

## The Greatest Gift: Adoring the Gift - 2

We are right in the middle of the Christmas season. I thought I'd start by asking you what some of your favorite things are about the Christmas season. How many of you would say:

- Looking at Christmas decorations is your favorite part of the Christmas season? Not you decorating, but looking at other people's decorations.
- How many of you would say gifts? Giving or getting gifts.
- How many of you would say the food is your favorite part?

Notice - I didn't ask **what the most important part of Christmas was**, that would have been too easy. We already know what the most important part of Christmas is. **It's in the Word – Christmas. Christ worship.** It's about worshiping Jesus and helping others know, the most important part of Christmas is Jesus.

When you think about Christmas and worshiping, focusing on Jesus at Christmas, in the back of our minds, that's the reason for the season, that's what it's all about. **But for some reasons, we miss out on worship during the Christmas season.**

- Why? We get too busy. You're doing this and that, rushing here and there, and get so busy when Christmas is over, you wonder, "I didn't worship."

### **But there's another reason.**

- Maybe we don't know how to worship.
- Problem is, to many, worship sounds **boring**. I come and sit, hope something happens – usually nothing does. **But no one showed us how to worship.**

**So - What is worship?** The original word was **worth ship**. **The original English word has to do with value and worth, and what you value in life.** When you say you worship the Lord God, you're absolute worth – that is worship.

Worship is a missing ingredient in a lot of our lives, it adds a lot to life. But worship seems foreign to a lot of people, **because** no one's ever told you **how** to worship.

I want to help you do the most important thing you can do at Christmas - **to worship**. **Because when you worship - it actually changes you and does something great to you.** **Today we're going to let the first Christmas worshippers teach us how to worship.** They came all the far east to find and worship Jesus. They were called the wise men and they'll help us learn how to worship Jesus this Christmas.

Let's look back at what happened with the wise men at the first Christmas in today's scripture in Matthew 2. And let's let these wise men help us learn about different parts of worship:

## 1. START WITH A SINCERE DESIRE.

It sounds simple, but if you don't want to worship, you're not going to worship. Like the Wise Men, you need to go and meet Jesus. The Bible says in Matthew 2:1, "The Magi from the east came to Jerusalem." Who were they? The Wise Men were Maji or political advisors. Experts in science, agriculture, math, history, astronomy and religion - the power behind the power - the king makers of the day.

**That's why they were interested in a king that was going to be born!**

- They heard a special king was to be born, so they made the long and expensive journey to worship the new king. More than curiosity, they wanted to see Jesus. When you think worship, the first part of worship is to desire or want to worship. This is important, because worship meets the spiritual needs in my life.

We know that need, it's that *emptiness* inside us that we try to fill it all the time. It's that need for significance: at work and in relationships. Those are spiritual hungers we try to fill in physical ways.

- So, we go out and shop, or we can eat more, or binge on movies. It puts off the need for a while, but it doesn't meet the need. This is also where addictions come from - by trying to meet spiritual needs in physical ways.

But it never works. Because what we need... is worship! Something only God can give us - to fill the emptiness and give hope. The wise men desired worship, they knew what the star meant and went to worship the king.

**So let's try it.** For a minute... recognize your desire to experience God. Tell God, "I need you to fulfill my need for your comfort, hope and strength; to fulfill my need for significance. God, I need and want you meet my needs in worship."

The second thing the wise men teach us about worship, is you need to:

## 2. DEVELOP AN EXPECTANT SPIRIT

Expect Jesus to show up, there's a connection between faith and expectations. When you expect to meet God in worship, you tend to meet God in worship.

The Maji expected to meet Jesus. In Matthew 2:2 they say, “*Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.*” **There’s no if, they expected Jesus to be there and they expected to worship.** Try spending a few minutes before a worship service and **expect Jesus to show up and say something to you, it makes all the difference in the world.**

I’m always humbled **when I go to Honduras.** I find people who walk or drive for hours so they can get to church early to sing and pray, they prepare for worship.

- They do this, to raise their heart of expectation towards God. And I thought, I don’t give it 5 minutes many times. There’s something about taking time and raising your expectation, it transforms worship.

**Think about the first Christmas: the different people with different attitudes:**

- The **wise men**, they were expectant - they expected Jesus to show up.
- **Herod** – he was resistant, didn’t want Jesus to show up and fought it.
- There were **the religious leaders**.... They were indifferent and figured they knew, “He’s in Bethlehem.” **Did you notice?** They didn’t go with the wise men to Bethlehem. **They knew the answer**, but didn’t do anything about it.

**God can work more with expectant and resistant people than indifferent people.**

That’s why Jesus said, “*I’d rather have you be hot or cold. Don’t be lukewarm or I’m going to sit you out of my mouth if you’re lukewarm.*” That’s pretty clear.

**Indifference, kills worship.** If your worship becomes routine, it’s turns into indifference. For these religious leaders, worship and the scriptures became routine. They knew the truth, but it didn’t impact their life.

