

Conversation Starters

- Do you have plans for Christmas already?
- What Christmas traditions do you or your family have?

Discuss

Christians have long celebrated the Christmas season with advent, which means "coming" and has become a dedicated time remembering Jesus in the days or weeks leading up to Christmas. Christmas in America has become a very busy time of year that seems to be more marked by consumerism than by the birth of Jesus, who is the Son of God. The Advent Conspiracy aims to recapture the true joy and meaning of Christmas by changing our approach to celebrating this special time of year.

- What observations or experiences do you have about our consumerism Christmas culture?
- What do you think of as Christmas approaches?
- Have you ever celebrated advent?

It starts by evaluating how we worship. Worship literally means "worthship" or to give worth, respect and honor. On a deeper level, it can be said to "bend the knee of your heart." In the Bible, we find that Mary, the angels who appeared to the shepherds, the shepherds themselves, and the Magi gave proper worship during this time. To start, their worship was given to Jesus.

And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior..." (Luke 1:46-47 NIV)

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God... (Luke 2:13 NIV)

The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God... (Luke 2:20a NIV)

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem 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." (Matthew 2:1-2 NIV)

- Does Christmas seem to pass you by without any chance for reflection of Jesus' birth?
- What would it look like to "bend the knee of your heart" to Jesus?
- How do these examples of worship impact your thinking of your own expressions of worship?

Looking even further at the worship from the magi, they gave tangible gifts, and also worshipped at great risk. King Herod was a staunch defender of his throne and his life was marked by going to any lengths to protect it, including murder. The Magi going to see the newborn Jesus to worship Him alone could have infuriated Herod, but even more, the magi refusing to go back to Herod to let him know where Jesus was (to kill Jesus) also angered him. The magi worshipped at a great sacrifice.

- If you are a Christian, does all spending during this time of year reflect the honor of Jesus at Christmas time?
- What would it look like for your worship of Jesus to grow, even at great sacrifice?

Next Steps

Gift giving started during Christmas time when the Magi brought gifts to Jesus. So, it started with the Christmas story and is still part of this time, but remember, the gifts were given to Jesus not to ourselves or others. Christmas passes us by because we do not often worship the right way. We can worship fully by looking past all of the consumerism to who Jesus is as God's gift to us, and then let our response be to give our hearts to him and let our gifts be to him as well – even at great sacrifice. As we enter this season of Christmas, how can you start preparing now to worship fully?

Further Reflection

See Luke 1:46-49; Luke 2:8-20; Matthew 2:1-19

Pray

God, thank you so much for Jesus and this season we can spend reflecting on the great gift that he is to us. Thank you for your love for us and how you continually pursue us at great lengths. Forgive us for letting this season become more about consumerism and worldly things. Help us to recapture this time of year and let our response to you truly and extravagantly reflect the wonderful gift that it is.