



Many songs we sing at Christmas are reminders that Christmas time is supposed to be happy. Songs like "It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year," "Joy to the World," "Jingle Bells," and "Walking in a Winter Wonderland" all communicate that Christmas time is to be a joyous, trouble-free season. For some of you, personal problems are keeping you from experiencing the joy of the season. For others, you feel like one crisis after another has run you over. With an avalanche of problems, it is hard to have a holly-jolly Christmas.

Christmas season is not providing the emotional lift that you expected. In fact, it is almost depressing. The world does not look like it is joyful. As most adults would say, "Christmas is only for children." But Christmas is for everyone including adults. Christmas is a celebration for our salvation. Disappointments at Christmas is not an unusual thing. We get so hyped up with expectations about what Christmas is supposed to be that often the real thing doesn't measure up, and we get disheartened.

How can you be MERRY this CHRISTMAS? The answer is found in the story of the magi in Matthew 2. Matthew 2:1-2,9-12 - "1 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem 2 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."...

9 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. 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, frankincense and myrrh. 12 And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route." (NIV)

THREE POINTS TO MAKE CHRISTMAS A MERRY ONE:

I. What do you SEEK?

Your level of joy at Christmas is directly related to what it is you SEEK. Ask the question: What is it I want to get out of Christmas? The problem with all these is that they can leave us disappointed. Have you ever had that kind of experience - when you were disappointed by Christmas because it did not deliver what you thought it would? Our disappointments is not caused by Christmas season. Our disappointments are caused by our EXPECTATIONS. We are looking for the wrong thing every Christmas season. SEEK Jesus this Christmas season. Christmas is an opportunity to worship Jesus, nothing more, nothing less. Who is Jesus to you? If our goal this Christmas is to worship Jesus, then I doubt we will ever be dissatisfied this Christmas season. Jesus is the reason for the season.

II. Where do you LOOK?

Your level of joy at Christmas is directly related to where you LOOK. We learn from the magi that there are WRONG and RIGHT places to look for Christmas. We are tempted to LOOK for JOY at Christmas in the wrong places. We think by getting the right gift we will be satisfied. We think by receiving bonus we will be happy. The trip to Jerusalem was not a total loss. While they were there, they discovered where they should have looked in the first place: the Bible, the word of God. The Scribes in Jerusalem, the ones who manually copy word of God, were the ones who told the magi where to look for the Savior

We often look at the wrong place so we get the wrong answer for our situations in life. Bible is the best friend you can ever have especially this Christmas season. The word of God will always guide you on what to do for your specific situation.

III. Where do you GIVE?

Your level of joy at Christmas is directly related to what you GIVE. The gifts the Magi gave were entirely appropriate. They gave gold, gift for a king. By giving it they acknowledged that Jesus was and is the King.

They gave frankincense, a gift for a priest. This was incense the priests used in Temple. By giving it they acknowledged that Jesus was a priest - the One who would bring us to God. They gave myrrh, gift for the dead. This was a fragrant ointment used to anoint a body before burial. By giving it they acknowledged that Jesus had come to die for the sins of the world. The gifts of the magi (gold, frankincense, and myrrh) represent who Jesus is and what He will do for us.

Lessons I learned from the gift-giving of the magi. If you want your Christmas to be merry, learn to GIVE. Learn to give without expectations in return. Learn to give and not expect to receive. If you do this, your level of joy at Christmas season will improve.

Christmas is about GIVING. Jesus was born so He could GIVE His life and PROVIDE us life after death. Another thing I learned from the magi is: We ought to give APPROPRIATE gifts this Christmas. You can bless others with material things. I am talking about more important things. We ought to give the gift of our LOVE and KINDNESS to our friends and family. We ought to give the gift of our HELP to those who are hurting. We ought to give the gift of FORGIVENESS to those who have hurt us. We ought to give the gift of QUALITY TIME to our family. Giving these kinds of gifts will result in a joyous and meaningful Christmas.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1.) What are your Christmas expectations?
- 2.) Where and how do you expect to receive them?
- 3.) What are the things that gives you satisfaction and brings meaning to your life this season?

Pray for each other in your group.