But they dramatically affect your life, your beliefs, and your dignity at a spouse and a parent. To not be able to teach your own children about your heart-felt beliefs and faith, is a smothering feeling. It feels like a lie. Imagine not being able to pass on your ancestral folkway to your own children. Ultimately, if your freedom to express and practice your religion is limited within your own domestic situation, then you are forced to choose between your family and your own beliefs.



Carefully discussing these sorts of questions with the potential spouse that is non-Heathen, prevents a lot of fighting, heartache, and broken marriages. Sometimes in the heat of a new relationship or the moment of attraction, considerations regarding compatible religious views, are not always at the forefront of your mind. But, there is a point where you have to

take a hard look at the person you want to date or are already dating, and you have to begin asking the questions that need to be asked.

One thing that can certainly help, is to welcome the non-Heathen to come to some Heathen events. Let them get to know good stable Heathens, and see what Heathenry is all about. There is nothing like actually attending a Heathen event, to strip away all the fear, apprehension, and disgust that other religions teach their followers about any religion that is not the same as theirs.

Ultimately though, if the non-Heathen is close-minded, or wants you to hide who you are and what you believe, what sort of marriage is that? If the non-Heathen wants to shield the children you have together, from your world-view and way of life, then what sort of marriage is that? If you are not allowed to participate in Heathen gatherings, or are not allowed to take your children with you, what sort of marriage is that? If you spouse tells you everyday that you are going to flaming Hell for your beliefs, then what sort of marriage is that?

If you cannot find a good Heathen spouse, then focus on finding a good stable non-Heathen willing to respect your faith and willing to support the practice of your religion. A non-Heathen willing to get to know the members of your kindred (or future kindred), and be on friendly terms with them. A non-Heathen willing to allow (or even help with) teaching your children about your Gods, your Ancestors, and your Ways.

Sometimes we fall in love with the wrong people, and when we do, we need to be strong enough to identify and address that problem before it has a negative impact on our life. The time and emotion we spend on a relationship that cannot work, is precious time and emotion we will never get back.



The Families We Build, The Oaths We Make

On the internet - in "on-line" Heathenry, you'll occasionally hear the call for a move away from monogamy, calling monogamy some sort of unnatural morality, or something "the Christians inflicted on us," as if monogamy represents Christian slave chains that we should throw off.

This bothers me. For me, personally, Heathenry is about family and kin. It is about the oaths we make. It is about our Ancestors and about our children. The only "afterlife" I am certain of, are the memories that my children and their children will carry of me. These descendants will carry on my memory and, more importantly, they will carry on my legacy by the choices and actions they make in their own lives.

I made an oath to my wife to be faithful to her. My children benefit from the stability of one household, one set of parents, one set of rules, and knowing that the two of us (my wife and I) will be here for them no matter what. In the modern world we can shelter our children from hunger and horrible weather, but the only shelter our children have from an upside-down, corrupt human world, is the family we build and maintain for them. Every sociological study suggests that a stable two-parent family produces, on average, more well-adjusted, successful, and happy children.

Our Ancestors married. I am married. Must we turn everything completely on its head to move away from what we see as Christianity? Turning Christianity on its head, and everything Christianity stands for, is reactionary. It has nothing to do with reconstruction and being true to our Ancestors.

I do not care what these "on-line" Heathens do in their life. I do not really know any of them. None of them are my kin or kindred, and frankly they can do what they want with their

lives, their families, and their children. But I do not enjoy the idea of anyone using Heathenry as an excuse for infidelity...or a way out of an oath that they have already made to a spouse or to their family.

If they break their marriage oaths...their Luck will wane...and they will likely bring unnecessary and disruptive complexity and chaos into their Wyrð. They can live out the consequences...but I want no part of it.



Protecting Heathen Children from Divorce

We can all agree that our children are our most important treasure. We would protect them at all costs. We would destroy anyone that would threaten them. They are our future. And we wish to pass good Orlog to them...so their lives can be Lucky and of Worth.

Our choices about marriage and relationships can either benefit our children or threaten them with dire consequences. Sadly, if we do not work hard at our marriages, we as parents can become one of the most destructive forces in our children's lives. We are the only ones that can protect our children from this threat.

Children of broken homes statistically do worse in school, are more likely to drop out of school, have more mental problems, are less physically healthy, are more anxious and insecure, are more likely to commit suicide, more likely to end up in prison, more likely to have problems in their future relationships, more likely to be molested or the victim of a violent crime, and more likely to have a serious addiction when they grow up,

among other things.

So, when things get a little rough in a marriage, and your mind wanders to the idea of "escaping" from it through divorce, think about who is threatening your kids' welfare now? Who's going to protect your kids from your decision-making?

Also consider the Oath that you took when you chose your spouse. You took an oath to that person, and many times you took that oath in front of family and friends. Is this oath any less important than the oaths we take on our oath rings? Is this oath, if broken, any less damaging to our own Luck and Wyrd? Is this oath, if broken, any less damaging to our Heathen communities, our kindreds, and our tribes? No, clearly it is one of the most important oaths that we take.



Frigga

But some will say that a "bad marriage" will damage children. In the case of child or spousal abuse, severe drug and alcohol addiction, I would agree with you. But these are extreme situations, and the vast majority of marital problems are NOT this severe.

So, honor your Oaths. Protect your Wyrd. Preserve your Luck. Pass good Orlog onto your children. If you find yourself

having marital problems, tackle the challenge like Heathens tackle any challenge...intelligently, fearlessly, generously, honorably, and with lots of hard work.

Doing so will benefit you, your family, and your tribe.



A Conversation with Frigga

I think male Asatruars tend to talk a lot to Odin, Thor, Tyr, Freyr, and the other male Gods. They are warlike, wise, and perhaps they appeal to us because they are strong, well defined, and they are the focus of many of the stories in the Lore. We tend to honor them more, and not pay enough attention to the Asyniur.

But, those of you with families, wives, and children...I would encourage you to begin talking with Frigga...and offering her gifts. Here is a Goddess who shares Hlidskjalf, Odin's high seat with her husband. She has the gift of prophecy, and yet carefully protects this knowledge. In a battle of wits, she can go toe-to-toe with Odin, and in at least one story from the Lore she comes out on top.

