

THE HEART OF

Worship



had the same profession, but a change had taken place within their hearts. They were now fully in tune with the One who had created them. They were worshiping the Lord, even in the midst of the field among their sheep. Instead of bitterly enduring long hours tending sheep, they realized their purpose in life beyond the grassy fields. They knew God was the One who had miraculously sent His Son to earth, and they knew their calling was to tell others about the moment they saw our Lord and Savior face-to-face. The joy from their encounter with Jesus was too wondrous to contain. Much like the shepherds, may we all find ourselves in the position where we cannot resist sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ with others, for there is no greater message we could ever convey.

Unfortunately, many people do not want to share the Good News or even worship God. It is saddening to see the number of people who are adamantly against worshiping a higher authority. Instead, they want to worship entities created by man. Whether it is an electronic gadget, a celebrity figure, or an athletic team, people find an infinite number of idols in which to put their hope. Yet nothing made by any human being on earth can ever provide eternal hope. Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, who gave His life for us, is the only source of everlasting hope. Why should we desire to worship anyone or anything else? Our complete adoration should go to the only One who can truly help us in our time of need. He is the only One who can save our souls.

We must surrender our all to Him. He is the only One we are to worship and adore. This is the heart of worship: surrendering ourselves to the only living God, trusting Him as a child would trust their loving father. We cannot worship the Lord sincerely until we take ourselves out of the picture. According to Tozer, "The essence of surrender is getting out of the way so that God can do what He wants to do." Worship should never be about us, but it should always be about Him. Jesus Christ should always be the center of our worship. Let us worship Him for all eternity!

May God bless you always,
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When Jesus Christ was born, a group of Wise Men undertook a long, arduous journey to reach the house where He was living as a young child. They did not travel such a distance simply to see a little boy. The Magi asked, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star as it rose, and we have come to worship him" (Matt. 2:2). These individuals had one purpose for their expedition, and that purpose was to worship the King of kings and Lord of lords. They faithfully followed the star, which led them to their destination. Along the way, they did not become discouraged. They did not lose hope that they would actually be able to find Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. Nor did they fail to remember their reason for traveling so far.

God's Word says, "They entered the house and saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him" (Matt. 2:11). When they arrived, the first thing they did was to bow down and worship Jesus. After their tiresome trek, they did not complain about sore feet or aching muscles. Their minds were not on acquiring a hot meal, finding a place to bathe, or locating a bed on which to lie down. No one proceeded to present the gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh the moment they set foot inside the house. They stayed focused on their primary goal, to worship the newborn King.

In the twenty-first century, we could take a lesson from the Magi. They trekked many miles in order to reach the place where Jesus was living. On the contrary, some people nowadays find it a struggle to get in their air-conditioned automobile and drive to church every Sunday morning. They complain about the service being too early or running too late. When they arrive, they get upset if someone is "sitting in their pew." How would church sanctuaries look different if believers joyfully walked through the doors, headed straight to the altar, and wholeheartedly worshiped our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ? What sort of impact would it have on our workplaces, schools, and other locations we visit throughout the week if we worshiped the Lord during our commute as well? Surely, making worship a priority would be a step toward pleasing the Lord in all we do (Col. 3:23). I am certain we would see a significant change in the way people interact with one another. Certainly, our

testimony for Christ would have a greater impact on those around us.

Furthermore, giving praise to the Lord would ultimately make a difference in our own lives. Look at the shepherds who came to see Jesus when He was born. In God's Word, we read about how they told others what they had witnessed. Luke 2:18 says, "All who heard the shepherds' story were astonished." They could not keep this Good News of great joy to themselves. Having knelt in the presence of the Almighty God was the most marvelous experience of their entire lives. When they shared their testimony of seeing Christ with their own eyes, other people were amazed at what they heard.

