



COMMUNICATOR GUIDE

Messy Christmas / Week 2

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SERIES BOTTOM LINE

Joy to the world anyway.

GOAL OF SMALL GROUP

To point students toward shifting their focus to Jesus this Christmas.

WEEK 2 BOTTOM LINE

You weren't meant to be the one who keeps it all together.

SCRIPTURE

- *Matthew 2:1-3, 8 NIV*

TEACHING SLIDES

All scripture, bottom lines, and teaching points that are bolded in this script are also provided as slides in your weekly "Teaching" folder.

OPTIONAL MEDIA

*[OPTIONAL MEDIA](#) for this week available for purchase through the [XP3 HS Media Package](#):

- Messy Christmas Countdown (10 minutes)
 - Christmas Candy Jar (for the interactive)
 - Messy Christmas Teaching Video
-

TEACHING OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

- I want to start with a very important question . . .
 - How many of you are going to hang out with your grandma at some point this Christmas?
- *PERSONAL STORY*
- See, Christmas can be like that. Sometimes, it's just a mess.

TENSION

- Sometimes, **Christmas brings the messes to the surface**—stuff that's already been going on.
- We try to fix and control things as quickly as possible so that everything stays in order.
- **We try to manage the mess.**
 - **We manage our image.**
 - **We manage expectations.**
 - **We manage relationships.**
 - **We manage behavior.**
- This list could go on and on. We all have our ways of managing the messes, especially during the holidays.
- The good news is that what we're going to talk about today is not only helpful in the areas where we try to manage the messes, it's helpful in all other areas of life too.

TRUTH

- The first four books of the New Testament are called the gospels. They are the accounts of Jesus' life when He lived among us.
- **So, if we want to see what God is like, all we have to do is look at Jesus.**
- Matthew is the first gospel, and it records what happened after Jesus was born. Let me break it down like this . . .
 - The traditional Christmas story—that's chapter one.
 - Today, we're going to turn the page to chapter two.
- In fact, *literal* chapter two of Matthew starts by saying this . . .
 - *"After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod..." (Matthew 2:1 NIV).*
- So now we learn about the guy who's in charge when Jesus was born. King Herod.
- Verse one continues . . .
 - *"Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, 'Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him'" (Matthew 2:1-2 NIV).*
- So, some wise men come to town.
- When they show up, they want to know where the Messiah is.
- The Messiah is the leader the Jewish people had been waiting for that would solve their problems and help them break free from the people that ruled over them.
- Jesus is that Messiah, and He came for all people.
- In fact, after Jesus came to Earth, lived, died, and came back to life, one of His earliest followers explained it all this way:
 - *In his very nature he was God.
Jesus was equal with God. But Jesus didn't take advantage of that fact.
Instead, he made himself nothing.
He did this by taking on the nature of a servant.
He was made just like human beings (Philippians 2:5b-7 NIRV)*
- King Jesus came with humility in order to help us.
- Matthew continues . . .
 - *"When King Herod heard this he was disturbed" (Matthew 2:3 NIV).*
- By "this," Matthew means the news that another king had been born.
- Just like that, the current king is threatened. Herod was in charge, and now there was competition . . . There can't be two kings.
- The last thing Herod wanted to do was lose control . . . his control of the kingdom, his future, his wealth, and his power . . . so he panicked.

- Before we judge, let's all admit that in some ways, we do that too. **We try to manage the mess, and when we feel like we're losing control** (of what's going on around us), **we don't like it.**
- Herod started slowly unraveling. He went to the wise men with a sneaky plan . . .
 - *"He sent them to Bethlehem and said, 'Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him'" (Matthew 2:8 NIV).*
- Herod obviously had no desire to worship Jesus. He would've immediately had Jesus killed.
- Now, I want to be really clear, I know Herod's example is extreme but there is something in his story that we can't miss. **Herod represents what happens when we try to be lord of our own lives.**
- When we think that following Jesus is about losing ourselves, it can feel threatening.
- But, **when we realize that Jesus came so that we could finally have real joy, peace, hope, and love, everything changes.**
- Think of it this way . . .
 - **BOTTOM LINE: YOU WEREN'T MEANT TO BE THE ONE THAT KEEPS IT ALL TOGETHER.**
- **But that's what makes Christmas so powerful—it's not about us keeping things together in our own power.**