In this day and age of "disposable marriages" and "temporary families," a Heathen husband should turn to Frigga for guidance. Gift Frigga, and ask her to watch over your family. Promise Frigga you will do everything in your power to maintain the health of your marriage, and even to improve it. Then follow through on this commitment.

Tell Frigg why your family and your marriage are important to

you. Tell her that you will sacrifice much to maintain this treasured relationship in your life, and then personally sacrifice whatever it takes to make that marriage and family work. If you are serious, and you are working hard to be a good husband and father, Frigg will see that you are Tru...



Kindreds Becoming Tribes

I had a realization during the formation of our kindred about kindreds becoming tribes. I made a quick note about the realization in the following paragraph, and then the rest of this essay expands on the idea.

Over time, as my family and other families become more integrated into the Kindred, in many ways it will have become a "Tribe" and not a Kindred. A Kindred is of course a family...and as our Kindred becomes a gathering of four or five families and some additional individuals...it will be more of a tribe than a Kindred. That is something growing Kindreds need to consider, talk about, and plan for.

When we first began building Jotun's Bane Kindred, I saw the Kindred as just five individuals oathed to each other as a "family." A tight-knit group of Heathens, honoring the Gods together, studying together, and looking out for each other as family should. I will not speak for the others in Jotun's Bane Kindred, but that is how I had envisioned it.

It never even occurred to me that our families would become such a big part of what we do. As I evaluated and sized up those making the effort with me early on, I thought to myself, "Would I trust this person with my children?" That was sort of a litmus test for me - a benchmark of whether they were of

worth or not. But, at the time I thought Kindred events would entail all of us leaving our families for a few hours a week, coming together, and doing "kindred stuff" as a group of individuals.

I am willing to admit, this was somewhat short-sighted...and completely missed the point of what Heathen Kindreds should work towards building.

Now that our Kindred has formed, and existed over time, we do not just gather as a small group of individuals. We gather together as Mark, my wife Jennifer, and my three kids...Jamie...Rod and his partner, Jason...Will...Craig and his wife Paula, and his two kids...Glen and Susan...and Johnny and his wife Kimberly, and their three kids. When we gather for fainings or celebrations, symbel, study groups, Heathen movie nights, etc, it is families that gather, not just individual Kindred members.



Joshua and Mark

I hadn't thought of this at the beginning, but seeing how things have progressed, I would encourage all Kindred's to work towards including their families in everything they possibly can. Rather than building Kindreds of individuals, we should be working to build Tribes of Heathen families. Families ensure the future of our traditions, our culture, and our ways in a way that individuals cannot.



Family is Family

For our ancestors nothing was more important than their families. They shared Frith within their family, which translated to complete and utter loyalty. They shared honor within their family, and took vengeance if that honor was threatened or damaged in any way. They had a deep and sincere connection with their own ancestors, and knew that the most important way they could live on was in the memory and tales of their descendants.

For modern heathens, nothing is more important than our immediate families. Our spouses and children. One of the most important oaths we take in our lifetime, is our marriage oath. It serves as the foundation of our families, and provides our children with a stable and unshakeable framework in which to grow up, in a world where almost nothing is stable or unshakeable anymore. One's home or hearth is at the core of one's Heathenry.

Modern heathens focus a lot of time and energy on forming and developing kindreds and tribes, where they bring together families into a social and religious grouping that learns to share loyalty and Frith much like an extended family would have among our ancestors. Forming kindreds and tribes and making them work allows modern heathens to accomplish more in their lives, both within heathenry and outside of it. These strong bonds formed between our individual hearths or homes is an important part of our very community-oriented religion and way of life.

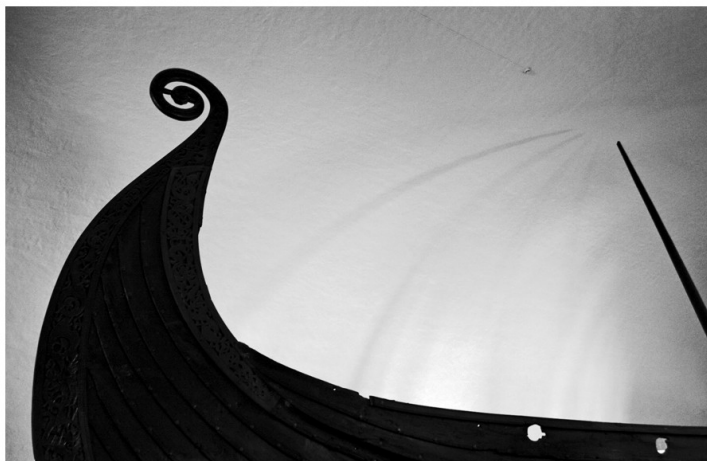
Regardless of the time, effort, and energy that you put into your kindred or tribe, you must never lose site of the core of Heathenry, and the basic building block of our heathen communities...your home. Your family...your spouse and children. Family is family, and family comes first. In a healthy and balanced kindred, it is completely expected that your family comes first.

Nothing your kindred does should be contrary to or threaten

your family in any way. No oath you are asked to take should be contrary to or threaten your family in any way. No activity, religious practice, relationship, or responsibility within the kindred should be contrary to or threaten your family in any way. If at any point your kindred is asking you to make a choice between kindred and family, then really stop and look at what is going on. Because something has gone drastically wrong with you or your kindred.

THE FLIP SIDE OF THIS IS ALSO TRUE

Of course the mirror of these statements should be true as well. Nothing your family does should be contrary to or threaten your kindred in any way. If at any point your family is asking you to make a choice between family and kindred, then really stop and look at what is going on. Because something has gone drastically wrong with you or your family.



Now, some heathens will choose or have chosen to marry non-Heathens. Some heathens were already married to non-Heathens prior to becoming Heathen. In this circumstance, there can be difficulties if the non-Heathen spouse strongly disagrees with your heathen beliefs, and seeks to subvert your participation in anything heathen or kindred related. Suddenly, your non-heathen spouse is not letting you go to

kindred events, or is at the very least, making it very difficult for you to attend. Perhaps punishing you for attending, by starting arguments and expressing a lot of anger toward you. This is a sticky situation, because you share an important oath with the non-heathen spouse and may even have children with this spouse.

