



A Christmas Talk for Families

Parents read this opening paragraph aloud to your family:

"Glory to God in the highest, **And on earth peace**, goodwill toward men!" - Luke 2:14

Over 2,000 years ago an angel disrupted the calm sky by announcing to shepherds that peace, God's perfect peace, had come. But the evolved holiday can sometimes be anything but peaceful change of schedule, unhealthy diet, unrealistic expectations. Can you relate? It's not uncommon for a family member to blow up or melt down or both almost simultaneously! Then what? Do you continue moving through the holidays carrying the emotional baggage of the disruption or do you pause for a moment, recollect, and move on in forgiveness? Talk to your family about that.

What you need

Empty box with wrapping paper, tape, ribbon, or simplify with a gift bag or basket. You will also need gift tags or slips of paper, a Bible and a writing utensil.

What you do

If you choose, wrap an empty gift box as a family. You may want to take turns or assign a specific wrapping item to each member. You could make it challenging by only using one hand and working together as a team. Your family could wrap the box blindfolded. You decide - you know what works best for your family. You may decide to use a gift bag or basket in place of a wrapped gift.

What you say

The series at church is "Christmas is ForGIVING." We give and receive gifts at Christmas but let's talk about one gift that we can choose to give all year – the gift of forgiveness. Forgiveness is a conscious decision to let go of resentful feelings toward a person who had done something wrong to you whether or not they are sorry.

Do you remember the last time someone made you angry or hurt your feelings? When/who?

How do you feel about that person now?

Have you forgiven them? Was it easy or hard to forgive that person?

Here's what we need to know about forgiveness:

1. Jesus set the example for us to follow. "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." Ephesians 4:32 (give your salvation story here, if you want; let others share their stories.)
2. Unforgiveness makes you unhappy. It's an emotion that makes you feel uneasy instead of peaceful inside.
3. Remember all of us have tough days or have trouble keeping our self-control. Most people feel badly when they mess up or melt down. Maybe you have the toughest time forgiving yourself. It is important when you do mess up that you give yourself the same grace you would give to others.
4. Choosing to give the gift of forgiveness is something you can do for you and for the person who hurt you and for others who were involved. Forgiveness is not conceding that what was done was okay, but rather that it is released and forgiven.
5. If you have trouble forgiving a person, tell someone about it. It helps to talk it out. Pray and God will help you too. It might take time, but you can make the choice to forgive. Where appropriate, you may need to take a step to talk with the person to whom you are offering forgiveness.

What to do with the gift box:

Say: We're going to put this gift box or container under the tree. This item represents the gift of forgiveness. Right now, it's empty to represent it's your choice whether or not to fill it with forgiveness.

We have gift tags or slips of paper here. When someone makes you angry or hurts you or your stuff, if you choose to forgive them, write their name on a gift tag or paper and put it in the box/bag/basket. After a while we will take a look at the tags and see how many people we chose to give the gift of forgiveness during the holiday season.

Pray

Pray your own prayer or someone can read this –

Dear God,

Thank you for giving us the gift of Jesus at Christmas and because of your gift we can be forgiven from our sins.

Help us to be more like you and choose to forgive when people hurt us.

Amen

Recognizing how one has been hurt is part of learning to respect and love one's self.

Recognizing how you hurt the other person and apologizing is part of learning to respect and love your neighbor.