

Conversation Starters

- Have you done any Christmas shopping yet?
- How has your family celebrated gift giving?

Discuss

The average person spends about \$150 per month impulse buying, which are purchases that someone did not intend to make before shopping. And most buying (about 80%) is emotional (based on want) rather than logical (based on need). Part of this is due to the shopping experience that retailers strategically design to showcase their products in an effort to entice you to purchase. At Christmas, the average American spends about \$885 on gifts alone, and the U.S. spends one trillion dollars.

- Have you ever purchased something that you did not intend to when shopping?
- What shopping experiences have you had that maybe enticed you to buy?
- How does the average spending figure in the U.S. impact you?

This matters because it has taken away from the true meaning of Christmas – the birth of Jesus and what that means for us. All of the effort, time, spending, and gifts for others has distracted us from what really matters. Gift giving did start with Jesus and the Magi, but the gifts were for Jesus, not anyone else. And it is not all about the gifts, but remembering and honoring Jesus during Christmas and celebrating the gift that he is to us.

"...the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. 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 their gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh" (Matthew 2: 9-11, NIV)

- Do you think gift giving takes away some of your focus at Christmas?
- What would your Christmas look like if you removed gift giving?
- How does this first Christmas scene look different compared to today?

Taking Christmas back starts with removing the distraction of consumerism. We can help remove it by spending less and celebrating differently. We can still give gifts, but can consider making gifts (which can be more memorable) and be better stewards of our finances. We can give our time by serving others. And we can take time to celebrate the birth of Jesus with song or play or a party for him. All of these would really be more honoring to Jesus than focusing so much on gifts alone.

- How can you change your approach to gift giving and spend less?
- What are some ways you can serve others around you?
- What would it look like for you and your family to uniquely celebrate the birth of Jesus?

Next Steps

Take some time to think about how you have celebrated Christmas. Consider how your Christmas could look different by focusing more on Jesus. How can your gift giving honor Jesus? How can you honor Jesus through serving someone else? How can you celebrate Jesus’ birthday? (It can be helpful to think about Jesus’ life and what would really please him.)

Further Reflection

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

Pray

God, thank you for this season to remember and reflect on who Jesus is. Forgive us because we do get distracted from that during this time of year. Everything around us tells us to spend, spend, spend. Help us to remove all of the distraction and consider how we can celebrate Christmas differently by honoring Jesus above everything else.