But, marriage is about compromise and working together. Marriage is not about controlling every thought, belief, or action of your spouse. So a non-heathen spouse that never allows you to attend heathen or kindred events, is wrong. A non-heathen spouse that will not allow you to talk to your own children about your Heathen ways, is wrong. A non-heathen spouse that tries to make you hide who you are and what you believe, is wrong.

So, if you find yourself in this situation, you have a lot of work to do. It is our responsibility to work through these issues in your marriage, through conversations and honest communication with your non-heathen spouse. A healthy balance must be struck, where you give some ground to gain some ground. You may have to stand your ground and firmly set some boundaries as to what they can and cannot make you do. There may be some heated debates, and likely some anger. But, you have to do the work to reach an understanding that allows Family and Kindred to work together and coexist in your life.

Allowing a non-heathen spouse nearly complete control of your interactions with a kindred or other heathens, will actually hurt you both, your marriage, and your family in the long run. It is a slow burn, but that level of control over what you do and cannot do breeds resentment, and resentment eats away at a marriage from the inside.

FAMILY IS FAMILY

It takes a lot of dedication and work to keep one's family strong, stable, and healthy. Living heathen values and ways, and building bonds between your home and the homes of other heathens, can help in this endeavor. Good families

reinforce and improve the kindreds they belong to, and good kindreds reinforce and improve the families they contain.



Involving Non-Heathen Spouses in Our Kindreds

The optimal situation would be for our kindreds and tribes to involve our entire family, including our spouses and our children. This would be the most natural state, with the entire family involved in our Folkway, our way of life, our religion, and everything that Asatru or Heathenry means to us. But some of us are married to non-heathen spouses. Many of us came to heathenry after we were already married and already have children. So, how do we involve our non-heathen spouses in our kindreds and tribes?

First, this essay is not about "How to Convert your Spouse." We each return to our native Folkway in our own way, and for our own reasons. So, the idea of writing an essay about "how to convert your spouse," just feels wrong. This essay focuses purely on how to get your non-heathen spouse involved in your kindred and your kindred's activities. Nearly everything in this essay would also apply to dedicated girlfriends or boyfriends, but I will use the term "spouse" throughout.

When you are attempting to convince your non-heathen spouse to attend a kindred event, keep in mind that for them it probably feels a lot like you are trying to take them to your "church." That is the main cultural example they have to work from, and so they may feel like you are trying to "convert" them. The more you pressure them, the more you make

demands, the more you try to "force" the issue...the more they are likely to resist it, and resent both you and the kindred. Your own actions and the tone you set with your spouse, is probably the most important part of making them feel comfortable with becoming involved.

Another part of this equation that you control, is the example you set. It helps if your non-heathen spouse sees that your religion and your kindred encourage you to be a better spouse. A better father or mother. A better employee. If they see that your religion and your kindred encourages you to be hard working, honest, honorable, loyal, successful, and strong...they will see the value of your beliefs and your involvement in the kindred. As in all things, we are our deeds, and the rightness of our actions and decisions will encourage a non-heathen spouse to see the kindred as a positive in their life, marriage, and family - rather than a negative.



A kindred is not a "church." Your kindred is not something you just do on Sunday. It is not purely religious. A kindred is about loyalty. It is about being involved in each other's lives. It is about sharing loyalty and Frith. Is about supporting one another's families, and our children playing and learning together. It is about sharing good times and laughter, but it is also about helping each other at times of need. These are all values and activities that a non-heathen spouse can support

and get behind, even if they do not personally hold to heathen beliefs.

But if your kindred is much like a "church" or a "club," that meets and gathers only for religious events. If you do not share loyalty and Frith, and are not involved in one another's lives, then a non-heathen spouse really will not have any motivation for becoming involved. If the heathen members of your kindred, do not see the benefit of having non-heathen spouses involved...you will run into a whole host of other problems. So if you think this may be a problem, you will need to talk to your kindred about how important it is to involve your non-heathens spouse, and why it is important.

All of this points very clearly to the fact, that the sort of activities and events that your kindred plans, has a direct impact on your chances of convincing your non-heathen spouse to become involved. Here are some events your kindred can hold, that would surely help...

DINNERS - You can invite another couple or an individual from the kindred over to your home for dinner. A simple dinner. Do not make you non-heathen spouse cook, unless she loves to cook. Do the work for him/her. Or go out to dinner with another couple or an individual from the kindred. You could have the whole kindred over for dinner, or meet the whole kindred at a restaurant for dinner, but if you are just starting out...start slow.

There is nothing like eating together, having good conversation, and laughing a bit to build friendships and a comfort level with other people. A simple dinner is non-threatening, not "religious" in nature, and will allow you non-heathen spouse to grow in appreciation for your friends within the kindred.

Do not spend the whole dinner talking about heathenry! Make sure the conversation at dinner covers topics of interest to your non-heathen spouse, and allows him/her to get to know your friends in the kindred better.

MOVIE-NIGHTS - Movie-nights are also good. Plan a movie night with the kindred and encourage everyone to bring their non-heathen spouses. Choose some great movies. Have lots of great snacks available. Talk before, between, and after the movies. Joke around and have fun. When Jotun's Bane Kindred has movie nights, we will usually pick one movie that involves Vikings and one that does not. LOL. But you have got to get at least one Viking movie in the mix.

SOCIALIZING IN GENERAL - Parties, social get-togethers, fires in the backyard, trips to a museum, going to a concert, amusement parks, camping, and other social gatherings are another way to involve non-heathen spouses, and encourage them for form friendships and bonds with the members of your kindred. The more fun the event you plan, the more tempting it will be to your non-heathen spouse. These sorts of activities are non-religious in nature, and thus non-threatening to your non-heathen spouse.

CRAFTING - Learning crafts and crafting really brings people together. Many non-heathen spouses have crafting skills (knitting, crocheting, weaving, sewing, woodworking, metal working, etc.) that the rest of your kindred may also be interested in, or may want to learn. Bringing them all together for that purpose, is a great way to involve your non-heathen spouse. Activities like mead-making can also bring together an entire kindred with the non-heathens spouses.



