

Real World LOVE

[Ernie enters, listening to his headphones. Enter his little sister Sandie, a note pad and a pencil in hand]

SANDIE: Ernie.... Ernie!... Ernie!!!! [She winds up as if to yell in his ear, pulls off his headphones and then says in a quiet voice] Hello Big Brother!

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SANDIE: We start with Dad of course.

ERNIE: I thought you were happy about what you're getting for Dad.

SANDIE: Not shopping for Dad, silly. We start with Dad to get some money to shop with! [They exit]

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Narrator: That's the way it is with kids sometimes.
Lots of love, great big intentions and small quantities of cash.
So if they have the heart to be generous, they need a sponsor, which is not usually a big problem since most kids have a natural inborn talent for asking parents for money.
Even if it's to buy a gift for a parent, kids are usually quite okay with the idea of just asking for the money!
Here is one of the many advantages to a two-parent home.
It's so much more elegant.
The kids can be generous to the one parent at the expense of the other parent.
But even in a single-parent home, kids have been known to ask a parent for financial assistance in order to give that very same parent a very nice Christmas gift.
Now in this, we are all like children. And when we learn to see God as our Father in heaven, as Jesus taught His followers,
we come to see that anything we mean to give Him, or do for Him, has to come from Him in the first place.

1 Chronicles 29:11-14 Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O Lord ... Both riches and honor come from you ...

In your hand are power and might, **and in your hand** it is to make great and to give strength to all.

For all things come from **you**, and **of your own** have we given you.

So [Enter Bob. He walks to the couch with the paper] all of us are like children in our dependence upon God.

But not all parents are able or willing to be like God in the experience of being depended upon.

Hm. What about Bob?

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Sandie / Ernie: Hi Dad!

Bob: Oh hi kids. I'm just reading the paper for a bit, okay?

Sandie: [Takes the paper out of his hands, folds it and hands it to Ernie.] Dad, we need to talk.

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Bob: [Springs to his feet] Well, we better go shopping.

Ernie: Have you got your credit card, Dad?

Bob: Right here in my wallet. [They take another step or two, and then freeze on stage]

Narrator: You might want to be here tonight (6:30. Arrive early for a good seat!) to see how this story ends.

Everyone knows that there is more to Christmas than presents.

But presents are a part of Christmas, one way or another. That's because Christmas is a celebration of giving.

As far as presents go, the wise men got us started: gold, frankincense and myrrh.

[To Bob] "Wise men" ... get it? [The actors come to life and exit]

But Christmas gifts, all the Christmas gifts in the world, including those first three, are a response.

A response to God's gift to the world...

Matthew 2:1-11 Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: " 'And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.' " Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him." After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had

seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. **Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.**

This moment in history is the very centre of Christmas.

In a way, when these wise men (Three?) knelt before the Christ Child and worshipped him and then gave him gifts, the story gets to the point!

A poor girl, barely married, gives birth to a child... And strangers from far away respond: worshipping the child and giving gifts.

This is the Christmas story: the story in the very middle of human history.

It's a LOVE story: the story of God's love to the world -- and the story of the response of the people of the world to that love.

And the response of the wise men was a wise and good response. It was a response of love, in the real world.

Real World LOVE

1. **The ultimate display of love was a costly gift**

Gift?

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, [This is how God loved the world] that **he gave his only Son...**

The definition of love

1 John 4:8-9 ... God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.

Costly? *! Gifts cost A really costly gift can impoverish ... An infinitely costly gift impoverished to a unique degree!*

2 Corinthians 8:9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake **he became poor**, so that you by **his poverty** might become rich.

Way more costly than material poverty... poverty regarding RWG.

2 Corinthians 5:21 For our sake **he made him to be sin** who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

The Christian's dilemma: What can be done in response to that costly a gift?

2. **The proper response to this love is a costly gift**

The gifts of the wise men were expressions of their response.

Matthew 2:11 ...and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, **they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.** (gold = a king/frankincense= a priest/myrrh = a sacrifice)

Q: And us, here and now?

Like **The Little Drummer Boy!**

NOTE: Three different slides: move to third briskly!

I am a poor boy too, pa rum pum pum pum / I have no gift to bring, That's fit to give the King,
Shall I play for you, On my drum?

Mary nodded [Which is nice], The ox and lamb kept time, [Which is hard to picture exactly] I played my drum for Him,

I played my best for Him, Then He smiled at me, Me and my drum.

2 Corinthians 5:14-15 For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that **those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.**

Two things we need to be clear one:

On the one hand → Anything we DO have to give we received from him in the first place!

1 Chron.29:11-14 ... All that is in the heavens and in the earth is **yours**. Both riches and honor come from **you** ... For all things come from **you**, and **of your own** have we given you.

Like kids giving nice gifts at Christmas that they bought with money that was given them for the purpose.

So God deserves all the credit: he gets all the glory for all that we do.

1 Corinthians 10:31 So ...whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

This is how a person lives for Christ.

Colossians 3:17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

On the other hand → God doesn't need anything. He is all-sufficient: no needs!

The ultimate example of "What do you get the person who has everything?"

But that doesn't mean no place for costly gifts: there are lots of needs in the world.

3. Our proper response to this love is a life of giving costly gifts to people.

1 John 3:16 By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and **we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.**

Your life → a costly gift!

This John learned from Jesus! He taught it.

Matthew 25:31-40

Colossians 3:23-24 Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.

SO...?

1. The ultimate display of love was a costly gift

BELIEVE THAT THIS IS TRUE. THE ULTIMATE DISPLAY OF LOVE TO YOU! Never again think of yourself as unloved. Never again think that no one has ever done anything very special for you!

2. The proper response to this love is a costly gift

EXPRESS YOUR LOVE FOR GOD BY LIVING FOR CHRIST! All to his glory and for his purposes.

3. Our proper response to this love is a life of giving costly gifts to people.

EXPRESS YOUR LOVE FOR CHRIST BY SERVING THE PEOPLE AROUND YOU!

A Christmas gift can be one such expression.

To the people who receive our gifts,

the greatest gifts we give are the gifts that are an expression of our love.

To God, the greatest gifts we give are the gifts that are an expression of our love for him. The gifts we give in Jesus name ... and to his glory!