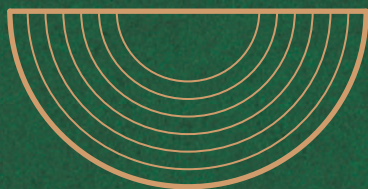


CHRISTMAS AT GREEN ACRES

ADVENT

IMMANUEL: A 25 DAY DEVOTIONAL



CHRISTMAS AT GREEN ACRES

ADVENT

IMMANUEL: A 25 DAY DEVOTIONAL

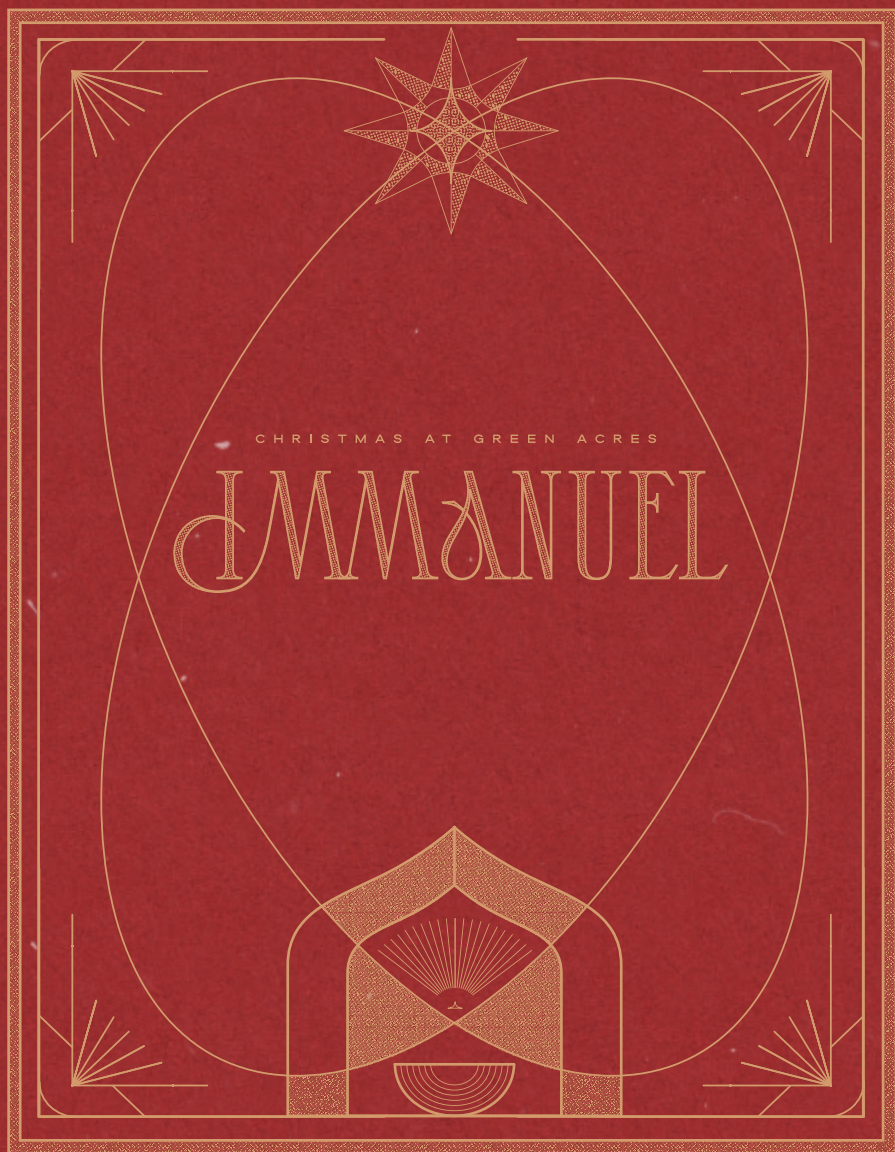


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JOIN US SUNDAYS IN DECEMBER
9:30AM & 11AM





CHURCH FAMILY,

Our dedicated staff has put together this special resource with YOU in mind. Our heartfelt desire is that amidst the holiday rush, we can take a moment to pause and deeply contemplate the incredible work the Lord has accomplished on our behalf. In the grand tapestry of the Bible, every story intricately weaves a thread that leads us to Jesus. From Genesis to Revelation, you can trace the scarlet-colored thread of the gospel connecting them all. This Christmas season, we invite you to journey through these stories with us, reflecting on how they eagerly anticipated the arrival of our King.

