Make Room for Giving | Uncluttered #3

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While Christmas should be a time of joy and celebration, it's often a source of stress and burden. Between decorating, shopping, cooking, party-planning, party-attending, kids programs, family visits and a million other things, the Christmas season can blow through our lives like a hurricane and leave us exhausted. So how can we move beyond all this clutter and actually be able to enjoy the true beauty and meaning of Christmas? The secret to an uncluttered Christmas is to move aside the clutter and make room for what God says really matters.

Obviously a big part of the Christmas season is giving. We exchange gifts with family, friends, co-workers and often we make an annual contribution toward our favorite charity. But sometimes our giving can get caught up in materialism, competition, or just become a thoughtless obligation. So how do we make sure we're truly giving the way Jesus would want on his birthday? Let's look at the story of the original Christmas givers and learn from their example.

Be generous with your time

In the New Testament we read the amazing story of a group of wise men who traveled a great distance to visit young Jesus and present him with gifts.

> ***Matthew 2:1-2*** *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."*

Apparently these eastern wise men, who were revered philosophers and astrologers, saw a symbol in the sky that led them to make a journey to the small, backwoods village of Bethlehem. They didn't know the details of what they would find, but they believed he was valuable and worthy so they made a long, treacherous journey to give him gifts.

One of the best ways to show someone you value them is to give them your time. It's easier to drop off a quick gift, but when you sacrifice some quality time to invest in them, it demonstrates true love. Christmas is a great time to intentionally plan some time – maybe lunch, coffee, or just a phone call – to connect with your important relationships and be generous with your time. But along with your time, make sure you give in other meaningful ways as well.

Be generous with what really matters

We've all received gifts that clearly involved no thought. While they might be nice, they don't carry the same weight as gifts that were thoughtfully chosen. The wise men demonstrate this with their meaningful gifts to Jesus.

> ***Matthew 2:9-11*** *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.*

The gifts they brought were not only valuable, but meaningful. We don't know all the real symbolism behind their

gifts, but we know each one had significance. Likewise, our giving should be purposeful and meaningful. This doesn't necessarily mean expensive, but it does mean that we should be thoughtful.

It also means that we should be generous with what really matters. We should give to what Jesus would care and be excited about. This means giving toward things like your local church, missionaries, and other causes that genuinely serve others and share God's truth and love. Finally, and maybe most importantly, we need to make sure we're generous with the real center of Christmas: Jesus.

*[**Related**: How Do I Give to the Poor]*

Be generous with Jesus

Don't forget that the real purpose of the wise men's journey was to worship Jesus.

> ***Matthew 2:11*** *They entered the house and saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him*

If you really want to honor Jesus and ensure that he doesn't get lost in all the clutter of Christmas, intentionally spend time connecting with him. Make sure that you not only spend quality time with important loved ones, but also with Jesus in prayer and his Word, the Bible. And make sure you aren't just a generous giver with friends and family, but also with Jesus. It's his birthday after all! So make sure to give to what truly honors him.

But above all, make sure you have room for Jesus in your heart at Christmas. This is done by trusting in him for salvation, living your life to honor him, and helping others to know him so they can make room for him as well.

*[**Related**: How God Rewards Us for Giving to Others]*

Discussion Questions:

1. *Watch the video together or invite someone to summarize the topic.*
2. *What is your initial reaction to this video? Do you disagree with any of it? What jumped out at you?*
3. *What is the best Christmas present you've ever received? What's one of the worst?*
4. *Read Matthew 2:1-2. Why do you think the wise men were willing to commit so much time to come and meet Jesus? What does this teach us about how we give of our time?*
5. *What are some practical ways you can give the gift of time to people in your life?*
6. *Read Matthew 2:9-11. Why do you think the wise men gave gifts that were both valuable and meaningful? What does this teach us about the gifts we give to people?*
7. *What are some practical examples of ways we can be meaningfully generous toward things that really matter to Jesus?*
8. *Read Matthew 2:11. What motivated these wise men, who were highly respected in their culture, to bow down and worship the small child Jesus?*
9. *What stops us from worshipping Jesus the way he deserves at Christmas and the rest of the year?*
10. *What are some practical ways you can make Jesus more central in your life during Christmas?*
11. *Write a personal action step based on this conversation.*