

Covenant of Conduct

Both sharing and listening to stories can be tricky. At no point during the conference will anyone be forced to share. We will be asking everyone to practice listening. In hopes of creating a safe environment, we've put together a handful of guidelines. Participants of the conference are asked to enter into a covenant, a mutual agreement, with one another that will guide how we conduct ourselves.

1. Keep your sharing focused on your own thoughts and feelings.

It can be tempting to focus on the desires we have for others. Especially the others we care about. And the truth is that we are deeply affected by our relationships with family, friends and co-workers. When sharing your story, be cautious to focus on your own thoughts, feelings, and actions. Not your spouse's, someone you're dating, or your family members' story, but your own. Allow God to meet you in your story. He will be faithful to meet others in theirs as well.

2. Be aware of cross-talk. Cross-talk is when two people engage in conversation excluding all others. When someone else is speaking, please accept that each person is free to express his or her feelings without interruptions.

As Christ followers, we're asked to love others as we love ourselves. We see Christ honor and respect others throughout scripture in many ways. One is by giving others His attention. Let's follow His model by avoiding cross-talk.

Cross-talk is making distracting comments or questions (facial expressions and sighs count as well) while someone is sharing. This includes speaking to someone else while someone is sharing, or responding to what someone has shared during his or her time of sharing.

3. We are here to support one another, not "fix" one another.

In this principle, we acknowledge that the Holy Spirit is our Divine Healer. We trust and submit one another humbly before God who is faithful to convict and teach.

We do not give advice, scripture or solve someone's problem in our time of sharing or offer book referrals or counselor referrals. These tools and resources are appropriate to share with others when they ask for it. Instead, we can offer our experiences as a way of providing different perspectives.

4. Anonymity and confidentiality are basic requirements for safe sharing. What is shared with you should remain confidential. The only exception is when someone threatens to injure themselves or others.

We are not to share information with our spouses/family/co-workers. This is called gossip and called out numerous times in scripture as being the most detrimental of sins (if we feel like prioritizing levels of darkness).

If anyone threatens to hurt themselves or others, please connect with a Conference Leadership Team Member who will have tools and resources to support the safety of all.

5. Offensive language is highly discouraged.

We ask that you please watch your language. The main issue here is that the Lord's name is not used inappropriately. In addition discriminatory, racial, and inappropriate comments will not be tolerated as they do not honor God's children.

We also avoid graphic descriptions. If anyone feels uncomfortable with how explicitly someone is sharing regarding behaviors, then you may indicate so by simply raising your hand. The person sharing will then respect your boundaries by being less specific in the descriptions. This will avoid potential triggers that could cause a person to act out.

6. This is not a time of debate.

The last two years have been especially painful. Top topics like coronavirus, sexual orientation, racism, politics, religion and more pervade our social media feeds and continue to divide God's Church. Many of us are deeply affected by these issues and need to share about them. In sharing, there is freedom because we're living out God's scripture to do life together.

Sharing a perspective is not the same as debating it. And in listening, you are not agreeing to someone else's perspective. So, let's be very clear, the debate stops here. The conference is not to take a stand, change someone else's stand, or to force a movement outside of the conference's mission statement.

The Conference will not focus on position on issues. We will be focusing on our position before God. Here is where Our Story begins. At the foot of the cross, humbly before our Savior. As we kneel before the throne of God, we submit our story, our place in life, our hardship, our confusion, our questions, our hurts, our loss, our anxieties, our addictions, our families to Him. As as we do that together, as we allow God to be God, our hearts will experience a freedom.