

# The Power of True Worship:

## *Lessons from the Wise Men's Encounter with Christ*

If you have your Bibles, please turn to Matthew chapter two. We'll delve into the first 12 verses together. Consider marking this chapter; we'll reference it as we proceed today.

Have you ever wondered about the three kings from the Orient? Most scholars believe these wise men, often represented in nativity scenes alongside shepherds, weren't present at the stable. Instead, they visited the house years later. Interestingly, the shepherds likely arrived the same day.

Whether it took them a day or years, the crux is finding Christ. Some embrace the gospel immediately upon hearing it, while others might need repeated exposures before an epiphany. We hope all find their way to the Lord.

## They Asked the Right Questions

Historically, these wise men were likely ancient scientists or astrologers from regions like Persia. Their intelligence was evident, but what set them apart? They asked the right questions. To find solutions, we must frame our inquiries correctly.

Their quest for Jesus was driven by faith. Though distinct in many ways, both shepherds and wise men shared a goal: seeking Christ. Unlike the priests and scribes who could only vaguely point Herod towards the newborn king, the wise men's direct inquiry piqued interest. They were purposeful in their pursuit, teaching us that seeking Christ is intentional and personal.

To encounter God, one must seek Him wholeheartedly. The search for Jesus isn't a one-time event but a lifelong journey of following and growing with Him. While we might wish for salvation for our loved ones, accepting Jesus is an individual choice influenced by the Holy Spirit.

These wise men weren't merely seeking religious experiences; they desired a genuine relationship with God. Their focus was clear: "Where is he? We have seen his star. We've come to worship him."

## They Followed Divine Leading

Their brilliance extended to following God's guidance. The star they observed in the east guided them, illuminating the path and pinpointing the exact location of Jesus. This celestial phenomenon underscores the importance of divine guidance in finding Christ.

Our pursuit of Jesus isn't left to chance. The Holy Spirit guides us towards Christ. Discovering the Savior isn't accidental; it's the Holy Spirit's inner workings leading us to Him. It emphasizes the profound concept of grace. Even when we were strangers, Jesus extended grace. The Holy Spirit gently beckons us, urging us to approach just as we are, representing mercy. Grace and mercy pave the way for individuals to find and embrace Christ.

Being lost is unsettling. Can you recall a time when you felt truly lost, uncertain of your whereabouts? God, I believe, never denies guidance to those earnestly seeking Christ. I cherish the hymn "Softly and Tenderly," a reminder that Jesus beckons us, sometimes in whispers.

However, there are moments when God's call is louder, echoing even amidst chaos or profound experiences reminiscent of Moses and the burning bush. If you're unfamiliar with God, consider events or feelings that seem out of place, perhaps signals that God is reaching out, eager to establish a relationship.

Even before acknowledging Jesus, there are signs pointing towards Him throughout our lives. Reflecting on one's journey might reveal multiple instances of God's presence and His desire for a deeper bond.

Imagine the joy of a personal bond with God, akin to Abraham's friendship with Him. Many boast about extensive friend lists in today's digital age, but true friendship is revealed in adversity. It's during challenging times that genuine friends emerge.

God desires intimacy with us. This relationship flourishes with consistent communication. Often, God has messages for us, yet we might delay or overlook them. What could be more crucial than divine communication?

Some never discover Christ as they seek the spotlight rather than following His guiding light. Reflecting on the wise men, God illuminates our path, providing direction. However, if one is engrossed in their self-made light, it becomes challenging to recognize the need for a Savior. When one's focus remains self-centered, it impedes accepting and acknowledging a force beyond oneself.

I'm grateful that God shakes us up to set us free. Being trapped within ourselves is the harshest confinement. Often, we're the root of our own distress. From personal

experience, Jesus aims to rescue us from sin and our self-imposed limitations. When you break free from self-restraints, genuine freedom awaits.