- Do you remember the first time you experienced God in worship and it felt like heaven opened up? Then a few months later, you’re trying not to fall asleep. **It’s not hard to become indifferent.**

**So we have to do something so we stay focused - we must be expectant!** The wise men teach us what to do, like the wise men we should ask “Where is the Messiah?”

**You build expectancy by asking God questions.**

- Ask God questions, like, “God, what are You really like? Why is there evil in this world and why is this happening to me? How can I find hope in this circumstance?” **Then, when you come to worship and wait for God to answer you. Some questions will only be answered in worship.**

*So let's do that together too. What question do you need to ask God right now?* God can handle it. Ask: "God, why? God, how? God, when?" The answer may not come immediately, but it might.

But over time as you worship, your confidence that God will answer you happens in worship. It's part of worship. **Next, the third thing the wise men teach us, in order to worship, you have to choose to express joy.**

### **3. CHOOSE TO EXPRESS JOY.**

**Joy happens when I make a choice to trust God.** The wise men did this in Matthew 2:10, "*When they saw the star, they were overjoyed.*" They chose to express joy.

Actually, in the original Greek. it actually says, "*They rejoiced with great joy, great exceedingly.*" They were overflowing with joy. They didn't just smile, they openly expressed their joy. **If you don't enjoy the love of Jesus Christ, you're not really connecting with him in worship.**

**When you think about expressing joy,** because they didn't just have joy - they expressed it. There's something about expressing it. When you think about expressing joy here something to remember.

- **First when you express joy, you do it in your personality.** Like you see a bubbly person over there. Do you have to become like him to be a joyful person? **No. You've got to be like you.** Some of you have the barest smile at the corner of your mouth that would be exceeding great joy for you. That's ok. You do it within your personality.

It's whatever fits for you in worship, that's how you worship.

**Here's something else the Wise men can teach us:**

### **4. DECIDE TO HUMBLE YOURSELF.**

Imagine, these wise men from the east, show up in Bethlehem and they bow before a baby. In Matthew 2:11, "*On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him.*" They recognized they were in the presence of someone greater... so they bowed down. **They didn't just say there's this new king to lead a country - they knew it.**

**When we worship, that's when we start to realize we're in the presence of God.**

One much greater than we can comprehend. But we are not only in God's presence when we're in a worship service. We are always in the presence of the greatness of God. That is a very humbling thought.

- **It's realizing God is God and I'm not.** That God is strong when I'm not; God understands when I don't; I may fail, God doesn't. **That's the greatness of God.**

That's part of what it means to have humility. Humility is trusting God and his love enough to admit that God is God and I am not! Even when I don't understand it all. I trust you God, because you are God.

- **I want us to do that right now.** Just bow before him and say I humble myself before you God, I recognize that you are God and I say yes to you.
- **Yes to God's forgiveness, maybe for the first time.**
- Yes, I recognize you died so I could be forgiven, and I accept your forgiveness.

**That's a humble decision.** Because you're saying instead of doing it my way, figuring it out my way, **I'm going to trust the way You've provided.** That takes humility. But that humility is met by his love in a very powerful way. Because he's the one who gives us this great forgiveness.

When you humble yourself and connect with God's greatness, you know you're connecting with power. And it affects you in ways you can't even explain sometimes. That's the greatness of what happens in worship. **These wise men teach us a fifth thing about worship. The fifth things they do is the most famous thing we know about these wise men.**

## **5. PLAN TO GIVE GIFTS.**

The most famous thing about these wise men is that they gave three gifts. These three gifts are famous because they were part of the worship in their lives.

- **Worship is not just taking in. Worship is also giving out.** It's also taking action. **In worship we receive from God, but we also give back to God and others.** So in Matthew 2:11, the Bible says, *"Then they opened their treasures and presented Him with gifts of gold and of frankincense and of myrrh."*

**A lot of us we never practice this part of worship.** For one thing what do you give God? What do you give the person who has everything. What do you give the person who *made* everything? How do you figure that one out? **We have what I have heard as “The little drummer boy syndrome.”** I have no gift to bring that’s fit to give my king. What can I give that would make any difference to God?

**What you can you give him... yourself.** God made you to be in relationship with Him. **So when you give him your choice, when you give him your love, when you give him your devotion, that’s the greatest gift of all.**

Your love and devotion is something of great value. When you give God your decision, your heart, that is a gift of great value. You give God - you – that is part of worship.

### **Prayer:**

Lord, I want to move from where I am, to truly worship you. So I ask you that you would develop in me these things we just talked about.

Develop in me a sincere desire and help me to want what you can give in worship, what I can only find in worship. Help me recognize that is what I need in my life. God, I also pray that you give me an expectant spirit. Build my faith. Help me to expect you to show up.

Give me a heart that chooses to rejoice, and help me to humble myself before you. Lord, I want to be a person who gives gifts back to you because you’ve given so much to me. I pray that you help me to act. Not just think about, but to act on what you say I need to do to connect with you in worship. Jesus, I worship you. In your name I pray. Amen.