ROAD TRIPS - Jotun's Bane Kindred travels frequently to visit other kindreds in our region. Sometimes it is for the day and sometimes is a multiple day camping trip. Road-trips are the best way to get to know people. Hours in a car. Fun crazy breaks at truck-stops and convenience stores in the middle of no where. Just being together like that all day or for days at a time, can build friendships that will never fade. If you can convince your non-heathen spouse to go along, they will almost always have a good time and bond with your kindred.

ONCE THEY ARE INVOLVED - Once a non-heathen spouse is comfortable with your kindred and shares friendships with some or all of your kindred members, you will find they will be much more comfortable attending kindred events that are more religious in nature. They will be more likely to come to a Faining or Blot. They may even participate, just out of respect for your kindred and your beliefs. They will be more likely to sit in Symbel, and enjoy the friendship and fellowship of the Hall. They will be more likely to come to a study group session, out of interest in learning more about your beliefs. Ultimately, they are even more likely to return to their native Folkway, but that is not really the goal. Sometimes that just happens as the natural course of things.

Now, nothing is guaranteed. Some non-heathen spouses are just not going to want to be involved, no matter how much effort you put into making them feel welcome. You cannot force people to do something they do not want to do. It is important to keep in mind that you share a marriage oath with your non-heathen spouse, so a balance will need to be struck and there will be problems that will come up that you will need to address. But following some of the steps above should help in most cases, and the potential pay-off is well worth making the effort.



Men: Prioritize Your Heathen Life

I wrote this essay after seeing an article talking about how men should prioritize their life. We have all see the articles and lists purporting to tell us what should be most important in our lives.

Many of these lists put "God" or a Higher Power first on the list - and some put the "Self" very high on the list. But from a Heathen perspective I would prioritize it differently. The Abrahamic religions teach us to put "Higher Power" before everything, but that is because the desert God is a jealous needy God. Our extremely selfish mainstream culture would, of course, recommend putting the Self second, before Family. So, here's my attempt to cast this topic in a Heathen-light...

FAMILY FIRST - I would put your spouse and children first. As a unit. You are obligated by oath and responsibility to do everything you can to protect and support your spouse and children, and to keep your immediate family and the relationships within it healthy and vital. This should be a Heathen's first priority, bar none. Raising a family within Heathenry, with Heathen values, is for me a part of having a healthy family. Part of that obligation is to safeguard your own health and strength so that you maintain your ability to support your family. This leads to our second priority...

SELF SECOND - Learning, evolving, improving, and keeping yourself mentally, physically, and spiritually growing and stable helps you to protect and support your family, and stay focused on what you need to do for them. Living Tru, taking right action, safeguarding your Wyrð, and making your own Luck all play into this.

CAREER/JOB THIRD - If you can't pay the bills, this can be one of the most stressful factors in breaking up families and marriages. The house or apartment needs to be paid for, the

food needs to be in the fridge, and the family needs to be clothed. It is not that your career defines you, it is the fact that your career is necessary to support your first priority...your family. This doesn't mean one particular career direction, or one particular job. It means your own ability to provide for your family.

With the family supported, and kept healthy...a Heathen man and husband can turn to those outside his immediate family...



INNANGARTH FOURTH - Those friends and family you fully trust. The ones you know have your back, and you have theirs. For me, this involves my oathed Kindred, and one or two of my extended family...and maybe one or two friends. In a sense, the support you give to your innangarth comes back to you as support from your innangarth. Gift for a gift, and the bonds that tie this tight inner circle together allow for a collective Orlog to develop and Luck to be shared.

For me, growth of my local Heathen community fits within this category. It is from that local Heathen community that I will form new ties, and accept new members into my innangarth over time. The growth of my local Heathen community is the

best way I know of to have a direct impact on the growth of our Folk.

UTANGARTH FIFTH - This is everyone outside of your tight inner circle. "Work Friends," friendly neighbors, or acquaintances, and all those that we enjoy being around and have fun with in social settings (backyard neighborhood BBQ's, double-dates with a neighbor couple, softball leagues, social hobbies), but do not fully trust as part of your inner circle.

For me, the growth of greater Heathenry fits into this category. While I want to see more of our lost Folk come home to the ways of their Ancestors, this has a lower priority for me than my local community. As it should.

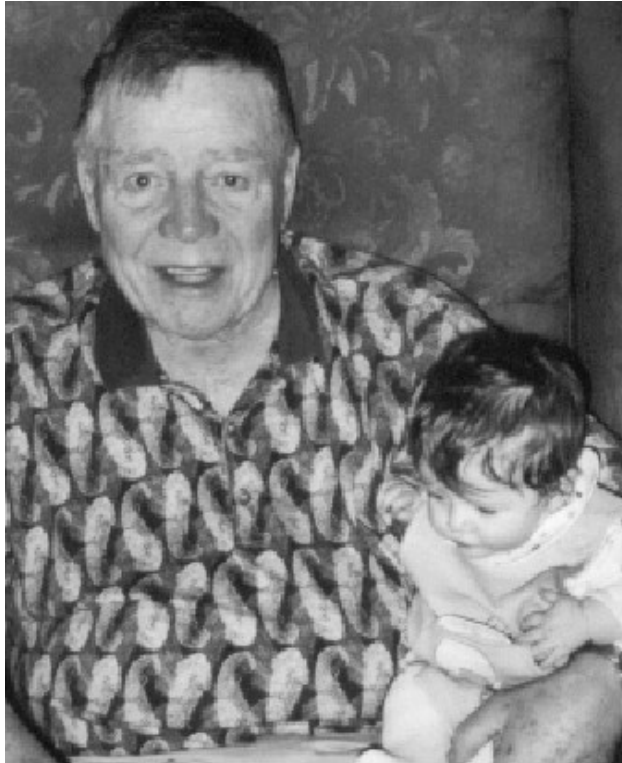
GREATER NON-HEATHEN COMMUNITY SIXTH - Charity work for those you do not know is a good thing, but the priority level for dedicating time to those you do not know would be lower than what has already been listed before.

