

A WAKENED

TO WORSHIP

LESSON 5 // THE CHOICES OF WORSHIP

“Freedom of religion” is one of the core values of America. People are free to worship in the way they choose in this country. This acknowledges a basic truth we all need to understand: Worship is a choice. God has given each of us free will to decide what or whom we will worship.

In His Word, the Lord calls us to worship Him as the one true God through His Son. Using a well-known story in Matthew 2:1-12 about the wise men who made the right choice in their worship, let’s look at three important aspects of this choice in our lives.

1. The prompting to worship

According to Matthew 2:1-2, the Magi (often referred to as the “wise men”) understood that heaven was announcing the birth of a great King—and they wanted to worship Him!

The birth of Jesus was the revelation of God to the world. The world had never seen, and never would see, another king like this One. God had come to earth as “Immanuel” (Matthew 1:22-23). The eternal Word became flesh (John 1:14). This was a turning point for the worship of God.

Matthew 2:3-7 tell us that a star supernaturally prompted these wise men to find this new King and worship Him. We will never pursue Christ and a life of worship to Him without God’s prompting. The Lord uses a variety of things to arrest our attention and call us to worship Him.

These promptings produce change only when we respond to them. We will miss out on worship if we respond to God’s promptings with spiritual dullness, disregard, procrastination or a lack of discipline. Instead we must be determined to “follow the star”—to respond to God’s promptings with a heart-felt desire to honor Him in praise, thanksgiving and surrender.

2. The purpose of worship

The Magi came to Jerusalem with one purpose in mind. Something wonderful happens in our lives when we choose to pursue this one thing—single-hearted devotion and worship to Jesus. This is the most important choice we can make, as Jesus Himself taught us:

Luke 10:38-42 (NIV) *As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. ³⁹ She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet listening to what he said. ⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, “Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!” “Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered, “you are worried and upset about many things, ⁴² but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.”*

Jesus is “God with us” — Immanuel! We are called to honor Him as Lord of all with our attention and affection. This is our purpose and focus as those who have been redeemed in Christ and seek to live for Him.

Colossians 3:17 (NIV) *And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

3. The practice of worship

Every believer is called to worship, not just to think or talk about this as something important. We are to be practitioners, not observers. The story of the wise men reinforces this truth.

These men weren’t just interested in finding the newborn King to seek His favor or to lobby for some future benefits. They came to Jesus to worship Him. From Matthew 2:9-11 we see several key phrases that teach us about the practice of biblical worship:

- “*overjoyed*”—Worship involves great joyful anticipation. The thought of coming into the presence of Almighty God through our worship can ignite in us overflowing joy.
- “*coming*”—Worship includes a commitment to a spiritual journey. This involves getting rid of excess baggage and learning new ways of thinking and relating to God and others.
- “*saw*”—Seeing Christ is a prerequisite to worshipping Him. Our eyes must be opened to who Jesus really is if we’re going to truly worship Him.
- “*bowed down*”—Worship includes physical actions that express awe, joy, praise and thanksgiving. Bowing down demonstrates a heart of humility and reverence.
- “*worshiped Him*”—Worship is submission to Christ as Lord of all. The Greek *proskuneo* means “*to bend low and do homage to, to kiss the feet of one who is superior.*”
- “*opened their treasures*”—We can’t keep the treasure chest of our lives closed and truly worship the Lord, “*for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also*” (Matthew 6:21).
- “*presented Him with gifts*”—Worship includes giving precious gifts to God. Along with our “sacrifice of praise” (Hebrews 3:15), we are to give the Lord our best physically (Romans 12:1-2), emotionally (Psalm 42:1-2), materially (Malachi 3:10), relationally (Psalm 133:1-3; Ephesians 4:1-3) and in every aspect of our lives.

Worship is a choice we must make. Just as the wise men chose to pursue and worship Christ, we have the privilege and opportunity to worship Him as Lord of our lives in all we do every day!

Discussion questions

1. What are some of the ways God prompts you to worship Him? How can you be more responsive and attentive to these?
2. Read Luke 10:38-42. What was the “one thing” Mary focused on in this story? How does this speak to you about your worship of Jesus?
3. Read Romans 12:1-2. In what practical ways can you “offer your body as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God” which is your “true and proper worship”?