

What does Christmas bring?
Christmas brings purpose
Part 4

Intro: If I asked you what your purpose in life is, how would you answer? I imagine I'd get a variety of responses. You might say, "To be a good provider", be a loving spouse, to raise my kids to be successful adults, to be a successful student, Maybe you'd say things like; "To be a loving person", if you're really spiritual you might say; "To follow Jesus or my purpose if to glorify God."

- I'm not asking the question because I'm looking for one specific answer. The fact is, human beings need purpose. Purpose motivates us – inspires us – gives us direction – actually keeps us mentally and emotionally healthy. Purpose gives us meaning, fulfillment and a reason to get out of bed every morning. Purpose is in our DNA. The need for purpose is something God created us with. Discovering the purpose God has created you for is something God wants you to experience.
- Our final Christmas story helps us with this discovery. We can learn much about purpose as we understand the example the wise men left for us.

Matt. 2 – Read the story of the wise men.

1. Purpose Begins with a Holy Discontent

- Who were these guys? These "Magi" or wise men were probably from Persia. They were commonly advisors to Kings. They were truth seekers. They were educated in astrology and interpreting signs in the heavens. They may have also had exposure to Old Testament writings prophesying the coming Messiah. (Israel's captivity 400 years earlier)
- The wise men were educated, successful, and influential men—yet they were still searching. Their willingness to leave comfort and certainty shows that status or knowledge alone doesn't satisfy the human soul. They were seeking something more.
- Purpose often begins with a God-given sense that "there is something more." The wise men in the story illustrate this. Why risk the travel...and yet they had a holy discontent they needed something more.

"Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews?" (Matt. 2:2)

- Sometimes the discontent we feel is God cultivating a greater purpose within us. Some discontent we experience is from God. Discontent isn't always a bad thing. Often discontent is the motivation that brings change.
 - Jesus experienced discontent – He saw the people as burdened and lost without a shepherd – He had compassion on those who were sick – He fed the hungry – He saw how sin had impacted humanity – Something needed to change. This is why He came to save us.

- The Apostle Paul experienced discontent – Paul was discontent that people didn’t know Jesus. He wanted to go to places where nobody had been. It needed to change.
- I remember experiencing discontent years ago. I remember God stirring in me the idea that a church could be more. It could be loving – unified – joyful – it could step into the messiness of a community. It could literally become the hands and feet of Jesus. I can still remember the feelings – “God this is not what you intended”) Foothills would have never started without this.
- Nothing ever changes without discontent, and a holy discontent is created by the Holy Spirit in us. He gives us a compulsion that something needs to change.
- What Holy discontent has God put inside you? Don’t discredit your discontent. It just may be from God moving you in a direction you never dreamed of.

2. Purpose Gives Direction

- The wise men followed a star. The star didn’t explain everything to the wise men—it simply pointed the way. The wise men didn’t have the whole plan, but they followed the light they were given. Purpose doesn’t require total clarity; it requires faithful movement toward God. It simply requires us to obey only what has been revealed.

Matt. 2:2 “We saw his star as it rose,..” (NLT) So, this is what they followed.

- I’ve said this for years that direction from God is on a need-to-know basis. God reveals more to us when we need to know. Until that time, we keep following what He has revealed.
- When God made it clear we were going to start a church, we needed a location. Now, I had no idea we would eventually move into an abandoned strip mall / a former grocery store years later. But, God knew I didn’t need to know that yet.
- **Tell story of going to the Elementary School** – The cost and the Janitor -
- We simply follow what He reveals. God often reveals direction step by step, not all at one time. If God is leading you to do something, your responsibility is to begin. You don’t have to have the entire plan – all the details – and all the answers. Follow the direction you’ve been given. God will give you enough to move. After you follow, God will eventually give you more. This is what following Jesus is like.

3. Purpose Requires Sacrifice

- The journey for the wise men was long, costly, and risky. WHY? Because they would have traveled possibly up to 1000 miles to get there. (From Persia) There was a cost of lodging – feeding animals – military protection, as well as the 3-4 months it would have taken to travel there. This was not a simple journey.
- Purpose often demands leaving comfort zones, routines, or even reputations behind. The wise men show us that godly purpose is worth inconvenience, cost, time and the effort to experience it.

- Let me return to my own story of purpose. Foothills did not get to where it is today without tremendous sacrifice. As glorious as our journey and purpose has been, it has not been an easy journey. Please do not mistake all our blessings as easy or pain free. Purpose will always require sacrifice.
 - There were plenty of times over the years I wanted to quit. (explain)
- There is a quality God wants to develop in every person and that is perseverance. I like to call it – godly grit. It’s just an unwillingness to quit. You believe what God told you so much you simply cannot and will not quit. It’s a tough type of faith purpose requires.
- I’m concerned because what I see in the modern church is that we no longer value this quality. We want things easy – instantaneous. Some may even see hard things as bad things. Maybe even conclude sacrifice is to be avoided and even resisted.

Heb. 10:35-36 “So do not throw away this confident trust in the Lord. Remember the great reward it brings you! ³⁶ Patient endurance is what you need now, so that you will continue to do God’s will. Then you will receive all that he has promised.” (NLT)

- We only receive everything God has promised IF we do not quit. Often we simply quit too soon. I often think of all I would have missed out on if I would have quit when things got difficult.

4. Purpose Leads to Worship, Not Just Achievement

- When the wise men finally found Jesus, they didn’t analyze Him or use Him to advance themselves—they worshiped Him.

