

“Seasoning the Season”

Seasoning Our Giving

12/5/21

Discussion Guide

Read the three passages that form the basis of Christian giving. There are other characteristics of Christian giving within these passages that were not covered in the sermon. See if you can discover them.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, John 3:16 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem² and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him...” After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Matthew 2:1-2, 9-11

Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 2 Corinthians 9:6-7

You can't cover all of these questions. Pick the ones that will create lots of interesting conversation and discuss those first. This can be a touchy subject. Most people haven't reflected on their gift-giving habits to see if they are aligned with scripture. To make the shift from how we currently give gifts to how the original followers of Jesus did may seem radical and unrealistic to some. Enjoy your small group time! Perhaps end by singing a few Christmas carols and enjoying a holiday dessert!

1. Of all the Christmas traditions, this one has been corrupted over the years. How we give and the motivation for our giving is far different from how and why the original characters in the Christmas story gave.

Of the four characteristics covered in the sermon (Motivated by love, Given to God, Meets real needs, and Done joyfully) which one spoke to you the most? What changes do you need to make in your gift giving so that it has more of the flavor of Christ in it than the flavor of our culture?

2. Do you think shopping and the giving of gifts has gotten out of hand over the years? If so, what can we do to bring it into alignment with scripture?
3. Share your gift-giving tradition growing up. Did you go out on Black Friday? What was shopping like? How many gifts did you give and to whom? How many gifts did you receive and from whom? How important were gifts? What did you do with your family? Did you do things differently or did you do pretty much the same thing as your parents?
4. Share ways to make shopping less stressful and exhausting and more joyous. Did you have any rules regarding shopping or the number of gifts so you were not financially overwhelmed in December (And January when the credit card bill came due)?

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5. Of the 10 hidden reasons for giving, which ones have you fallen prey to? (See below) How hard would it be to go against these rules established by our culture? They are pretty well ingrained in our gift-giving tradition. What would be the response by your co-workers or members of your family if you gave only non-obligatory gifts?
6. What was the most memorable gift you have ever received at Christmas? Was it a gift with a bow (Meaning, a material gift) or a gift without a bow (Didn't cost money) or both? Why was it so memorable?
7. Have you ever wondered why we give gifts to ourselves, friends, kids, and family when Christmas is not our birthday, it's Jesus'? How do you give back to God in honor of Jesus' birth?
8. Do you think most people have a good balance between the amount they give to themselves or their family and the amount they give to the church and/or charities at Christmas?
9. What charities are dear to you heart and why? Do you do anything special at Christmas as a form of outreach as a way of celebrating Jesus' birth, i.e. Participate in Operation Christmas Child, ring the bell for Salvation army, Angel Tree, serve meals at the Gospel Mission, etc?
10. What “gifts without bows” have you received that blessed you? Did God speak to you about a gift without bows he wants you to give to someone this Christmas?
11. Christian giving meets needs. What would it look like if we started to give more to those who need it and less to those who don't? Is this a radical idea? How would it go over in your family?
12. Be honest. How hard is it to pass a Salvation Army kettle and not put something into it? Do you tend to give because you feel compelled to out of guilt or out of joy? How can we shift our attitude towards giving so we do it out of love and joy and not out of reluctance and compulsion?
13. Final thoughts? Questions you have that we did not cover?

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Ten Hidden Rules for Gift-giving

1. Give to everyone you expect to get a gift from.
2. If someone gives you a gift unexpectedly, reciprocate that year. (Some people have prewrapped generic gifts for such an occasion.)
3. If you add a person to your gift list, give that person a gift every year thereafter.
4. The amount of money you spend on a person's gift reflects how much you care for the recipient.
5. Gifts exchanged between adults should be roughly equal in value.
6. The presents you give someone should be fairly consistent in value over the years.
7. If you give a gift to a person in one category, like a co-worker or neighbor, you need to give a gift to everyone in that category and these gifts should be similar in value.
8. Women should give gifts to their close women friends.
9. Men should NOT give gifts to their close male friends – unless those gifts are alcoholic beverages.
10. When the above rules cause you any difficulties, remedy the situation by buying more gifts.