HONORING OUR GODS, ANCESORS, AND THE VAETTIR - I did not place our Gods and Ancestors on the priority list, because I do not see our religion as something that can be put before or after other parts of our lives. They are a part of us, and a part of our lives. Heathenry is a way of life, and our loyalty to the Gods and Ancestors is exhibited and reflected in our loyalty to our family, our own personal growth, our hard vocational work, and our focus on our innangarth. In addition, the way we lead our lives is quickly evident to those in our Utangarth and the greater non-Heathen community. We live Tru in all the parts of our life, as our very way of living.



Honoring One's Ancestors

A large part heathen practice involves honoring our ancestors. While living, our ancestors were living breathing people, with hopes and dreams, families and friends they loved, successes and hardships, and if not for their hard work, dedication, and sacrifices we would not be here. A part of our heathen soul, our Orlog, is passed to us by our ancestors. We work hard all through our lives to pass good Orlog to our own children, and thus our descendents. We share blood and culture with our ancestors, and it is through our ancestors that we find connection with our Gods.



In death, we as heathens have various ideas about where they might be. Perhaps a part of their heathen soul is in our Ancestor's Halls in Hel or perhaps they rest in the mound.

There are other concepts of the afterlife among modern heathens, but these are probably the most common. Regardless of where they are, there is a belief that our ancestors are aware of us and watch us throughout our lives. That our Alfar and Disir are able to bestow advice and a bit of needed Luck to a deserving descendant. That our ancestors take an interest in us and may look out for us during a trying time. Regardless, we owe our ancestors our lives, and they deserve to be honored and remembered.

ENCOURAGING NEW HEATHENS

Many newcomers to Asatru or Heathenry focus first on our Gods, and only later develop a true interest in honoring their ancestors. This is probably a vestige of the mainstream religions within which they were raised. To your average person in our Western Culture, religion is all about honoring a god or gods. For the majority religion, Christianity, the entire focus of the religion is on worshiping their god. So, it makes sense why new heathens first focus on our Gods, and do not usually come to fully understand the importance of honoring their ancestors until they have been around Heathenry a little while.

But our ancestors have a direct and vested interest in us, and how we live our lives. They share the frith of kinship with us, and properly honoring them and making them proud is of great importance. So, when new heathens approach you or your kindred looking for guidance, share with them the importance of their ancestor. Teach them how to honor and value their ancestors at least as much as they honor and value our Gods.

Sometimes new heathens will ask, "But what about all my Christian ancestors, how am I supposed to honor them?" Quite frankly, I do not believe that there should be any difference in how we honor our Heathen ancestors from our Christian ancestors. We honor them by knowing them, remembering them, gifting them, leading worthwhile lives, and raising strong responsible children. All ancestors, regardless of what religion they held in life, would appreciate all that we

do for our ancestors.

WAYS TO HONOR ONE'S ANCESTORS - KNOW THEM

There are many ways to know one's ancestors. One of the best ways to get started is to talk with your living relatives, and find out all they know about your grandparents, great-grandparents, and as far back as any one of your living relatives can go back. Take notes. Write down names, dates, where they lived, and their occupations. If they remember little details from their lives, make note of those as well. What were their interests and hobbies? What were their greatest hardships and accomplishments? What was their favorite foods or treats? What stories are known or have been passed down about these ancestors.

While your parents, grandparents and great-grandparents are still alive ask them to tell you stories from their lives. This may take some convincing with some of your quieter or more modest relatives. But some living relatives will tell you all sorts of stories from their lives. Ask them how they felt about or reacted to important historical moments that took place during their lives. Ask them about the jobs they held, the homes they lived in, the schools they went to, the adventures and misadventures they lived. Once these living relatives are gone, their stories will go with them if you do not ask and listen. Take careful notes and keep them all in one place you will not lose them. Details are easy to forget or mix up, so keeping notes will keep the information clear and accurate in your memory, and give you something to refresh your memory. Notes also make it easier for you to preserve and pass on the information you collect.

Genealogy can also be enormously interesting and enlightening about one's own background. You are in luck if you already have a relative that has done a lot of the genealogical footwork for you. Usually they will be very happy to copy of the information and families trees information they have gathered. Sometimes it will be so complete, that you do not have to really do much more with it than read it and learn from it. But, with genealogy you can always strive to go further back with

the research, and existing genealogical information given to you by another relative can give you an amazing starting place for further research.

Whether you are starting nearly from scratch in researching your family tree or if you are given a head-start on the information by a relative, there are a variety of on-line sources of genealogical information. One such site is <http://www.ancestry.com>. You can do some very basic searching for information for free at ancestry.com, but you will get much further along and more quickly, if you go ahead and pay the \$20 a month fees to register with their website. Ancestry.com has searchable census documents going back to the 1700's. They also have all manner of birth records, death records, service records, marriage license records, immigration records, ship passenger lists, and the list goes on and on. All of this is searchable, and with a little practice you can start piecing together your families history from home on the internet.



With today's technology, you also have the option of having your DNA tested and analyzed. There are a wide variety of services and pricing methods based on this technology, but if you do your research and have some money to spend you can learn a lot about where your ancestors come from, who you are currently related to in the world, and many other helpful areas of information about your ancestors.

If you have managed to do some or all of this work to learn more about your ancestors, then it is definitely worth bringing all that information together in one place, and putting it in a format that can be shared with other relatives and your descendants. This can be as simple as photo-copying and stapling together packets of information to share and pass down. Some families bring the information together into a book format, and print off a number of actual books to share and pass down. The book creation option is enormously easy using today's print-on-demand book services available on-line. <http://www.createspace.com> and <http://www.lulu.com> are both excellent options in this area. With today's technology, it is even possible to use family-tree software to enter all of your information into a professionally designed computer interface that makes the information searchable, easily browsable, and when copied to a disk...enormously easy to share and pass down.

I have been asked before, "What if I am adopted and do not know who my ancestors are?" Or, "I never knew who my father was, so I do not any of my ancestors from that side of the family?" We cannot help it if circumstances make it impossible for us to know or learn more about our ancestors in all or some of our family. But regardless of whether you know your ancestors or not, 100% of us do have ancestors. Even if we do not know them, you can be assured that your ancestors DO KNOW YOU. Though you know nothing of your ancestors, they are still worthy of being honored and gifted.

The act of knowing one's ancestors and all the time and sacrifice that can go into such an on-going process, is a great gift to one's ancestors. In addition, the knowledge you gain about them, makes your connection with them and your ability to honor them just that much stronger.

