

1. I love what Christmas truly stands for. It excites me that Christmas is a celebration of Jesus birth. I love Jesus and I love celebrating him.
2. But there is an aspect of Christmas that I don't do very well with and that is in the area of giving gifts. It's not that I don't like giving gifts because I do; it's that I'm not very good at it.
3. Dr. Gary Chapman in his book the five love languages describes the five general areas in which people like to be shown love.
4. The thing is we don't all speak all five of those languages. We usually have one or two that are really meaningful to us.
5. One of those five love languages is the giving and receiving of gifts. I learned pretty quickly that is not one of my primary love languages.
6. I don't do well at giving gifts. Some people are just amazing at giving gifts and still others just light up when you give them a gift. Even something small just makes their day.
7. Whether the giving and receiving of gifts is one of your love languages or not what is interesting to me is that Christmas as you well know entails a lot of gift giving.
8. And whether you are good at it or not on some level we are all expected to give a gift. I have been chatting with people for the last couple of weeks about their readiness for Christmas.
9. I have asked probably several dozen people during that time if they are ready for Christmas and it's amazing how often the person assumes correctly that I am talking about whether they have purchased all the gifts they are going to purchase.
10. I have gotten responses all over the map from, we haven't even started to, I have half of them purchased to oh I don't do that.
11. I love what an elder gentleman told me one time he said, I don't shop for Christmas. I just go down to the bank and get some envelopes and put money in them. My shopping takes all of about five minutes he said.
12. I couldn't help but laugh. Secretly I wished I could get by with that, but I can't. And so, like you I am engaged in the process of thinking about and

sometimes worrying about whether or not I am getting the right gift for the right person.

13. This idea of gift giving comes from the Christmas story itself found in the book of Matthew. It is the story of the Magi or wise men as we often call them.

TEXT: **Matthew 2:7-12** Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. **8** He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him." **9** After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. **10** When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. **11** 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 and of incense and of myrrh. **12** And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

TITLE: **What gift to give God.**

INTRO:

1. When I read this story of the Magi, I can't help but think of buying a gift for that person who is hard to shop for.
2. Anybody have somebody like that in your life. You know you need to get them a gift but every year you just don't know what to get them.
3. These Magi or wise men who were probably astronomers, people whose profession it was to engage in scientific study of the stars, noticed that a new star had appeared in the east and assumed that a great king had been born.
4. They follow the star to Jerusalem and began to ask around. Where is the king of the Jews, where is Jesus. Word reaches the king of that land that they are looking for Jesus and he sends them to Bethlehem with instructions to return and give him a report if they are successful in locating him.
5. They go to Bethlehem and in time do locate Jesus. I'm going to take just a side street and I hope I don't mess up your Christmas theology too much, but more than likely, they didn't find Jesus right after he had been born.
6. These men didn't go to the stable where Jesus was born and find him lying in a manger. Instead verse eleven says on coming to the house they saw the child with his mother.
7. History tells us that Jesus, more than likely was somewhere between 12 and 18 months of age.
8. While I'm meddling, I'll just go a little deeper. There is no evidence that there were three Magi. No number is given. Most people assume there must

have been three because three gifts were given to Jesus but there is no evidence to support that. There could have been a dozen magi for all we know.

9. These men were probably not kings as we sing about in the Christmas song “we three kings of orient are.”
10. And to top it all off, they more than likely weren’t from the orient either. Many scholars agree that they were probably from the area of Iraq, or possibly Iran.
11. But don’t let those things distract you from the real importance of these men’s visit to see Jesus.
12. What is powerful about their visit is that upon finding him verse eleven says that they opened up their treasures and gave him gifts of gold and incense or frankincense and myrrh.
13. From a human standpoint those would have been strange gifts to give a toddler. I mean, what toddler knows the value of gold.
14. And wouldn’t a toddler be tempted to put that incense and those spices in his mouth and eat them?
15. But we all know that this wasn’t just any toddler, this was the son of God. This was Jesus. And even though it might seem that giving a gift to Jesus would be about as hard as buying for that person who is difficult in your life, in truth these Magi gave Jesus the perfect gifts.
16. They were absolutely perfect. And I would like to encourage you today that giving Jesus the perfect gift is not as complicated as it might seem.
17. By the way. I have the belief that in all our Christmas shopping that **Jesus is expecting a gift from each and every one of us.**
18. No, he doesn’t want a fruit cake or a scarf or a new wallet. He wants something much more meaningful from us.
19. When buying for that difficult person I always try and think in terms of what do they need or what are they really passionate about. In other words what do they want?
20. Now I think we all realize that Jesus, being the son of God doesn’t need anything. He has everything because he is God.
21. But I must tell you that he most certainly does want something, and he most definitely is passionate about something.
22. And if you don’t get anything else out of this service today, please get this. He is passionate about you. And even though he has everything a God could ever need, Jesus wants you. You are what he desires and wants and dreams of.