Have you encountered someone who always redirects conversations back to themselves? Perhaps a family member? Such individuals seem to believe the world revolves around them. A.W. Tozer astutely observed that many remain restless because they haven't reached their breaking point.

Our path to God starts where our self-centeredness ends. The shepherds realized it wasn't about their flock but about a savior. Similarly, the wise men understood it wasn't about their knowledge but about seeking. Despite the uncertainties and challenges, they pursued Him relentlessly. Such surrender marks the journey toward sanctity and salvation.

No one handed the wise men a comprehensive roadmap; they simply followed a star. They trusted the light given to them, and God rewarded their faithfulness. Sometimes, discerning God's will feels daunting. The key? Move forward with the clarity you have. As you progress, God illuminates the subsequent steps.

To be led by God, you must actively seek Him. If you're waiting passively, it's time to act. Engage with purpose and drive. The Bible reminds us, "Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you." Your closeness to God reflects your intent and effort.

While having God in your heart is profound, it's merely the beginning of a transformative journey. Each day offers an opportunity to make an impact, guided by God's presence. Every Christian has a role in God's larger plan. Whether it's sharing the gospel publicly or serving quietly, embrace your calling wholeheartedly. Today's world needs proactive faith. Let us rise to the occasion.

I deeply resonate with that scripture. When will God act? He acts when you do. He desires to accompany and work through you. It's not about dictating to God but partnering with Him, walking side by side as co-laborers. We should be asking, "Where are we headed today, Lord? Guide me, let me hear Your voice amidst my hectic schedule. Help me remain attuned to the opportunities You place before me."

## They Worshiped Jesus

Reflect on the wise men. Their wisdom was evident in their immediate response upon finding Jesus: they worshiped Him. What more fitting reaction could there be? They entered expecting a divine encounter and had prepared their hearts for worship. Their journey was arduous, but turning back wasn't an option. Their destiny lay ahead in Bethlehem, where they sought the newborn King of the Jews.

Imagine the scene: the wise men arriving, the divine glow indicating the presence of the world's Savior behind a simple door. These men, with their rich attire, symbolizing their stature and purpose, were ready for this divine moment. As they approached, anticipation and reverence filled the air. Upon meeting the infant Jesus, they were in the presence of divinity. The culmination of prophecies, the promise of salvation, was embodied in this child.

Upon seeing the star, their hearts rejoiced, knowing they were on the right path. Yet, upon seeing Jesus, their joy transformed into profound worship. Their encounter illuminated the room with God's glory. Can you fathom making eye contact with the Creator, the one who spoke the universe into existence?

True worship always revolves around Christ. It's not about us; it's entirely about Him. As we approach moments of worship, the question shouldn't be, "What will I gain?" but rather, "What can I offer?" The depth of our worship experience often mirrors our investment in it.

Two individuals can attend church together. One might leave brimming with joy from the experience, while the other feels it was just average. The difference? It's about the intention and engagement one brings into the experience.

After worshipping Jesus, the wise men's actions stood out. They presented Him with gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Each gift was heartfelt, emphasizing their connection to the occasion. Yet, their primary focus remained on God. It's essential to remember: we don't worship the act of worship itself but the God we worship. Our faith isn't about denominations or gatherings; it's about the Almighty.

Jesus established the church with a distinct purpose: a sanctuary of devoted believers. Reflecting on the New Testament, the church's foundation was always God-centric. As we exit a place of worship, our foremost question shouldn't be about personal satisfaction but whether our worship resonated with Christ and honored Him.

True worship elevates Jesus, placing Him at the forefront. Our mindset should be geared towards God even before we enter a place of worship. Ideally, every Sunday, one should wake up eager to commune with God, viewing it as an encounter with a dear friend. It's a collective experience, mirroring the unity of God's family on earth and a glimpse of the unity in heaven.