WAYS TO HONOR ONE'S ANCESTORS - REMEMBER THEM

Remembering an ancestors gives them the respect and recognition they deserve. It allows them to live on in this

world, in the form of memories, stories, and the lessons that their lives can teach us. Everyone wants to be remembered, and there is no reason to believe that our ancestors would be any different. There are many ways to remember one's ancestors, and the following are just some of them.

Talk with your children about your ancestors. Tell them the interesting, funny, and moving stories that you know. Show them photos and home movies if you have them. Share what you know about who they were, what they cared about, and what they were like to be around. Explain to your children why their ancestors are important and why it is good to honor them. In essence, make these people "real" for your children and give them the tools they need to connect with them and to feel like they have a relationship with who they were (are).

Use whatever creativity you have, and create art that memorializes your ancestors. If you carve stone, carve a rune stone in honor of a specific ancestor. If write songs, poetry, or prose, write something that memorializes a specific ancestors, and expresses who they really were and why they are important to you. If they had a specific craft that they were good at or enjoyed, then it may be beneficial to learn and practice that craft yourself. If they had a favorite food or dish that they liked to prepare or are known for within your family, then prepare that food or dish keeping that ancestor in mind. If you take the food or dish to a family dinner or wider gathering, tell those present about the food and the ancestor that inspired you to prepare it.

During meals at special occasions prepare an ancestor's plate and set an empty seat at the table. At the beginning of the meal, invite ancestors or a specific ancestor to dine with you. During the meal, tell stories of that ancestor and share why they were so important to you.

During Symbel, speaking good and true words of your ancestors or a specific ancestor is a wonderful way to remember them and to share with those you care about something special about that ancestor. When making such a toast, say who the ancestor was by name, and then share from

your heart something meaningful about them. These words and the honor you give them go into the well, and everyone participating benefits from them.

Photos are an amazing way to remember people, and having a large wall of your house dedicated to photos of your ancestors reminds you of them daily. If you have certain belongings or artifacts passed down to you that belonged to ancestors, care for these objects and keep them safe. Find ways to preserve and display these items in your home, to show their importance to you and to also serve as a reminder of your relationship with that ancestor.

In taking steps to remember and memorialize one's ancestors, it is the act of doing something that shows them your respect and admiration. It is one thing to say, "I honor my ancestors," but there is something so much more significant to actively do something that honors them.

WAYS TO HONOR ONE'S ANCESTORS - ALTARS AND GIFTS

One traditional way of honoring one's ancestors is to establish an area in your home specifically for honoring and gifting your ancestors. Many call this an Ancestors' altar, but the name or shape of it is not nearly as important as what you do with it. The altar could take the form on one set of bookshelves in your home dedicated to this purpose. Perhaps the altar is an old table or piece of furniture that belonged to an ancestors that was particularly special to you. Perhaps it is simply a wide window sill overlooking a beautiful view outside. Really, it depends on how much space you have and what you have at your disposal to create this holy space.

Once you have a spot picked out and prepared, place things in the area that remind you of your ancestors and represent who they were. This can include photographs, objects that belonged to them, and objects that they would have liked based on their interests in life. Establishing this holy space is a deed that you have performed, that in a concrete way shows your ancestors how important they are to you and that they are not forgotten. This holy space in your home also serves as

a constant reminder to you and your family, so that everyday as you pass the altar, thoughts and memories of your ancestors are brought to mind.

This altar also serves as a place for gifting your ancestors, and these gifts can take many forms. Placing an offering bowl on the altar with some of their favorite drink, food, candy, or other object will actively show them the honor you are showing them. It is a gift you are giving them in return for the many gifts they have given you. Gifting is a powerful way to build bonds and friendships among the living, and gifting has the similar affect of maintaining our connection and relationships with our honored dead.

WAYS TO HONOR ONE'S ANCESTORS - MAKE THEM PROUD

This particular method of honoring one's ancestors is not talked a lot about. Or at the very least, it is not talked about enough. One of the greatest gifts you can give your ancestors, is to live a life of which they are proud. What better way to honor your ancestors than to lead the sort of responsible, eventful, and accomplished life that would make them proud of who you are and what you accomplished with your time on earth? When making a choice in life, it is worth considering what would Grandmother Hattie think of what I am about to do? When deciding whether to watch 6 hours of television or actually accomplish something, it is worth considering what Great Uncle John would want you to do with your life.

We all wish the best for our children and our descendants, and will do nearly anything to give them the nudge they need to lead responsible and productive lives. When our children and grandchildren do grow up to be strong accomplished adults, we feel great pride in them. It should be no different for the dead. By living a life of which they would be proud, we show them that we have not squandered or taken lightly the gift of life and Orlog they have passed to us. Many of our ancestors struggled and sacrificed greatly to give their descendant's a better life than they had, and when we recognize this and lead our lives with this in mind, we show them in a concrete way that we acknowledge and appreciate them and what they did

for us.

WAYS TO HONOR ONE'S ANCESTORS - YOUR CHILDREN

Another way of honoring our ancestors that does not get spoken of enough, involves the children we bring into this world. What better gift to our ancestors than raising, to the best of our ability, healthy and well-adjusted children? We see in the faces of our living parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents the pride they feel in those children that are descended from them. It should be no different for the dead. What pride they must feel to see those that are descended from them, growing and prospering in the world.

Even a tree with deep roots but no limbs will eventually die. Continuing our families, and strengthening and improving the lives of those that come after us...brings great joy and honor to our ancestors.

IT IS A PROCESS....

It is unreasonable to expect that a new heathen would hit the ground running, and attempt to do everything talked about in this essay from day one. Just like forming and maintaining relationships with the living is a process and takes time, so does building and maintaining our relationships with our ancestors. So, if you read this essay and find that you are doing nothing that is listed here, or very little of it, then pick one or two things and work toward making them happen. When those are in place in your life and working well, choose a few more things to add and bring into your Heathen practice. Over time, you will establish a connection and a bond with your ancestors that will serve you, your family, and your kindred well.



So, You do Not Know Your Ancestors...