23. Having a relationship with you. To God that is the most prized thing in his existence.
24. And it is because we as humans are his passion that the gifts the Magi gave to Jesus were perfect. First, they gave him...

Gold.

1. Understand that in the culture of the bible gold was only given to royalty. Gold was a gift that would only be given to a king.
2. So, when these Magi came to Jesus and presented him with gifts of gold they were proclaiming to him and to the world, we believe you are the king, and we believe you are the Lord and we believe you are the very son of God.
3. And as the son of God that means that you are worthy to be the Lord and king of our life.
4. And Jesus doesn't want to be the Lord of our life so that he can be like a cruel dictator; he wants to be lord of our lives so that he can protect us from unnecessary heartache and pain.
5. It is out of love that **Jesus wants to be our king and our lord.** And these Magi, by bringing Jesus gold were in essence saying, we accept your offer and invitation of lordship.
6. And today Jesus still extends that same offer to us. He invites us to relate to him as Lord. We don't have to accept that offer by going out and buying some expensive gold gift, Jesus wants something more valuable than gold.
7. He wants our life. He wants us.
8. I don't know if that does anything to you, but it absolutely moves me to the very depth of my soul that the God of all the universe wants you and he wants me.
9. He wants us. Next, they offered Jesus...

Incense.

1. Incense or frankincense is a resin or gum from certain trees that when burned produces a very pleasing aroma.
2. Incense was used in the Old Testament as an instrument of worship to God.
3. The priests were commanded to continually burn incense before the Lord in the temple.
4. Some faiths still burn incense in their worship. The fact that these Magi brought incense as a gift was a sign that they were choosing to worship Jesus.

5. In fact, in verse eleven it says **Matthew 2:11** On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him.
6. Worship is considered the ultimate act of honor. We pay honor to people and things that are highly important to us.
7. Do you know that one of the greatest gifts we can bring to Jesus is our worship? Jesus is honored by our worship. Now understand something. We can worship God anywhere and we can worship God in many ways, but the bible teaches us that there is something powerful about our worshipping the Lord together.
8. **Hebrews 10:25** Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another.
9. Church, I believe that our coming together to worship Jesus is a gift. It is valuable. I believe it is something that is so valuable that we ought not to take it for granted.
10. Paul's command was very clear. Don't get out of the habit of meeting together for worship. If you are in the habit of being hit and miss in your worship of God and your meeting together with other believers don't take it lightly.
11. Don't make excuses. It is a gift from you to God and he wants you. He wants to relate to you in worship.
12. The final gift they gave to Jesus was...

Myrrh.

1. Myrrh was a spice that was very different from incense.
2. Where incense was very sweet-smelling myrrh had a very bitter smell. There was a good reason why it had a bitter smell. It was bitter because it was used to embalm a dead body. That bitter smell was to help cover over the smell of death.
3. Now from a human standpoint, who in the world would give a toddler a spice used for embalming?
4. These Magi gave Jesus the gift of myrrh because they were recognizing that one day Jesus would give his very life and die on a cross for your sins and my sins.
5. The giving of myrrh was believed to be symbolic of Jesus' death on the cross. In essence it was an acceptance of the gift of salvation.
6. It was as if they were saying to Jesus, we know you are going to do something for us that we could never do for ourselves and we accept your gift.

7. How offended would you be if you gave someone a gift and right in front of your face, they acted like they could care less that you took the time to give them a gift?
8. I believe that illustration is good to have in mind when we consider the gift Jesus has given us by allowing himself to become sin for us. By taking our sin and our punishment upon himself and allowing himself to suffer in our place.
9. Jesus offers us the gift of salvation and I believe he waits for our response.
10. Again, the best way I can explain the gift of salvation is that God loves us so much that he wants us. He is passionate about us. He is passionate about you.

Conclusion:

1. He offers us a gift and what he longs for in return is us.
2. What kind of gift do you give the son of God? You give yourself.
3. Let's practice the act of giving ourselves to God this morning.
4. Can we keep that in mind as we celebrate for the next couple of days.
5. Sing Silent Night with phone flash.
6. In the Old Testament, the people were commanded by God to bring a wave offering.
7. The wave offering only occurred on joyous occasions and it signified thanksgiving and devotion to the Lord.
8. That's what we are doing when we wave our phones.