

11-14

SEASONS OF GIVING 2: Give and Take

The 'Pay It Forward' movement is something that has been going around for years. The true meaning behind this movement is the fact that people are giving to another person knowing the person on the receiving end cannot give them anything in return. We live in a world where people love to receive; we like to get and grab for ourselves. We often forget that giving is a beautiful thing. It's a gift itself to give. The Bible says that. This session will think about why it is more blessed to give than to receive and how we can practise more giving into our everyday life's.

Activity 1

Why do we give gifts to each other at Christmas?

We often think that there are three Kings or wise men, but actually there are three gifts.

Read Matthew 2: 1-11.

The Magi Visit the Messiah

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi¹ from the east came to Jerusalem² 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."

³ When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴ When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵ "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:

⁶ *“But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for out of you will come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel.”*¹⁰

⁷ *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 search carefully 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 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.*

1. Why do you think that these wise men chose to give gifts to a baby, what was their motivation behind it?
2. When you think of why we give gifts at Christmas, do you think the reasons are similar? Why or why not?
3. Why do you think people buy gifts for each other today? What are the main motivations and how true is this for you if you're really honest?!

Not only did the three Kings give gifts at Christmas, but Jesus coming to Earth was Gods gift to us, His motivation was simply that he loved us and gave us the best gift possible.

Activity 2

Think about your top 3 possessions (not including animals or people).

Why have you included these things?

Could you live without these? Can you imagine a situation when you would give them away?

So often we are focused on us and what we have that we forget the nature of giving and blessing others. Our focus needs to be on giving rather than taking and being prepared to let someone else be blessed, but often we can be so busy trying to take and focus on what we want and our needs that we forget that it is better to give than receive.

Read 2 Corinthians 9:7-8

⁷ Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸ And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

1. Why do you think people are more focused on what they get rather than what they can give to others?
2. How do you think verse 7 relates to people's mindsets at Christmas? How often do you think people give 'reluctantly or under compulsion'?
3. Read verse 8 again, we hear that God is able to give you all that you need, how is this different to the things that we want, and why?
4. What is your experience of giving gifts without expecting anything in return?

Activity 3

Read Luke 6: 35-36

³⁵ But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. ³⁶ Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

God asks us to be generous with our gifts, but the gifts that we are generous with might not always be physical presents or stuff. There are lots of different areas of our lives where we can be generous.

Think of ways to be generous that don't involve stuff

This might include our time, our gifts or our attitudes

Try to be specific. Make a list of who we could be generous with a how. For example, I could be generous with my time by putting aside an hour to spend with my brother or sister without being asked etc.

Activity 4

Draw a table like the one below

Generous with	What	who
Things		
Attitude		
Serving		

In the first column (generous with) write three things that you will commit to be generous with this Christmas, write one 'thing' e.g. your games console or tablet,

one attitude that you can have towards someone else e.g. Forgiveness or patience and then one way that you can be generous by serving e.g. Cleaning, cooking, drawing, listening etc.

Move on to the second column. What exactly will you do with that thing over this Christmas? E.g. I will be better at sharing my tablet, I will be more patient with my family, I will give my time to listen to my friends more.

Then finally, write down the name of someone that you would like to specifically be generous towards in this area.

ACTIVITY 5

Watch this: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QXgH8ZlZ9jQ>

PRAY

Thank you God that you gave us the greatest gift of all in Jesus, it is a gift that we could never repay. Help us to share the great gift of Jesus with people we know.

Spend a few minutes in silence and ask God to bring to mind a friend or family member who you could commit to pray for every day over the Christmas period.