

Dousing the Fire of Conflict When Your Family Gathers

Ten people. Two bathrooms. One fridge. Five nights. That's a recipe for something.

Fourth of July forever and always means a trip to my mom's in Wyoming. This year, we threw my daughter and her husband in the back seat for the 12-hour drive that turned into 14 hours because of two unfortunate meal stops in cowpoke towns.

My brother and his wife always come, with their three young girls, and we crowbar ourselves into mom's house.

This year, the entire town blew up fireworks on their driveways as usual on the 4th, but one of the pyromaniacs on our driveway lit a spectacular display that proceeded to tip over facing the garage.

Now I know my brother has some fantastic dance moves.

Some young guys riding by on bicycles stopped just as this happened and said, in between colorful expletives, that there was a fire in the garage. That got my brother moving even faster. Great save, bro'!

Our family vacations together are a lot like that night.

With 10 people in the house, that means 10 personalities, 10 hearts wanting their own way and 10 mouths speaking their mind, some more than others, and I'll kindly ask you not to look at me like that. All of this is like a well-packed canister of pyrotechnics aimed straight toward the belly of the home.

Sometimes one word or act can spark a fire that can quickly do a lot of damage in a family.

But you know what we have in my mom's house? Peace.

There is peace in our family because we have Jesus in our hearts, and He moves fast like my brother.

So yes, there are sparks. Someone throws somebody's hamburger away because she thinks he's done with it. Good grief, brother, how many times do I have to say I'm sorry about that! Somebody beats you to the shower. Some sister touches some other sister.

Lots of sparks shooting every which way.

Dangerous beginnings of flames licking their way through relationships.

But we're a group of people all trying to obey Jesus, and this individual work, to act and speak the way he wants us to, is what infuses peace into our family.

So apologizing happens. Faults get overlooked. Except for the hamburger incident, apparently. Grace extinguishes hot spots before too much damage is done, which is why we all still love getting together and why we feel sad when the time is over. The grace of Jesus is the reason hugs are long before our car pulls away for the drive home.

Paul says: "Let the peace of God, to which also you are called in one body, rule in your hearts. And be thankful" (Col. 3:15a).

Think of what this mandate means for family gatherings: the peace of Christ has to rule in the hearts of individuals before it will ever show itself in the greater family.

There's still lots of summer left. Trips and company. Family get-togethers. What is your heart bringing to the mix? And what if you're the only follower of Jesus in your family? What a great contribution of peace you can bring, better than a bowl of cold watermelon!

While we're talking about the home, I'm happy to announce I'll be one of the speakers in an online homemaking conference coming up this fall, so I get to invite you to put your name in the hat, for this valuable giveaway of homemaking resources that's happening through tomorrow night: [Click here](#) for the giveaway. {eo}

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