

# Gift Giving

Message 01 of the series "Christmas Unplugged."

## I. Giving gifts is an important part of Christmas.

### A. God gave us his Son.

"For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." Isaiah 9:6 (NLT)

"Thank God for his Son--a gift too wonderful for words!" 2 Corinthians 9:15 (NLT)

**Note:** God's motive for giving was love.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16 (NLT)

### B. The Wise Men brought gifts to baby Jesus.

Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the reign of King Herod. About that time some wise men from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star as it rose, and we have come to worship him."... "In Bethlehem in Judea," they said, "for this is what the prophet wrote: 'And you, O Bethlehem in the land of Judah, are not least among the ruling cities of Judah, for a ruler will come from you who will be the shepherd for my people Israel.'"...After this interview the wise men went their way. And the star they had seen in the east guided them to Bethlehem. It went ahead of them and stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were filled with joy! They entered the house and saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasure chests and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Matthew 2:1-2, 5-6, 9-11 (NLT)

**Note:** The Wise men gave their gifts with the motive of worship.

## II. Giving gifts can be an important part of our Christmas, too, if our motives are right.

### A. We need to unplug from pressure to give.

- Pressure to "keep up with the Jones".
- Pressure to "top last year".
- Pressure to give gifts to everyone on our contact lists.
- Pressure to give gifts to others simply because they gave gifts to us.

"...don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. "For God loves a person who gives cheerfully."  
2 Corinthians 9:7 (NLT)

### B. We need to unplug from spending too much.

- Credit can be a trap.  
"Just as the rich rule the poor, so the borrower is servant to the lender." Proverbs 22:7 (NLT)
- Wise people plan ahead.  
"Good planning and hard work lead to prosperity, but hasty shortcuts lead to poverty."  
Proverbs 21:5 (NLT)

"Take a lesson from the ants, you lazybones. Learn from their ways and become wise! Though they have no prince or governor or ruler to make them work, they labor hard all summer, gathering food for the winter." Proverbs 6:6-8 (NLT)

- Wise people set limits.  
"In the house of the wise are stores of choice food and oil, but a foolish man devours all he has." Proverbs 21:20 (NIV)
- Wise people get creative rather than expensive.

### C. We need to unplug from the attitude of "What's in it for me?"

“...the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’” Acts 20:35 (NIV)

“Don’t be selfish; don’t try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don’t look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.” Philippians 2:3-5 (NLT)

“When you put on a luncheon or a banquet,” he said, “don’t invite your friends, brothers, relatives, and rich neighbors. For they will invite you back, and that will be your only reward. Instead, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. Then at the resurrection of the righteous, God will reward you for inviting those who could not repay you.” Luke 14:12-14 (NLT)

D. Three simple questions for checking our motives when giving gifts at Christmas.

- Is this something that will meet a need? Think: Gold
- Is this something that will bring joy? Think: Frankincense
- Is this something that could help fulfill a purpose or calling? Think Myrrh

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### Connect Group Discussion Questions:

1. What was the best Christmas gift you ever received? What was the best gift you ever gave someone else? What made these gifts so special?
2. Read Matthew 2:1-13. Why did the Wise Men travel to Bethlehem? How did they know where to go? Why was King Herod concerned when they arrived in Jerusalem? Why did the Wise Men give Jesus gifts? What would you have brought Him? What could you offer Jesus this Christmas?
3. In his message this past week John used the gifts of the Wise Men to suggest three simple questions for checking our motives when giving gifts at Christmas. Discuss them.
  - Is this something that will meet a need? (Gold)
  - Is this something that will bring joy? (Frankincense)
  - Is this something that could help fulfill a purpose or calling? (Myrrh)

What guidelines do you use in gift giving?

4. Read Isaiah 9:6-7, John 3:16-17, and 2 Corinthians 9:15. While Christmas shopping you notice the following slogans on the sweatshirts of several people: "Jesus is the reason for the season" and "Wise men still seek Him!" What does Christmas mean to you? Why do you celebrate Christmas? Read Matthew 10:8. Why do people give gifts at Christmas anyway? Should this impact our Christmas shopping/gift giving? If so, how?
5. Discuss the following pressures that many of us face when giving gifts at Christmas.
  - Pressure to "keep up with the Jones".
  - Pressure to "top last year".
  - Pressure to give gifts to everyone on our contact lists.
  - Pressure to give others gifts simply because they gave gifts to us.

How do you feel pressured at Christmas? How do you deal with it? Now read 2 Corinthians 9:7. What was Paul's advice regarding giving? Does his advice work at Christmas time? Why? Why not?

6. Read the following proverbs and discuss their implications regarding Christmas spending and gift giving. Proverbs 6:6-8, 21:5, 20 & 22:7. How well do we as Americans do in following this wise advice? What drives our spending at Christmas? What should?
7. Read Luke 14:12-14. While grabbing a cup of coffee at Starbucks you notice a friend who is reading a book in the corner. This surprises you because in years past she is always moving at high speed around Christmas time shopping like crazy. You walk over to her and comment that you are amazed to see her so relaxed with only 21 shopping days left until Christmas. Her response surprises you even more. "We're doing Christmas differently this year." she says. "As a family we decided not to give gifts to each other this year at all. Instead, we are going to use the money we would have spent on each other to go on a mission trip to Haiti with our church in February." How do you respond? Is this a good idea? Why? Why not?