



## Christmas and Control | Ryan Wekenman | 12.14-15

### Weekly Study

#### SHARE

Welcome to another week of our series Christmas at Red Rocks Church. Last week, we dove into the theme of "Go Outside". We were challenged to step outside of ourselves and our worries, embracing the wonder of God's glory as we wait on Him. This week, we shift our focus as we continue reflecting on the birth of Jesus and the choices we make in response to His arrival.

As we move into this week's message, we focus on the theme of surrender versus control—two vastly different approaches to life, especially during the Christmas season. Ryan explores how these two perspectives play out in our lives, particularly as we navigate the pressures of the season.

- What was one thing that clearly stuck out to you and with you from this week's message?**
  
- How do you find yourself trying to control the holiday season?**

#### GROW

**Read Matthew 1:18-24 & Matthew 2:1-2**

As we reflect on the Christmas story, we see two radically different responses to God's plan. Mary and Joseph's story is one of quiet, humble surrender. Despite the immense pressure of being chosen for such a monumental task, bearing and raising the Savior of the world, they obey without fully understanding what it would cost them. Joseph's decision to marry Mary, despite the public disgrace it could bring, and Mary's willingness to bear the Son of God, accepting the unknown, both demonstrate profound trust and surrender to God's plan, setting

aside their own fears and desires to follow His call. Both Mary and Joseph exemplify a response of “yes” to God, even when it doesn’t make sense by worldly standards.

In stark contrast, Herod’s response in Matthew 2:1-2 reveals a person clinging desperately to control. When Herod hears of the birth of the new King of the Jews, he is disturbed because he fears losing his power. Herod’s obsession with controlling every situation, even through violence, illustrates the destructive nature of unchecked control. Unlike Mary and Joseph, Herod is not willing to surrender; he seeks to protect his own kingdom at all costs, even if it means ordering the massacre of innocent children.

- Reflect on the difference between Mary and Joseph’s response to God’s plan and Herod’s response to perceived threats.**
- How do you see yourself in the stories of surrender (Mary and Joseph) versus control (Herod)? How does this relate to your approach to Christmas this year?**

## MOVE

### Read Matthew 2:3-16

Herod’s response to the birth of Jesus offers a sobering example of what happens when we let fear and control take root in our hearts. When Herod hears of Jesus’ birth, he reacts with violence and paranoia, fearing the loss of his power. This reaction is fueled by his obsessive need to control his kingdom. However, the Magi, who followed God’s guidance with open hearts, experienced joy and peace when they found Jesus. Their willingness to surrender their plans and trust in God’s direction contrasts sharply with Herod’s destructive control.

This distinction is a powerful lesson for us: when we try to control every aspect of our lives, we often experience frustration, anxiety, and isolation, just like Herod. On the other hand, when we choose to surrender to God’s will, even when the path isn’t clear, we open ourselves to peace, joy, and spiritual fulfillment. The story of the Magi encourages us to trust God’s timing and direction, knowing that His plans for us are good, even if they are unexpected.

- Reflect on the areas of your life where you might be trying to control outcomes, whether it’s in relationships, work, or personal goals. How does clinging to control affect your peace and joy?**

- In what ways might God be calling you to surrender specific areas of your life to Him this season? What are the fears or obstacles that make surrender difficult for you?
- Why do you think it so difficult for you specifically to surrender control, especially during the busy and often stressful holiday season? What might God be inviting you to let go of this Christmas?

## P R A Y

Take time as a group to pray, reflecting on the theme of surrender versus control. Here are some prompts for prayer:

- Ask God to reveal areas in your life where you may be holding on to control rather than trusting Him.
- Pray for the strength to surrender your plans and desires to God, knowing that His will is always better.

**Group Prayer:** Share prayer requests, and take turns praying for each one. End the time together by praying for a spirit of surrender during this holiday season.