Sometimes people post on our board about their inability to connect with their ancestors because they do not know anything about them (for instance someone who is adopted and does not know anything about their birth family, or someone who does not know who their dad is...so they know nothing about their dad's side of the family.) Sometimes they worry about connecting, because a grandfather or grandmother died before they were born.

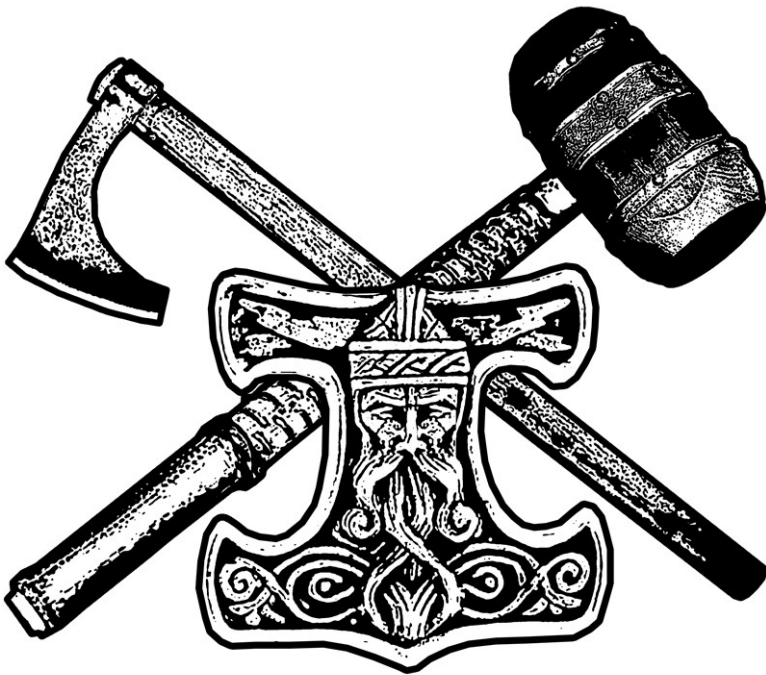
It is important to remember that while you may not know your ancestors...or anything about them...**that does not mean they do not know you.**

Think about it. After your death, if you are able, will not you want to check on your descendants and see how they are doing? If you are able to help them in some small way, will not you want to help them? The way we love our children and grandchildren, will not you check in on them and help them regardless of whether they know you or not?



Granted, a gift for a gift does have an impact. Honoring your ancestors and gifting them, does facilitate a better relationship and connection with them. But there is a blood connection...a soul connection that exists regardless of how little you may know of your ancestors.

So, do everything you can to learn about them. If you do everything you can, and learn nothing...so be it. Gift you ancestors. Raise a horn to them. Honor them. Set up a shrine to them in your house. Talk to them every day, and let them know how thankful you are for the hardships, sacrifices, and hard work they performed to ensure that you are here on this earth and have a life to live to its fullest. Live a life any ancestor would be proud of. If you do these things, you will see their influence in your life...





**LIGHTNING
ACROSS THE
PLAINS**

**Heathen
Gathering**



The Lightning Across the Plains Heathen Gathering

Heathenry is about community, gathering as a people, shaking a man or woman's hand, looking them in the eye, hearing their voice, telling stories, getting to know each other. It is letting your kids play together. Letting your spouses get to know each other. It is about laughing at dumb jokes, and telling stories from your life. It is about mingling Wyrd...and taking the measure of another person, and finding them of worth.

Every September, Heathens from across the Heartland and beyond gather for 3 days and 2 nights camping at [Gaea Retreat](#), a campground 40 minutes outside of Kansas City.



- ◆ Dinners Provided on Friday & Saturday
- ◆ Symbels Friday and Saturday Night
- ◆ A Blot/Faining on Saturday Evening
- ◆ Asatru & Craft Workshops all Weekend
- ◆ Viking Games Saturday Afternoon
- ◆ Children's Games and Activities
- ◆ A Heathen Auction on Sunday Morning

REGISTRATION FEES & METHODS

Registration fees include all camping fees and dinner on Friday and Saturday night. We keep these fees as reasonable as possible, and with a focus on keeping the gathering affordable for both individuals and families to attend. In 2010 **individual registration was \$40, while family registration was \$60.** Family registration includes a maximum of 2 adults and 3 children. You can learn more about the event and register for this year's Lightning Across the Plains at:

<http://www.lightningacrosstheplains.com>



ACTIVITIES AT LATP

Every Lightning Across the Plains is packed with activities in which you can participate and enjoy.

- ◆ Workshops on heathen topics, traditional crafts, historical information about our ancestors, modern kindred building, tribal structure and thew, etc.
- ◆ Religious activities, including several Fainings, two Symbels, visiting our outdoor Ve, and at every Lightning Across the Plains, a small Hof is established.
- ◆ There are children's game and activities throughout the event...with children activities scheduled at the same time as



all adult workshops and many of adult activities. Hikes, sword-fighting lessons, a large foam-sword battle, storytelling, a class on the runes, heathen craft projects, etc.



- ◆ A heathen auction, where everyone bids on objects donated by those attending Lightning Across the Plains. There are always amazing heathen objects in the auction, and the money collected goes to support the LAMP event and to the Heartland Hof and Hall fund.



- ◆ Viking games, including hammer-toss, kindred tug-of-war, and a little game we like to call, “Steal the Wench.” The hammer-toss involves throwing a large hammer made by Craig Winkler called “Skull-Splitter.” The kindred who wins the kindred tug-of-war gets to take home the hammer-trophy for that year, and then come back the next year and defend their title.

TENTING INCLUDED, BUT CABINS AVAILABLE

The registration fees for Lightning Across the Plains cover the tent camping fees at Gaea Retreat for both nights of the gathering. Cabins are also available for a small fee, and can be

reserved directly with the staff of Gaea Retreat. Details on how to do this can be found in the registration packet at the LATP website.



A REGIONAL THING IN THE HEARTLAND

We feel the growth of Heathenry is something that must happen...can only happen...at the grassroots level. Heathens find each other in their local area. Kindreds form, and grow. Regionally, kindreds begin to gather together and face to face connections and relationships form. Over time, the trust between tribes and tribal leaders becomes such, that the formal structure of a Regional Thing is put into place. Here in the Heartland, we have reached that point.