We must recognize the sanctity of the church as God's dwelling. Before we gather, we should prepare to pour out our hearts in reverence, lifting His name high. True worship involves surrendering ourselves, humbling our spirits, and offering God the unique gifts He has bestowed upon us.

Every day offers a chance to reaffirm our commitment to God, to bow in worship, and to honor Him. Engaging in genuine worship transforms us. It's not about merely fulfilling a religious obligation or bargaining with God based on our deeds. Worship is a profound privilege, a sacred moment to connect with God.

What a profound invitation we've received! It's not merely an invitation to be blessed but to be transformed. Reflect on the last line of our text: they journeyed back to their homeland by a different route. Herod expected updates from them to facilitate his worship. However, God guided them away from that path. They bypassed worldly temptations and returned with hearts brimming with divine experience. Perhaps their camels' pouches were lighter, but the richness of their stories and shared moments would have been unparalleled. Imagine if the shepherds and the wise men shared their firsthand experiences. The shepherds recounted their encounter with the newborn Jesus, and the wise men described the Christ child, possibly walking and growing.

## Encountering Christ Changes Us

Encountering God's glory transforms us. Leaving a place of worship unchanged is a missed opportunity. Continuously going through the motions without genuine transformation doesn't align with God's intentions. True worship propels change. Just as the wise men redirected their journey based on divine guidance, we should be open to evolving in our spiritual journey. Our aim shouldn't be to serve God in the new year as we did before. God seeks to refine and elevate us continually. Everyone, without exception, can grow closer to God and serve Him more profoundly.

We all have the potential to deepen our relationship with God. Let's not allow our spiritual lives to stagnate. Embrace the renewal that Christ offers. Recall the joy the shepherds felt sharing their good news or the wise men's enthusiasm upon finding Jesus. We mustn't settle or become complacent. As Paul advised Timothy, we should reignite our passion for God. When our hearts are aflame for God, it drives us to act. This isn't a time for spiritual passivity or feeling content with our current state of faith.

Anticipate the imminent call. When it sounds, let's be actively engaged in God's work, illuminating our spheres with His love and glory. Remember, our journey isn't about human perceptions but divine understanding. The God we serve desires a genuine relationship with us, offering renewal and fresh beginnings. As we approach the new year, let's shed old mindsets and clothe ourselves with praise and love. May our hearts overflow with such divine love that it radiates to all around us, revealing the transformative power and boundless love of Jesus. After all, the wise men didn't seek Mary or Joseph; they sought the Messiah.

The world seeks to see Jesus. Just as the Greeks told Philip, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus," today's world yearns for the genuine presence of Jesus—not just in the church but in every believer. The wisdom of the wise men is evident in their pursuit. Firstly, they sought God for themselves. Secondly, they heeded God's simple call: "Follow me." It's a straightforward command—stay close to Him. And thirdly, upon finding Jesus, their worship was profound. Their encounter with Him transformed them, and their worship wasn't confined to a moment; it was continuous.

Every attendee of our fellowship should be prepared for transformative change. We should all desire new hearts and renewed attitudes, leaving behind the negativity of the past. As we usher in the new year, our theme resonates with a simple yet profound message: "More in 24." This theme invites us to break free from routine and deepen our relationship with Christ. Embrace more fellowship, love, prayer, and so much more.

To receive more from God, we must be willing to give more. God is ever-abundant, awaiting a receptive vessel. Reflecting on my past challenges, I recall my pastor's words: "Just follow Him and be open like an empty container." It's a task we can all undertake. This year, let's pray for opportunities that stretch our faith for moments that seem beyond our capabilities. Because in those moments, growth and transformation truly unfold.

Ask yourself, what are you currently doing for God that feels beyond your reach? That's divine guidance at play. It's not just you, but God working through you. Remember, with Christ, nothing is impossible. We've discovered the treasure that is Jesus, and now, our mission is to let His light shine beyond these walls. Let Him set our hearts on fire—not literally, of course, but with passion for His purpose.