“They bowed down and worshiped him.” (Matt. 2:11)

- Their purpose wasn’t self-fulfillment; self-advancement, it was God-centered fulfillment. True purpose culminates not in accomplishment, but in surrender, obedience, humility and worship.
- When you experience God using your life to accomplish His purposes, it doesn’t result in self-elevation. The result is not pride. It results in a profound humility and worship of God who chose to use your life in ways you don’t deserve. You stand in awe of God and His purposes.
- Sometimes I love walking through this facility when it’s quiet (which is rare) and I reflect on the journey. (Every corner of this place has a memory). I try to remember all the things God did to get us where we’re at – all the miracles – all the sacrifice – all the promises fulfilled – all the people. It just fills me with gratitude and awe of God and His ways. I’m humbled that God chose me to do this. Why me? (Then, He chose others to join the journey – He’s still doing this!)
- True purpose that comes from God draws us closer to God. It humbles us. It elevates God not man. Here at Foothills, we simply try to follow Jesus. The secret to Foothills is not me or any other person. It’s Jesus. We simply follow where He leads and He does the rest. We know where our success comes from. We don’t chase achievement. We chase Jesus.

5. Purpose Requires Change

- After finding Jesus and presenting their gifts, they returned home by a different route because Herod was going to seek to kill Jesus.

Matt. 2:12 “When it was time to leave, they returned to their own country by another route, for God had warned them in a dream not to return to Herod.” (NLT)

- Purpose requires change. Purpose will require us to change how we live, think, and choose, how we follow. Encountering Jesus doesn’t just give us meaning—it reorients our entire life. Jesus did not save us to leave us the same.
- Just because God led you a certain way last week – last month – last year does not mean He will lead you in the same way or the same direction again. God led the wise men by a star – then by advice from biblical scholars – then by a dream – and then changed the route how they return home. Fulfilling purpose and embracing change go together.
- To be a follower of Jesus is to see change as essential and part of the journey. Change is His will for your life.

2 Cor. 3:18 “And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.” (NLT)

Phil. 1:6 “And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.” (NLT)

- God is progressively changing you and progressively leading you. If we do not embrace change, we miss both.
- If we are always viewing change as something to resist, we will end up resisting the very change Jesus is trying to bring to our life. Sometimes I stop and think about all the changes I have experienced on this journey.
 - Change in thinking – I do not think like I did 27 years ago. How so? In countless ways. Let me share one: Life is not as binary as I thought it once was. It’s far more complex and multifaceted than I once thought.
 - Change in attitudes – I’m less critical and judgmental of others – their struggles – their imperfections – their brokenness – Time has allowed me to become much more acquainted with my own brokenness. The gift of self-awareness.
 - Change in behavior – Again in countless ways: Here’s one...” I’ve learned to rest and be still. I’ve learned to just BE. I don’t always have to be productive.
 - Change in strategies – (culture has changed) technology was a bit different in 1998 – people were different in 1998) Back in 1998, you could still go door to door and invite people to church. Now you can get shot!
 - Change in technology – In 1998, we used an overhead projector...I love our younger employees because they help me with staying current with technology and strategies.
 - Change in my leadership – leadership must evolve because people and culture change. My role has evolved over 27 years. For example: It’s not about how much I can do, it’s about how much I can influence.

- Change in relationships (I've seen a lot of people come and go) 27 years ago, my daughters were 8 & 9 years old. Now I have 4 grandchildren that are 8-11.
- The only way for me to stay on purpose all these years is to embrace change. Are you resisting the very change that God may be using to fulfill the purpose He has designed you for?

6. Purpose Is Universal

- Godly purpose is for everyone. The Magi were Gentiles, outsiders to Israel. Their inclusion shows that purpose isn't reserved for a select few—God invites all people to seek Him and find meaning and purpose in Christ.

Eph. 2:10 "For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago." (NLT)

Eph. 4:1 "Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God." (NLT)

- I know some of you may believe that godly purpose is for only a select few. God has a few special people He uses in tremendous ways and the rest of us are like observers in a game watching other people play.
- Yet, this is not what the word of God teaches. God saved you so you could experience the things He designed you to do for Him in this life. You have a godly calling on your life that you need to discover.
- Your calling was not simply believing in Jesus, having your sins forgiven and receiving eternal life. There is now a godly purpose He wants you to discover and walk in during this life.

HOW?

- If there is one thing we can learn from the wise men is that this life is a journey. You're not going to have it all figured out at the front end. What we all must do is begin. You must follow what has been revealed and trust that God will give you more when you need it.
- I had no idea I would be a pastor. At 18 God convinced me to go to a bible college for one year. During that year, he convinced me I needed to graduate. During my second year, He convinced me to do an internship as a youth pastor...and on and on the story goes. I just kept following what He revealed. I'm still living this way.
- Now, what do you need to do?
 - **Pray** – ask God for direction
 - **Serve** – He's already told you to do this. He will use serving as a way to reveal and guide you.
 - **Listen** – Listen to God but also to your discontent. What needs to change? (Don't let this be a fleshly response but a godly one. Explain – Quit blaming others for the lack of change. The reason might be you because you've been telling God NO.
 - **Follow** – Even though you have no idea, yet what the plan is. Trust the One leading you.

How is God leading you to experience purpose? What response is He asking of you today? How can you be more like the wise men who are willing to keep seeking?