Strong kindreds from across the Heartland gather at Lightning Across the Plains to hold our annual Regional Thing. Kindred Chieftains, leaders, and representatives meet together to discuss regional issues and goals. Those attending Lightning Across the Plains can bring matters before the Thing for consideration and advice. This is a process that is developing, and will continue to develop for some time.



ATTENDING LIGHTNING ACROSS THE PLAINS

If you are a long-time Heathen, a new Heathen, or someone curious about Heathenry...you are welcome at Lightning Across the Plains. If you are part of a strong Heathen tribe, or a small hearth, or you are a solitary Heathen wanting more...you are welcome at Lightning Across the Plains. If you have been to dozens of gatherings, or never been to even one...you are welcome at Lightning Across the Plains. While this is a Heathen gathering focused on the those living here in the Heartland, all Heathens are welcome. Come and gather with your Folk. Honor our Gods, our Ancestors, and the Vaettir of the land with other tribes and other Heathens of our region. You can learn more about the event and register for this year's Lightning Across the Plains at:

<http://www.lightningacrosstheplains.com>



Temple of our Heathen Gods Website

Please visit the Temple of Our Heathen Gods resource website for Heathens. It features an extensive on-line library of books related to Heathenry, an Asatru artwork archive, Heathen related articles, Mark Stinson's blog, and a message board active with interesting discussions. heathengods.com



Mark Ludwig Stinson

Mark Stinson lives with his wife and three kids in Kansas City, Missouri. Mark earned Bachelor of Arts Degrees in History, Political Science, and Philosophy from Rockhurst, a Jesuit University in Kansas City. He has worked as a police officer since 1993 and has been a Sergeant for the Kansas City Missouri Police Department since 2001.



At Thingvellir

Mark discovered Heathenry in June of 2006. A year later, in June of 2007 Mark committed himself to Heathenry and to practicing the Asatru religion. Seeking to honor the Heathen Gods in the old ways, Mark began looking for an existing Kindred in the Kansas City Area. When he discovered that there were no Kindreds in his area, he dedicated himself to finding like-minded Heathens in order to form a new Kindred.

Mark enjoys researching the history of the Asatru religion, and traditional Heathenry. Mark honors all of the Northern Gods, but has a special affinity for Asa-Thor, because Thor protects us from the monsters of this world, sets an example for how we should confront evil, and was a God for the "working class" and the thralls. But Mark has great respect for Odin...and his sacrifices and wisdom as well as Tyr's courage.

Mark serves as the Chieftain of Jotun's Bane Kindred. The title

of "Chieftain" denotes the leader of a tribe. Jotun's Bane is an egalitarian organization, and important decisions are based on a consensus of its members. But the title of Chieftain reflects Mark's role as an organizer, consensus-builder, and leader, and the fact that his Luck has had a positive impact on the success of the Kindred.



Mark's middle name is Ludwig, a family name that descended to him from his Great Grandfather, a furniture-maker who immigrated to the United States from Austria. Mark's Father was Glen F. Stinson, a World War II submarine veteran. While Glen Stinson was not Heathen, he taught Mark values and a way of approaching the world that made Mark's transition to Heathenry much simpler than it could have been otherwise.

Mark is very focused on his Family and building a solid Heathen Kindred that will stand through time and adversity.

Mark serves as a Folkbuilder within the Heartland of the United States, and dedicates a great deal of time and focus to promoting the growth of local Heathen communities in the Midwest.



To contact Mark, email him at mark@heathengods.com.



Other Books for Heathen Children

When giving your child a book on heathenry to read, it is always better to read it yourself first. This will help you decide whether the book is really the sort of book you want your child to read. And it will also make it easier for you to discuss the details of the book with your child.

It is also a good idea to do a little research on the author of the book prior to buying it for your child. It could be the author is not someone you would want to support by buying their book, and the author's views might not be something you want to share with your child.

Here are some children's books worth checking out...

Children of Odin by Padraic Colum and Illustrated by Willy Pogany - This is a collection of stories or the retelling of stories from our Lore. The stories are somewhat changed or simplified from what you might find in our Lore, but it is an entertaining book, and the illustrations are beautiful. This is available in the Temple Library at heathengods.com.

D'Aulaires' Book of Norse Myths (Hardcover) by Ingri D'Aulaire - This is another collection of retold stories from our Lore. But nearly every page is illustrated with full color paintings filled with imagination and power. My kids really enjoyed this one. This is for kids 4-8, though adults will enjoy it also. I usually skip the last page of this book when reading to my kids, because the last page suffers from Christian-bias.

D'Aulaires' Book of Trolls (Hardcover) by Ingri d'Aulaire - The format of this book is very similar to D'Aulaires' Book of Norse Myths, except it has all sorts of fun folklore stories about Trolls and such. For kids 4-8.

The Adventures of Thor the Thunder God (Hardcover) by Lise

Lunge-Larsen - This book is also beautifully illustrated with full-color paintings. This is listed for ages 9-12.

Odd and the Frost Giants (Hardcover) by Neil Gaiman - A wonderful story of a boy named Odd traveling with Odin, Loki, and Thor and helping to foil a dastardly plot by a giant to take and keep Asgard.

Kinder Edda (Paperback) by Noil Skeggold - A collection of stories based upon the Poetic and Prose Edda of Norse Mythology, with the addition of unique stories. This is also illustrated and is for ages 9-12.

Kindertales: Stories Old and New for the Children of the Folk (Paperback) by Freydis Heimdallson.

Iduna and the Magic Apples by Gal Laszlo - You'll likely have to buy a used copy of this book.

Gods and Goddesses of the Ancient Norse (Hardcover) by Leonard Everett Fisher - There are portraits of 14 of our Gods and Goddesses in this book, with descriptions of who they are and what they do.

Dover Publications makes a coloring book about the Norse Gods and Goddesses. They also give a very brief explanation, but it's obviously "G" rated. Dover publications also has other coloring books, like "Story of the Vikings," "Beowulf," and "Viking Gods and Heroes."

And there are books at this link worth checking out:
<http://www.vikinganswerlady.com/kidbooks.shtml>

There are also quite a few free storybooks appropriate for children that are available as free PDF's on our on-line Temple Library at heathengods.com.





