



Most of the shopping has been done. In some houses, the presents are already under the tree. In other homes, the gifts are hiding in closets and under beds, waiting to be wrapped. And many people must now be wondering “Did I get the right thing?” “Will he like it?” “Will she want to take it back?”

In our rather consumeristic culture, we spend a lot of time thinking and worrying and looking and deciding about what gifts to get for our loved ones. But often the things we spend all that time on are not what is remembered years later. A church leader recently surveyed some people and asked them what they remembered most about Christmases past, and the answers ranged from special family traditions to certain handmade ornaments to silly games played with friends. Hardly any of the answers focused on particular gifts that were once wrapped and placed under the tree. Even in Dickens’s *Christmas Carol*, when Scrooge is presented with his Christmases past, it is not certain material things that come to his miserly mind, but special moments with special people—laughter, and conversations, and love.

When remembering his old (and very kind) boss, Scrooge remarked, “He has the power to render us happy or unhappy; to make our service light or burdensome; a pleasure or a toil. Say that his power lies in words and looks; in things so slight and insignificant that it is impossible to add and count ’em up: what then? The happiness he gives, is quite as great as if it cost a fortune.”

Let us all give such rich gifts this Christmas, and count ourselves blessed if we receive anything like that in return.

As students arrive, give each of them a copy of the above article to read. Then discuss it in this way:

What is one thing you look forward to at Christmastime?

The wise men in the story of Jesus’ birth and childhood had watched for the promised king to appear. They claimed to have learned of his coming through a star that appeared in the East. What signs can you see at Christmastime that tell you something about Jesus?

Do you have a hard time thinking of gifts to give to others at Christmas? If you could give a gift to Jesus, what would you give?

One way to learn how to give good gifts is to observe good givers. Today we’ll look at the Magi and see three characteristics that made them good givers.