APPLICATION

- But, what could that look like in the middle of any messes we're currently facing? Here are a couple of ideas . . .
 - **Loosen your grip.**
 - *INTERACTIVE: See the Communicator Guide for detailed instructions.*
 - **Trust the King who humbled Himself.**

LANDING

- In a perfect world, all the messes would just go away.
- This Christmas, we have a God who is right there with us in the middle of the mess.
- **BOTTOM LINE: YOU WEREN'T MEANT TO BE THE ONE THAT KEEPS IT ALL TOGETHER.**
- When you head to group, think about your answer to this question:
 - **Is there anything in life you're trying to control right now?**



TEACHING SCRIPT

Messy Christmas / Week 2

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WEEK 2 BOTTOM LINE

You weren't meant to be the one who keeps it all together.

INTRODUCTION

3 MINUTES

I want to start with a very important question . . .

How many of you are going to hang out with your grandma at some point this Christmas?

Let's give it up for all the grandmas in the world! Love that group! There's nothing better than hanging with Nana. Unless it's no fun at all. In that case, there are probably a lot of things better than hanging with Nana.

Growing up—all the way up until a few years ago when she passed away—I was sure to spend some of my Christmas break at my Nana's little house in the country. It was awesome! Like a lot of grandmothers in the world, my Nana was a great cook. Her food was delicious!

There were, however, some not-so-great parts of going to Nana's. For one, the house was HOT. Saying it was "warm" doesn't do it justice. You'd walk in from the cold and start sweating within minutes. Two, Nana had no WiFi. She also didn't have cable or satellite TV. If you happened to have cell service at her house—which was rare—that's the best chance you had at staying connected.

The funniest thing was when we'd open presents. She'd always get my cousins and I plain, white, basic socks. No shame in it—we can all use more socks. But that wasn't even the funniest part . . .

*The second we were done opening gifts—I mean it, The. Very. Second—*Nana started taking down Christmas. It was like she was in a race car sitting at a red light. And the light turned green when the last person opened their present and said thank you. Then she hit the gas. Before you could blink, she had used wrapping paper in trash bags, re-usable gift bags in cabinets, and Christmas tree decorations in plastic bins. My cousins and I would be instructed to carry the fake tree and follow Papa to the shed out back. By the time we walked back inside, it was like Christmas never happened.

See, Nana took great care of her things. When we were in her world, we knew that things were clean and neat. And I can respect that. But her sense of order was tested at Christmas—kids running around, food plates stacked up, wrapping paper, and of course, socks everywhere! Nana wasn't a big fan of the Christmas mess, and she didn't put up with it for long.

See, Christmas can be like that. Sometimes, it's just a mess. And I'm not talking about wrapping paper and food plates. It can be messy relationally and circumstantially. And sometimes we feel like my Nana looking at stuff everywhere. All we want to do is clean it up and get things in order. But unfortunately, it's not always possible. And that, my friends, is what we're talking about today.

TENSION

3 MINUTES

Sometimes, **Christmas brings the messes to the surface**—stuff that's already been going on. For example, maybe . . .

- We've been lonely for a while, but once Christmas break hits—and we don't have regular routines and schedules to distract us—it sinks in. Or, it seems like we come across endless pictures of happy couples at Christmastime, and it reminds us that we're by ourselves.
- Things have been falling apart at home for a while—or they're already broken or fractured—and Christmas brings all of that back to the front and center.
- It's a reminder of someone who's gone, or someone who is struggling.
- It's too much unstructured time in the same place, and Christmas becomes a time for old habits to come crawling back.

And sometimes, we try to respond to these messes the way my Nana did to the mess we made in her house. We try to fix and control things as quickly as possible so that everything stays in order. **We try to manage the mess.** For example . . .

- **We manage our image.** We post things that make it seem like family life is perfect for us. We know that we can't *control* the mess in our family, but we can *manage* it by what we portray on Instagram. We make sure that everything looks just right.
- **We manage expectations.** We try to do everything that we can to keep everyone happy. We feel like we're the one responsible to make sure that everyone gets along. Maybe you're in the middle of two divorced parents, and you feel the need to keep the peace at Christmastime.
- **We manage relationships.** We use all kinds of tactics to try to get people to do what we want them to do. We manipulate. We say things like, "I can't believe that you would act like that." We tell our parents, "You're ruining my Christmas break!" We play the victim, ignore people, yell at people, whatever it takes to manage the people around us.
- **We manage behavior.** Maybe some of you find control by doing everything perfectly—you do exactly what your parents expect from you. Maybe some of you are the opposite. You act out in negative ways in order to show the authority figures in your life that they're not in control of you.

