

ENGAGING SPIRITUAL CONVERSATIONS

Merry Christmas or Happy Holidays?

Christians may be hesitant to wish people, “Merry Christmas.” At least publicly. Others will proudly and defiantly declare (with raised voice and exaggerated enunciation), “Merry CHRISTmas!”

Both responses are unfortunate reactions to the question of how a Christian should greet others, particularly people of a different religion or culture. In our attempt to maintain our freedom of speech and to protect our rights, we may move away from the Bible’s directive regarding witnessing. Peter, who had witnessed wrongly, wrote correctly, “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect . . .” Gentleness and respect are virtues well worth grooming.

Should we continue to greet people with, “Merry Christmas?” Sure. When a store clerk replies, “Happy holidays” graciously receive that blessing. Should someone respond, “Happy Hanukkah,” accept that blessing too, for Hanukkah celebrates the rededication of the temple to God.

How we greet each other in society is part of our witness.