

The Revealing Gift
Lesson 02 in the series, "The Gift"

I. Jesus was the original Christmas gift.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16 (NIV)

II. God's gift of his son revealed what was in the hearts of people.

"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.' King Herod was deeply disturbed when he heard this, as was everyone in Jerusalem." Matthew 2:1-3 (NLT)

a. The leading priests and teachers of the religious law were apathetic about Jesus' birth.

"He called a meeting of the leading priests and teachers of religious law and asked, 'Where is the Messiah supposed to be born?' '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.'" Matthew 2:4-6 (NLT) (see Micah 5:2)

"He was in the world, the world was there through him, and yet the world didn't even notice. He came to his own people, but they didn't want him." John 1:10-11 (MSG)

Life Application: We must not be apathetic about Jesus.

"A man prepared a great feast and sent out many invitations. When the banquet was ready, he sent his servant to tell the guests, 'Come, the banquet is ready.' But they all began making excuses. One said, 'I have just bought a field and must inspect it. Please excuse me.' Another said, 'I have just bought five pairs of oxen, and I want to try them out. Please excuse me.' Another said, 'I now have a wife, so I can't come.' "The servant returned and told his master what they had said. His master was furious and said, 'Go quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and invite the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame... urge anyone you find to come, so that the house will be full. For none of those I first invited will get even the smallest taste of my banquet.'" Luke 14:16-24 (NLT)

b. The wise men sought out Jesus, brought him valuable gifts and worshiped him for who he was.

Then Herod called for a private meeting with the wise men, and he learned from them the time when the star first appeared. Then he told them, "Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for the child. And when you find him, come back and tell me so that I can go and worship him, too!" 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. When it was time to leave, they returned to their own country by another route, for God had warned them in a dream not to return to Herod. Matthew 2:7-12 (NLT)

Life Application: We must seek Jesus, worship him for who he is and be willing to give him what is valuable to us.

"...you must worship Christ as Lord of your life." 1 Peter 3:15 (NLT)

"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)

c. King Herod was hostile toward baby Jesus because he viewed Jesus as a threat to his throne.

"After the wise men were gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. 'Get up! Flee to Egypt with the child and his mother,' the angel said. 'Stay there until I tell you to return, because Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.' That night Joseph left for Egypt with the child and Mary, his mother, and they stayed there until Herod's death. This fulfilled what the Lord had spoken through the prophet: 'I called my Son out of Egypt.' Herod was furious when he realized that the wise men had outwitted him. He sent soldiers to kill all the boys in and around Bethlehem who were two years old and under, based on the wise men's report of the star's first appearance. Herod's brutal action fulfilled what God had spoken through the prophet Jeremiah: 'A cry was heard in Ramah— weeping and great mourning. Rachel weeps for her children, refusing to be comforted, for they are dead.'"

Matthew 2:13-18 (NLT)

Life Application: We must run to Jesus NOT view him as a threat to the “throne” of our lives.

“God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him. There is no judgment against anyone who believes in him. But anyone who does not believe in him has already been judged for not believing in God’s one and only Son. And the judgment is based on this fact: God’s light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil. All who do evil hate the light and refuse to go near it for fear their sins will be exposed. But those who do what is right come to the light so others can see that they are doing what God wants.”

John 3:17-21 (NLT)

“Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.” Matthew 11:28-30 (NLT)

d. Joseph was obedient and responsive to God’s directions.

“When Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt. “Get up!” the angel said. “Take the child and his mother back to the land of Israel, because those who were trying to kill the child are dead.” So Joseph got up and returned to the land of Israel with Jesus and his mother. But when he learned that the new ruler of Judea was Herod’s son Archelaus, he was afraid to go there. Then, after being warned in a dream, he left for the region of Galilee. So the family went and lived in a town called Nazareth.” Matthew 2:19-23 (NLT)

Life Application: I must be obedient and responsive to God’s directions.

“I will guide you along the best pathway for your life. I will advise you and watch over you. Do not be like a senseless horse or mule that needs a bit and bridle to keep it under control.” Psalm 32:8-9 (NLT)

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Connect Group Questions

1. What is the best Christmas gift you have ever received? What made it so special?
2. What is the strongest reaction you have ever received from someone who either loved or hated a gift you gave them?
3. Read Luke 14:16-24. Why are many apathetic about their faith? Does it matter?
4. Read Matthew 2:1-12. Why do you think the wise men went to so much effort to find baby Jesus?
5. Discuss the following statement: We must seek Jesus, worship him for who he is and be willing to give him what is valuable to us. Do you know someone who lives this way? What's their secret?
6. Read Matthew 2:13-18. What motivated Herod to kill all of the boys age 2 and under in Bethlehem? Why do many people feel threatened by Jesus and his followers today? (see John 3:17-21)
7. Read Matthew 2:19-23 & Psalm 32:8-9. Why was Joseph obedient and responsive to God's directions? How responsive and obedient are you to God's directions? What things hold us back from fully obeying God?
8. What changes do I need to make in 2017 in order to seek God more, worship God better, obey completely and experience more joy? Spend some time as a group praying for each other.