



# in FOCUS

Equipping God's Workers With God's Word For God's Work



## A MODEL OF TRUE WORSHIP

(Matt. 2:1-12)

Samuel Pan

When God sent Moses to bring the Israelites out from the Egyptians' bondage, he wanted them to "worship" him (Exod. 3:12; 4:23; 8:1, NIV). Concerning the right way of worshipping God Jesus says, "God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). Worshipping God therefore is in the center of Christian faith.

Unfortunately, many believers today do not have the right concept of true worship. Many still have the man-centered mindset. True worship, however, must be God-centered.

Matt. 2:1-12 records the visit of the Magi after Jesus was born. The way the Magi worshiped baby Jesus provides us with a model of true worship. Let's learn from the Magi the way they worshiped baby Jesus, so that our worship truly honors God.

### I. True Worship Centers on God

Verses 1-2 say, "After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, '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.'" The Magi's model shows that true worship centers on God.

According to the tradition, the Magi were eastern astrologers. They probably came from Persia. In those days, it would

take a long time to travel by camels from the east to Palestine. That would require a lot of efforts on the Magi's part. Why would the Magi be willing to do that? They had to consider it worthy of their efforts to pay homage to Jesus. And they came to Jerusalem, neither for sightseeing, nor to visit King Herod, but to worship Jesus.

The English word "worship" is a combination of 2 words "worth" and "ship." It implies that the person we worship has the honor and the worth as the object of our worship.

Only God has the honor and the worth as the object of our worship. We come to Sunday service, neither to meet friends, nor to have fellowship, nor to hear the speaker's message. We come to Sunday service for a purpose—and one purpose only—to worship God.

What are my purpose and your purpose in attending Sunday service? To fulfill our membership duty? To meet friends? To hear the message? Or to worship God?

### II. True Worship Involves Our Whole Being

Verse 11a says, "On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him." The Magi's action of bowing down before baby Jesus shows that true worship involves our whole being.

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# My People, God's Own

Yi Xi

**A**lthough I am an overseas Chinese, born and raised in the Philippines, I have always cherished an unspoken sentiment for China. The first time I saw my ancestral home in Guangzhou, Fujian, I wanted to kneel and kiss the ground. However, I've never thought of any spiritual heritage that could be traced to my hometown; not until my most recent trip to Fujian. In my naiveté, I did not realize that the seed of the Gospel has been sown in this coastal province more than a hundred years ago. In fact, the first church to be built in China is still standing strong in Xiamen, Fujian, after a hundred fifty years. I cannot cease rejoicing and praising God for His faithfulness in calling my people to be His own.

Many unexpected events developed during this trip. We were given a formal invitation to teach a four-day seminar which turned out to be the first full-time workers retreat/conference in the greater Guangzhou area covering more than ten cities, municipalities, and towns. Due to limited accommodations, we were able to minister to around eighty co-workers which was only half of the total number of ministers in the area with more than fifty churches and meeting points. The difference in age, ministry experience, and level of training which these dear men and women of God have undergone were quite varied and this posed a little concern on how we could minister effectively. But we just went on and taught what we had prepared, hoping that they would be able to teach and transfer the same materials and skills to their flock. We were also given opportunities to preach in two evening meetings in the local church where the attendance was relatively high. Some expressed their desire to accept Christ.

On the first day, trying to create a non-ethnic appeal, I used "butonghua" (common language/Mandarin). However, for the rest of the time, I switched back to our common mother tongue which I felt was far more intimate and effective. Many asked for more, but time was a constraint. I really desired for more time just to sit down and get to know more about them. Many of them were just as shy or polite as I was, while some were more open. From the few

that I was able to share with, I gathered that many came from strong Christian families. Praise God that the spiritual legacy has been passed on!

China is changing in every aspect at a pace faster than we expect. Therefore, our mode of ministry should be able to keep up with the changing needs. Do not take the risk of "smuggling" Bibles to China, specially in places where there are open churches. Good, inexpensive Bibles can be bought in the church. But Bible study tools and good Christian literature are in great demand. One could say that the kind of teaching and literature brought into China will determine the course of the future Chinese churches. Formal theological training is still a rare commodity, and some who have, find their training inadequate in terms of practicality and spirituality. Due to limited exposure and resources, some do not know what they do not know. On the other hand, their passion for God and man is certainly a humbling lesson for us.

Some further suggestions can be recommended. Conservatively, Christians comprised 5% of the total population of China. Opportunities still abound. Like Paul, let us try to aim for unreached frontiers. To strengthen existing ministries, we should continue building good relationships with the local leaders, be it open or house churches. Think more of corporate work with the local churches to establish more long-term, well-structured, indigenously-designed training programs on both the leadership and grass root level. The local church members should also learn to share financially, even how meager it may be.

We would like to thank those who have given and stood behind us in prayer for the heart-warming opportunity to serve our very own people for God's glory. We are but grains of sand on the shores of history, for God to implement His plans for the multitude that He has called to be His own.

*(Reprinted from Grace Monthly, the publication of Grace Gospel Church.)*

## FACULTY ON THE MOVE

☞ Dr. and Mrs. Joseph Shao attended the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration of the Bandung Evangelical Church on December 15 to 21, 2003. Dr. Shao also taught a module on “Nehemiah.”