This list could go on and on. We all have our ways of managing the messes, especially during the holidays. The good news is that what we're going to talk about today is not only helpful in the areas where we try to manage the messes, it's helpful in all other areas of life too. And it has the potential to really change the game on how we view things this Christmas season.

TRUTH

6 MINUTES

If you're unfamiliar with the Bible, no worries! I'll bring you up to speed really quick. It's divided into two sections: The Old Testament and the New Testament. In the Old Testament are the books of the Bible that record what happened before Jesus walked the Earth. The New Testament consists of the books that account from the time that Jesus walked the Earth and beyond. But ultimately, whether it's an Old Testament or New Testament book, they all point to Jesus.

The first four books of the New Testament are called the gospels. They are the accounts of Jesus' life when He lived among us. And these books are important because they're all about Jesus. And this is huge because Jesus was God. **So, if we want to see what God is like, all we have to do is look at Jesus.**

Matthew is the first gospel, and it records what happened after Jesus was born. Let me break it down like this . . .

- The traditional Christmas story—that's chapter one. If there's a nativity scene at your grandma's house (there was a FANCY one at my Nana's), that's what chapter one is all about. Jesus is born in a cave. Mary, Joseph, and some animals were all gathered around. This is what Christmas pageants are all about.
- Today, we're going to turn the page to chapter two.

In fact, *literal* chapter two of Matthew starts by saying this . . .

"After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod..." (Matthew 2:1 NIV).

So now we learn about the guy who's in charge when Jesus was born. King Herod. He's called "Herod The Great." He crushed opposition. He was wealthy, smart, and strong. He did some brilliant things. But he was also in love with power. His fits of rage and jealousy led him to do all kinds of things.

Verse one continues . . .

"Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, 'Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him'" (Matthew 2:1-2 NIV).

So, some wise men come to town. Maybe you've also seen them in your grandma's nativity scene. They're *definitely* a part of the Christmas story, but they're more chapter two than chapter one. When they show up, they want to know where the Messiah is. The Messiah is the leader the Jewish people had been waiting for that would solve their problems and help them break free from the people that ruled over them. Jesus is that Messiah, and He came for all people. Stop and think about that for a second. Jesus, who is God in a human body, came to Earth. Like, God came to Earth and dealt with all the human things: bruises, stress, puberty, and pimples. In fact, after Jesus came to Earth, lived, died, and came back to life, one of His earliest followers explained it all this way:

In his very nature he was God.

Jesus was equal with God. But Jesus didn't take advantage of that fact. Instead, he made himself nothing.

He did this by taking on the nature of a servant.

He was made just like human beings (Philippians 2:5b-7 NIRV)

King Jesus came with humility in order to help us. As we go back to the Christmas story, that's who the magi are looking for. They're asking, "Where's Jesus—the Man who's going to save us and lead us? We want to worship Him!"

Matthew continues . . .

"When King Herod heard this he was disturbed" (Matthew 2:3 NIV).

By "this," Matthew means the news that another king had been born. Just like that, the current king is threatened. Herod was in charge, and now there was competition . . . There can't be two kings. The last thing Herod wanted to do was lose control . . . his control of the kingdom, his future, his wealth, and his power . . . so he panicked. Before we judge, let's all admit that in some ways, we do that too. **We try to manage the mess, and when we feel like we're losing control (of what's going on around us), we don't like it.**

- When we can't manage image—and people find out that our family isn't perfect—we hate it.

- When there's too much unknown, and it feels out of our control, we feel anxious.
- When we can't manipulate people into doing what we want, we get angry.
- When we can't make everyone happy and be everywhere at once, we feel overwhelmed.

We don't like our sense of control being messed with. Herod started slowly unraveling. He went to the wise men with a sneaky plan . . .

"He sent them to Bethlehem and said, 'Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him'" (Matthew 2:8 NIV).

