



December 2018

Dear Trinity & Peace Family,

Merry Christmas to you and your family! I pray this Advent and Christmas season are days of deep connection; personally in your own relationship with Jesus, but also with family and friends. Through the years many people have asked me about how to connect with family during the holidays.

Here are a few practical tips for this Christmas:

- 1) Take time to read the Christmas Story together. You can read a modern day version or a children's version, but recounting the story connects you to one another and God's purpose for Christmas. You can read the story from Matthew 1:18-25, 2:1-2 or Luke 1:26-38, 2:1-20.
- 2) You can get creative and act it out. The kids can act out the parts of the shepherds, Mary and Joseph and the baby Jesus.
- 3) Take just a moment to thank God for all He has done this past year. Just going around the room and saying one thing you are thankful for is always a boost of encouragement. If and when you do a gift exchange, before someone can open a gift have them answer a question like, "What are you thankful for?" or "Name a thing Jesus has done in your life this year?" That makes the gift exchange have a little more life in it and connection to each other while we open gifts.
- 4) Sing Christmas carols. The great thing about the internet is that you can get all the words to your favorite songs and print them and pass them around. Some of my favorites are Come All Ye Faithful, Hark the Herald Angels Sing, and Oh come, oh come Emmanuel. Make sure you have copies of the lyrics. It gets a little funny when everybody isn't able to sing together.
- 5) Take a moment to pray for someone who you know is lonely or doesn't have family, and if you do have the freedom, pray for one another as well. Those times of bringing Jesus in on Christmas Day always creates space for grace.
- 6) Here are some additional conversation starters – both serious and fun for young and old:
 - If you had to give all of your possessions away for Christmas, which would be the hardest and why?
 - What has been a new relational highlight in 2018? Someone you are significantly closer to than you were a year ago.
 - What was one favorite memory in 2018?

- What is one characteristic of another family member you would like to grow in next year? (This could turn into an encouragement time.)
- What were your highlights and lowlights of 2018? How did God use them to teach you more about Him and what did you learn about yourself?
- With those of you that have little one's going on road trips to relatives you could play a game called "What to do when." What is the first thing we do when we get to their house (meaning- how do we greet them)? What do you do when you are offered something to eat that you do not care for?
- Come up with an honor plan to deliberately honor the elders in your family.

I hope this is a wonderful Christmas for you and your family! As the followers of Jesus, when we honor and celebrate Him in the midst of our family life, we will find the true richness that God so desires in and through our lives.

In His strength and love,

Pastor Wiley Gladney