## Campus Events

- On November 7, 2003, BSOP co-sponsored a special meeting with the Haggai Institute at the Makati Polo Club. The guest speaker was Rev. Li Kian of Taiwan. More than 140 participated in this event, twenty-five of whom were students from BSOP.
- A team from Haggai Institute toured our campus on November 16, 2003. There was a brief time of fellowship with students and faculty aside from a tour of the facilities.
- The 38<sup>th</sup> Mission Retreat of Grace Gospel Church was held at BSOP on November 16 and 17, 2003. The retreat was attended by missionaries supported by Grace Evangelical Mission. Among them were our own faculty members: Dr. Tan Chiu Eng, Prof. Nenita Lee, Prof. and Mrs. Dennis Yam.
- Twenty-four representatives from SIM International held their convention at BSOP on November 19 to 21, 2003. Dr. Shao is presently the president of the local chapter, while Dr. Tan Chiu Eng serves as secretary.

## Alumnus Ordained

Congratulations to Rev. Harg Timothy Ang, who was ordained at the United Evangelical Church of Pasay on December 14, 2003. Rev. Ang ministered at this church upon graduating in 1994.

## Q3 Theological Education by Extension (TEE)

Gerizim Evangelical Church	<i>Romans II</i>	Prof. Dennis Yam
Quezon City Evangelical Church	<i>Missions</i>	Dr. Chiu Eng Tan
Grace Gospel Church	<i>Acts</i>	Prof. Jay Hallowell

## Student Passes Away

A first year student, Ivy Po, succumbed to a rare disease and passed away on December 20, 2003 in her hometown in Cebu City. The whole BSOP family grieve with her bereft mother, but we are comforted by the thought that Ivy was able to spend the last months of her short life with us, as we served together the King of Kings.

## Special Lecturers

### Geography

Dr. Jonathan Lu of Holy Light Seminary in Kaohsiung, Taiwan has been invited to return and teach Bible Geography from January to March, 2004.

### World Religions

Dr. Ajith Fernando's course on Christianity's Encounter with World Religions was fully packed with our students as well as forty missionaries from Grace Gospel Church. The module was held on November 17 to 20, 2003 (Monday to Thursday).

### Evangelism

Dr. Stephen Hsieh of Trans Light Mission, based in Fort Worth, Texas, came to lecture on Personal Evangelism on January 9, 2004.

Watch out for BSOP's new website... And new domain name:  
[www.bsop.ph](http://www.bsop.ph)

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According to the oriental culture, bowing down is a gesture of homage given to a king. When the Magi came to visit Jesus, they believed that Jesus was the king of the Jews. Their action of bowing down showed their reverence and homage to Jesus.

In the original language, worship indeed means to prostrate oneself in reverence and homage. As our God is the King of kings and the Lord of lords, when we worship him, we must prostrate ourselves in reverence and homage. So worship is not just singing praises or saying prayers with our lips; worship involves our whole being: our hearts, our minds, and even our bodies.

When the Magi saw baby Jesus, they bowed down and worshiped him. In our worship of God, have we prostrated ourselves—may be not with body, but at least with mind and with spirit—in reverence and homage?

### *III. True Worship Includes Our Offering*

Verse 11b says, “Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh.” This shows that true worship includes our offering.

The gifts that the Magi offered—gold, incense, and myrrh—were all very expensive items in Jesus’ time. They were the gifts normally offered to a king. By offering these precious gifts to Jesus, the Magi demonstrated their sincerity in paying homage to Jesus.

Nevertheless, as God is the Creator of the universe, he does not lack anything. God has said, “I have no need of a bull from your stall or of goats from your pens, for every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. I know every bird in the mountains,

and the creatures of the field are mine. If I were hungry I would not tell you, for the world is mine, and all that is in it” (Ps. 50:9-12)

The reason we give monetary offering to God is not because God lacks money. Our monetary offering is just a token to express our gratitude to God for what he has given to us. It is a tangible way to show our hearts to God. Jesus says, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matt. 6:21).

Jesus had commended the poor widow’s offering of two very small copper coins, not because of the amount of money she offered, but because of her heart. Because she “out of her poverty put in all she had to live on” (Mark 12:41-44; Luke 21:1-4).

It is said, “You can give without love, but you cannot love without giving.” “For God so loved the world that He gave his one and only Son” (John 3:16a). God’s love toward us is demonstrated through his gifts to us, so shall be our love toward God. If we truly love God, naturally we would give our monetary offering to God willingly. Our monetary offering is an indicator of our love toward God.

### *IV. True Worship Requires Our Obedience*

Verse 12 says, “And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.” The Magi’s obedience shows that true worship requires our obedience.

The Magi learned from the star that the king of the Jews was to be born, so they came to Jerusalem. When King Herod heard about their quest, he was disturbed. By checking with the chief priests and teachers of the law, he learned that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem. So he called the Magi and

sent them to Bethlehem to search for the child and to report back to him, in order that he could kill this king of the Jews to be.

With the guidance of the star, the Magi went to Bethlehem and found Jesus. But they were warned in a dream by God not to go back to King Herod. The Magi obeyed God rather than King Herod. So they returned to their country by another route.

Jesus once presented the parable of the two sons (Matt. 21:28-31). The father asked the first son to work in the vineyard. The first son answered, “I will not,” but later he changed his mind and went. The father also asked the second son the same thing. The second son answered, “I will,” but he did not go. Which son pleased the father? Of course, it was the first son who obeyed the father in action.

True worship requires our obedience. The Bible says, “Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams” (1 Sam. 15:22). The real test of our hearts to God is not how our worship service is conducted, nor what our gestures in worship are, and not even how much money we offer. The real test of our hearts to God is how much we have obeyed his words in our lives. Therefore, true worship is not just our lip service or outward performance, but our obedience in daily living.

The way the Magi worshipped baby Jesus provides us with a model of true worship. Our worship must center on God. Our worship must involve our whole being. Our worship must include our offering. And our worship must match with our obedience. This kind of worship truly honors God. May our worship honor God as did that of the Magi.