Like the shepherds, we should have the same reaction when we stand in the presence of the Lord. When we worship our Heavenly Father, we need to open our hearts, allowing God to change us from the inside out. This heartfelt worship will lead us to follow the will of God in our lives, to love the Lord with all of our heart, our soul, and our mind (Matt. 22:37). By giving ourselves to Him, He can use us for His divine glory. Just as the shepherds were able to give testimonies of their encounter with Christ, we should share what God has done in our own lives. It should not be a burden, or an embarrassment, to tell what the Lord has done for us; instead, it should be a desire we cannot suppress. It should be a joy.

A.W. Tozer once said, "No one can long worship God in spirit and in truth before the obligation to holy service becomes too strong to resist." Our utmost desire should be worshipping our Heavenly Father and sharing His amazing love with everyone around us. Like an avid angler who restlessly looks forward to the next time they can cast their bait into the water, we should have an even greater longing to fish for souls (Luke 5:10). There should never be a time when we are not fully devoted to the Lord's service. When we put our trust in the one true living God, we should yearn to serve the Lord in all we do. No matter where God places us, we should take every opportunity to be witnesses for Christ. As Christians, we are commissioned to share the Good News to the entire world (Mark 16:15). We should be eager to share encouraging testimonies of what God has done in our lives. We should be unable to refrain from telling everyone about the marvelous love of Jesus Christ, whether we are speaking to the cashier at the local supermarket, the server at the café downtown, or our neighbor right next-door to us.

Personally, I cannot refrain from sharing the love of Jesus Christ, even with complete strangers. On one of our trips to New York, God gave my dad and me a divine appointment to speak to a Muslim family in Brooklyn. As we were taking a walk one evening, one of my earrings fell off, slipping through a metal grate in the sidewalk. Although the earring

was very inexpensive, its retrieval posed an interesting challenge. The next day, my dad fashioned a catch hook out of a couple of paperclips and attached it to a long thin audio cable, which we had with us. After several successful practice runs in our hotel room with the matching earring, he was able to retrieve my earring from a ledge on which it had fallen. As my dad was sitting on the grate, pulling out the earring from below, a woman approached us to see if we needed assistance. She said her family had experienced a flat tire. Almost immediately, I also learned their child had been born prematurely, just like me. This common ground opened the door for a conversation that would soon become a thorough religious dialogue. Our conversations with this family lasted for nearly two hours, with me witnessing to my newfound acquaintance and my dad sharing the Good News with her husband.

Although they were practicing Muslims, the mother seemed open to hearing the Gospel. She said one of her coworkers attended The Brooklyn Tabernacle. I gave her a copy of my book, *When You're in the Sunset, There's Sunshine Awaiting You*. She told me she would read it. I pray she has since read my testimony, so she can learn more about the truth of the Gospel, for it is my hope that I will see this family in Heaven one glorious day. If it had not been for my losing an earring and the family having car trouble, our paths would likely not have crossed. God is the One who orchestrated the opportunity to share the love of Jesus with them. I pray God has sent others to water the seeds He chose us to plant, so this family will discover the truth of the only living God.

Although I often feel inadequate in confrontational situations like this one, where our conversations resembled an Islam versus Christianity debate, I know God is more than enough. No matter the circumstances, God will give us the confidence we need to deliver the message, and He will even give us the words to speak. We only have to be willing to answer His still, small voice, by saying, "Yes, Lord, I will follow wherever you lead." Reflect back on the Wise Men and the shepherds. They did not know exactly what they would find when they followed the star. Nevertheless, they were compelled to follow the star and see what God had in store. They had a desire within their hearts to worship the Lord Jesus Christ. We need to have that kind of devotion and that level of trust. We need to step out on faith, knowing God will guide us. While we may not be renowned theologians, the promise of Acts 1:8 says the Holy Spirit will empower us to be witnesses of the love of Jesus Christ.

In case you wonder if your life will change when you share your testimony, I can tell you that your life will never be the same again. For when "the shepherds went back to their flocks," they were "glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen" (Luke 2:20). Yes, they still