

3 Choices You Can Make to Bring Peace to Your Christmas Conversations

Peace on earth. Wouldn't that be lovely this Christmas? A few moments scanning Facebook or a moment watching the evening news shatters that hope. We're polarized and divided. Strong opinions seem to be the norm. Very little is nuanced. It feels as though every issue has been relegated to black or white. Yet Jesus came with the promise of guiding our feet into the path of peace.

How do you walk the path of peace this Christmas as you gather with family and friends who may hold very different views from you? For some, being "together" during the holidays is a challenge. Conversations become combative, and views held dear are challenged. If you hold your view in silence, does it mean you're compromising? How do we show the heart of Christ while entertaining views different from our own? I believe the answer lies in how we listen.

As I've been thinking about this, I realize that Jesus did indeed show us the path to peace—He was a phenomenal listener. He knew when to stay silent, when to ask a question and when to challenge. If we're going to enjoy the promise of peace this Christmas in our conversations, I think there are a few choices we need to make.

3 Choices for Peaceful Conversations This Christmas

Choice No. 1: Find common ground. While there may be differences between you and extended family members or friends, look intentionally for common ground. It's far easier to build trust or to repair broken trust when you're standing on common ground. If you focus on the differences, you'll find them and become agitated. Instead, focus on what you have in

common and go from there.

Choice No. 2: Let go of the need to be the fact police. There is perhaps nothing more annoying than the person who feels the need to correct stories of others in the room. Check your own facts, but ignore the wrong facts of others. If a tense conversation arises and someone misquotes a fact, you can politely ask about their source so you can do more research yourself. But don't correct others. Feeling scolded is never a good feeling, so instead of scolding or correcting, just let it go. Focus on understanding why the issue is so important to the other person.

Choice No. 3: Ask a question. One of the best people skills you can develop for peaceful conversations is the ability to ask great questions. Jesus did this all the time. With the woman at the well, He asked, "Will you give me a drink of water?" To the lame man, He asked, "Do you want to get well?" To the blind beggars by the road, He asked, "What do you want me to do for you?" Mimic Jesus. He is the Prince of Peace and came to lead us down pathways of peace. It's hard for others to become offended if you simply ask a question. Rather than correcting or shouting your own opinion, ask how the other person formed their opinion. Ask where they researched their view. Ask how their belief system is working for them.

Remember, you're not responsible for changing their view. You're responsible for loving them and listening well.

Lord Jesus, You are the Prince of Peace who came to lead me down pathways of peace. Help me when I gather with family and friends this holiday season to focus on understanding in my listening. Remind me when my stomach feels uptight that You have not called me to change another's point of view. You've called me to love others and to listen to them. {eoa}

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