

From the Rector's Desk Continued

(What a Rabbi Taught Me About Keeping Christ In Christmas)

I don't see any need to be an anti-Santa zealot. But let's not let this once-a-year opportunity pass us by. And don't water it down.

Give them what the came for.

Give them Jesus.

2. Believe what you believe, but don't be a sellout about it

"What do you do when someone wishes you Merry Christmas?" asked my Methodist colleague.

"I wish them a Merry Christmas back," responded the rabbi. "We're allowed to say the words, you know," he smiled. "What would you say if someone wished you 'Happy Hanukkah'?"

"I say Happy Hanukkah back," the Methodist answered.

"There you go."

3. Why blend in when we can be set apart?

"So, being around the Christmas images doesn't make you uncomfortable?" I wondered out loud.

"No," he replied. "The vast majority of our society claims to be Christian. If you lived in Israel, you'd expect Jewish celebrations to be predominant, right?"

"Which brings me back to my original question," my Methodist friend responded. "What about your kids? Don't they feel left out when almost all the other kids are celebrating Christmas?"

[Separation from the culture isn't something to be embarrassed about. It's who we are.](#)

"No," responded the rabbi. "What some people call *left out*, we call *set apart*. Being different is central to what it means to be Jewish. It always has been. So that's what we teach our kids. That kind of separation from the culture isn't something to be embarrassed about. It's who we are."

After that, the conversation ended with thanks and farewells – and a few *Merry Christmases* and *Happy Hanukkahs*, of course.

I went home pondering these things in my heart.

And I've never looked at Christmas the same way since.

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