

Making Christmas the Most Wonderful Time of the Year *December 12 & 13, 2009*

The Christmas story is told in Matthew 2 & Luke 2 in the Bible. Observations from that first Christmas...

1. Jesus was the focal point

- Without Jesus, there was no first Christmas
- Jesus was not an afterthought or a side-show...He was the event

Making Jesus Central in my Christmas...

- Realize that society does not encourage me in this, so I'll need to be intentional about it
- Spend the next couple of weeks reading the Christmas accounts in Matthew 2 & Luke 2
- Be intentional on Christmas to spend time reading the Christmas account from the Bible & thanking God for sending Jesus

To Santa

- Kids are good to get gifts
- Santa sees all
- Santa is the source of gifts
- Kids earn gifts
- Santa gets the credit

or

Not to Santa??

- Kids learn to obey to honor God & parents
- God sees all
- God is the source of gifts
- God provides gifts
- God gets the thanks

2. Jesus got the presents

- All the attention & gift-giving was directed towards Jesus
- This reflected His worth & showed other's worship & love of Him
- What gifts am I giving Jesus this Christmas?

Gifts Jesus would love to get from me...

- Accept His gift of salvation - *The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans chapter 6 verse 23 (861)*
- Humility - *What do you have that God hasn't given you? And if everything you have is from God, why boast as though it were not a gift? 1 Corinthians chapter 4 verse 7 (872)*
- Serving - *A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other. 1 Corinthians chapter 12 verse 7 (877)*
- Sacrificial love - *Husbands must give honor to your wives. Treat your wife with understanding as you live together. She may be weaker than you are, but she is your equal partner in God's gift of new life. Treat her as you should so your prayers will not be hindered. 1 Peter chapter 3 verse 7 (936)*

When giving gifts this Christmas...

- Don't go into debt or neglect other financial obligations to buy gifts (*honor God first!*)
- Set a budget & stick to it (*honor God first!*)
- Don't just give a gift...include a conversation or card that expresses your love & appreciation
- Give gifts that cost little or no money...time & love & words

3. People sought Jesus out & spent time with Him

- Christ was the priority that first Christmas & people wanted to be with Him
- People traveled from all over to be with Christ

Who am I spending time with this Christmas?

- Thank God for those you'll be with at Christmas...even if you don't want to be with them
- Use your time with them to show them God's love ...the way God loves us
- Allow God to use you to love them through you
- Allow your friends & family to be a reminder of God's love for you
- Start praying now for those you'll be with

Spend time with Christ this Christmas...

- Be intentional about not letting Christmas shopping and the "craziness" of the season keep you away from weekend services or the Christmas Eve services
- Make the Christmas Eve services a "group" or "family" event by sharing Christ with those who need Him
- On Christmas Day, be intentional about telling others what God is doing in you & for you

4. Jesus loved all people, not just people with gifts

- Jesus didn't make an issue about the gifts given...He made an issue about the heart of the gift-giver
- Jesus willingly received gifts because He knew they were an expression of love

What's my attitude about gifts?

- Are my gifts given freely, with no strings attached, simply to express my love & appreciation?
- If not, don't give them - ***You were cleansed from your sins when you obeyed the truth, so now you must show sincere love to each other as brothers and sisters.***

1 Peter chapter 1 verse 22 (934)

- Am I truly thankful for each and every gift I receive? Look at each gift as a tangible expression of someone's love & appreciation
- Even if the gift isn't great, be thankful for the love being expressed through it

Kids & gifts...

- Help your kids decide what they really want
- Pray with them about the gifts they want, asking God to provide the means to purchase them
- Don't even try to get your kids everything they want. Help them learn now that happiness is not getting
- Involve your kids in giving/serving others & make it fun so they see the truth that Christmas is not about "getting" & that it really is better to give than to receive
- What your kids really want is you...no matter what they're asking for at Christmas

5. Jesus was the only child at the first Christmas

- The first Christmas was very much an adult event
- Adults worshipped God, adults gave gifts to God, adults rejoiced because of God's goodness