Herod obviously had no desire to worship Jesus. He would've immediately had Jesus killed. The wise men never came back to Herod, and never sent him a report. They saw Jesus, celebrated Him, then went a different way back to their hometowns. When Herod realized that his little plan didn't work, he lost it. He did something so horrible, it turns my stomach. He ordered for kids two and under, who could possibly fit Jesus' description, to be killed. Was his plan successful? Of course not. Did it create a lot of pain and chaos? Absolutely!

Now, I want to be really clear, I know Herod's example is extreme but there is something in his story that we can't miss. **Herod represents what happens when we try to be lord of our own lives.** When you think about it, this story is really a tale of two kings . . .

- King Herod was concerned about losing his throne. He wanted to protect and maintain it.
- King Jesus arrived in a manger to invite everyone to a new and better kingdom.
- King Herod created a temporary, fear-based solution.
- King Jesus came to restore chaos for all of eternity.
- King Herod made things messier.
- King Jesus came to bring peace.
- King Herod felt threatened by Jesus.
- King Jesus felt no threat. He came to help Herod and all of humanity get rid of those unhealthy things in his heart and become the fullest version of himself.

When we think that following Jesus is about losing ourselves, it can feel threatening. But, **when we realize that Jesus came so that we could finally have real joy, peace, hope, and love, everything changes.**

Herod obviously never realized this. His life ended in a sad way. He was never going to be King forever, no matter what he tried. He wanted to make it all happen on his own. He tried to manage the mess, but it didn't work. It never does. The same that's true for him that first Christmas is true for me today. And, it's true for you, too! Think of it this way . . .

YOU WEREN'T MEANT TO BE THE ONE THAT KEEPS IT ALL TOGETHER.

You weren't meant to be the master of the mess! You want to fix and control things? Me too! **But that's what makes Christmas so powerful—it's not about us keeping things together in our own power.** It's about focusing on the only One who can truly lead us to life the way it's supposed to be—The King who was born and placed in a manger. The King who—out of love for us—came to live among us.

APPLICATION

3 MINUTES

You weren't meant to be the master of the mess! You want to fix and control things? Me too! **But that's what makes Christmas so powerful—it's not about us keeping things together in our own power.** It's about focusing on the only One who can truly lead us to life the way it's supposed to be—The King who was born and placed in a manger. The King who—out of love for us—came to live among us.

APPLICATION

But, what could that look like in the middle of any messes we're currently facing? Here are a couple of ideas . . .

1. **Loosen your grip.** This is what Herod failed to do. He was so intense, worried, anxious, and threatened that he let the worst parts of him get the best of him. We think that controlling and managing things takes away anxiety. In reality, it has the potential to increase anxiety. When we learn to let go and put it in the hands of God, we can actually feel more peace and rest.



OPTIONAL MEDIA available for purchase through the XP3HS Media Package:

Messy Christmas – “Christmas Candy Jar”

(Communicator, get a plastic cup from your house. You need one that fits within this size description: If you put your hand into the cup and ball your hand into a fist, you can't get it out. But if you relax your hand, it comes out of the cup easily. You also need a couple pieces of Christmas candy).

I saw this illustration when I was a kid. It's so simple, but I still remember it today. Let's say I put this delicious Christmas candy in this cup. And then I reach inside, grab it, and grip it tightly, I can't get my hand out. (Demonstrate.) If I let it go, however, I can get my hand out easily. And then I can just turn over the cup and pour the candy in my hand. Like I said, it's super simple. But sometimes the things that we think we'll get from control and order—things like peace and security—those actually show up through letting go. And it's such a less exhausting way to live!

2. **Trust the King who humbled Himself.** Jesus is secure enough in Who He is to be the humble King. Out of His love for us, He came to Earth, lived His life among us to show us the loving heart of God, then displayed His ultimate love by dying on a cross for our sins. We can let go and trust Him with anything and everything in our lives!

LANDING

1 MINUTE

In a perfect world, all the messes would just go away. Or, like my Nana, we could just clean them up ourselves. But as we learn through Herod, that doesn't work. This Christmas, we have a God who is right there with us in the middle of the mess. God is present, God is loving, and God is powerful. **You weren't meant to be the one that keeps it all together.** God can manage that mess this holiday season. You don't have to be king or lord of your life—That's God's job. After all, God is much better at it than we are!

When you head to group, think about your answer to this question:

Is there anything in life you're trying to control right now?



TRANSITION INTO SMALL GROUPS