

The Gift of an Empty Box

Word

Scripture Reference

Matthew 2:1-23

Discussion Questions

1. Why do we give gifts on Christmas? How do you react when you receive a gift that you don't really need nor want?
2. Jesus, the Son of God, is definitely the best gift of Christmas. He is the very reason why we have Christmas, why we give and receive gifts on Christmas. Read Matthew 2:1-23. During the reign of King Herod, wise men, most likely from east of Persia, came to Bethlehem to worship Jesus about two years after His birth. These wise men saw a great light appear in heaven when Jesus was born. Discuss the reason why King Herod would react the way he did to the visit of these wise men. Why did a powerful king feel intimidated by a helpless baby (v. 3-8)?
3. The Bible tells us that the wise men brought with them gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh, and worshipped the young child Jesus with great joy. Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, the wise men used another way to return to their country (v. 9-12). When we talk about gifts in the Christmas story, we automatically think about these valuable gifts given by the wise men. However, the Bible tells us about three unrecognized gifts in the Christmas story:
 - a. *The gift of provision (v. 14-15).* An angel warned Joseph that their family was not safe in Bethlehem and therefore must move to Egypt. But how could Joseph move his family to another country when they didn't have much money? God, in taking care of Jesus' earthly family, sovereignly provided for their needs through the wise men. God supplied their needs in the nick of time—the night before they should leave Bethlehem. Why was the escape to Egypt important in the life of Jesus (v. 15)? How has your Heavenly Father been providing for your needs? Share an experience when He had provided for something right at the time you needed it. What area of your life do you need to trust that God will provide?

b. *The gift of protection (v. 16-18).* When Herod realized that the wise men were not coming back, he was exceedingly angry. He went as far as ordering the murder of all the male children, two years and below, in Bethlehem and all its districts. But Joseph, Mary and Jesus were already safe from Herod's reach in Egypt. Are you aware of the fact that God sends angels to protect you? For the fact that you reach your destination each time you travel, do you thank God for the gift of protection? Why do Christians usually pray for safety but not for arriving safely? Share about an experience when you have seen God's protection over you.

c. *The gift of guidance/leading (v. 19-23).* The Christmas story spans two years, and throughout these two years, it was God who led Joseph and his family. When Herod died, the angel told Joseph that it was safe to go back to Israel. Heeding God's warning that it was not safe to go to Bethlehem, Joseph took his family to dwell in Nazareth. This was a fulfillment of the prophecy that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem but would grow up in Nazareth. As God had led Joseph, He is leading you too. God's leading, whether through joys or hurts, and resolutions or difficulties, is always for your good. Do you recognize when God is leading you in your life's path? Discuss what sources do people frequently look at for guidance. Looking back on your life, can you see how God has guided you? How do you show your appreciation to God for this gift?

Walk

*Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere
Go, tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born.*

When we accept Jesus Christ into our lives, we receive gifts more valuable than what we imagine. He pours on us the gift of provisions, the gift of protection and the gift of guidance. Our Heavenly Father lavishes us with good things, and above all these is eternal life that we can only obtain through Jesus Christ. How do you respond to your generous Heavenly Father? Do you have the sense of thankfulness and appreciation? In return, what shining deed can you do this Christmas season to point someone towards the Savior who is Jesus Christ?

Worship & Prayer

Father, thank You for Your love that allowed mercy to reign. Thank You for Jesus Christ who took my place on the cross. Thank You for Emmanuel, God with us, who gives us strength to endure. Thank You for the precious gift of Christmas, and every blessing that comes with it. In Jesus' name. Amen.