



## **BE BRAVE:** *How to Have Hard Conversations around Our Holiday Tables*

1. **Embrace belovedness.** Every one of us is a beloved image bearer of God. And if that's true, then so are your friends, your enemies, and, yes, even your family members. As we head toward our holiday tables, choose to see the image of the divine in those with whom we disagree.
2. **Prepare for potentially stressful conversations by asking yourself these questions:**
  - a. *What are my goals?* Remember that you don't need to win, be right or change the other person's opinion.
  - b. *What's at stake? What am I afraid of?* Remember that you don't need approval or affirmation. It's a legitimate desire, but it's more important that you be authentic and not codependent. Your identity does not depend on how the conversation goes.
  - c. *What are my expectations?* For instance, do not expect that if people are experiencing you in a different way than in the past (different ideas, you're speaking up instead of being quiet or always agreeing, e.g.), that they will easily accept this. It is normal for families to resist change and want things to be the way they've always been, so expect resistance.
3. **In the midst of the conversation remember to breathe.** It's ok to take space from a person or a conversation if you feel yourself starting to escalate.
4. **Start with relationship.** Ask questions to help you understand the other person's perspective, and then be willing to graciously assert that you have a different perspective. Think of some questions that you can ask to stay curious instead of getting defensive.
5. **Preemptively invite stories of hope.** Send an email to those who will be joining you at the holiday table and invite them to bring an object that represents a story of hope, healing or restoration that they experienced over the past year. During the meal, encourage each person to show their object and share their story. As you go around, pay attention to what is being restored in you and in those around your table. Conclude by asking your tablemates to share what the experience was like.