We hope this Advent Companion Guide becomes a personal guide for you as we reflect on the coming of the King this Christmas. Hallelujah, for the King has indeed come!

Merry Christmas,

Michael and Katie Gossett

Michael Gossett
Katie Gossett







THE GOD WHO SATISFIES

PSALM 107:8-9

*⁸ Let them give thanks to the Lord
for his faithful love
and his wondrous works for all humanity.*

*⁹ For he has satisfied the thirsty
and filled the hungry with good things.*

DAILY PRAYER

Father, we praise You as the one who initiates our worship.

Thank You for setting our hearts to long for You, our true satisfaction. We thank You for Your faithful promise to meet us in that longing, satisfying our thirsty souls and filling our hungry hearts with the goodness of Yourself. This Advent, as we celebrate Immanuel, quiet our hearts to find our fulfillment in the eternal reality of Your presence with us. Amen.

The Christmas season often arrives with a deep and persistent thirst. We quickly notice a longing for something more than what our busy activities can provide. We seek to quench this thirst with the festivities of tradition, connection, and celebration. And while these are good and beautiful gifts, they often leave us with the familiar ache of our emptiness all the more. Psalm 107 pulls back the curtain on this universal human experience, revealing a profound truth: our thirst is by divine design. The Psalmist declares that it is God who “has satisfied the thirsty and filled the hungry with good things.” The ache we have in our souls is our heavenly homing signal, a holy appetite, instilled within us by God Himself, calling us to our only true Source of satisfaction.

During this first week of Advent, we’re reminded that “Immanuel Satisfies,” and we are graced with an opportunity to re-examine where we seek our fulfillment. Charles Spurgeon once beautifully observed, “The Lord sets us longing and then completely satisfies us.” Our deepest cravings for meaning, presence, and love are not accidental, but a God-initiated rhythm. God Himself, our Creator, set our hearts longing so that we might seek our satisfaction in Him, our Redeemer. He is the initiator of our worship, and that worship begins with the holy hunger He places within us. The very name Immanuel, “God with us,” is the ultimate answer to this divinely inspired ache. Our Father in Heaven gave us Jesus to fill our hunger, to quench our thirst, and to reveal Himself as our soul’s satisfaction. He is the “good thing” that fills the void. As we begin this Advent journey, may we posture our hearts in thankfulness, recognizing our worship not as something we’ve conjured up, but as a heartfelt response to the God who creates our need and then graciously, perfectly, fulfills it.

ADULTS

1. Spurgeon says, “The Lord sets us longing and then completely satisfies us.” What longings in your heart this season might actually be God’s invitation for you to seek deeper satisfaction in Him?
2. Psalm 107:9 says He “filled the hungry with good things.” Looking back, can you identify a time when God satisfied a deep longing in your life? How can that memory fuel your thanksgiving and trust in Him for your current needs?
3. The promise of “Immanuel” is that God is with us in every moment. How does knowing God is present in your moments of longing and dissatisfaction change how you view the pressures and expectations of the Christmas season?

STUDENTS & KIDS

1. Think about a time you were really hungry or thirsty. What did it feel like to finally get something to eat or drink? The Bible tells us God satisfies our deepest needs just like that!
2. God gives the best gifts! What are some gifts from God that you can’t hold in your hands or put in a box?
3. “Immanuel” means “God with us.” How does it make you feel knowing that God is always, always with you?

MANNA FROM HEAVEN

EXODUS 16:4-5

⁴ Then the Lord said to Moses, "I am going to rain bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. This way I will test them to see whether or not they will follow my instructions. ⁵ On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather on other days."

DAILY PRAYER

*Father, thank You for being my daily bread. Please forgive me when I seek satisfaction in anything but You. Teach me to trust You daily, and to believe that what You give is enough. Remind me not to worry about tomorrow but to walk faithfully with You today. Help me to want Your presence more than anything.
Amen.*

It's December 2 and the Christmas rush has officially begun! Will I get the house decorated? The neighbor's house is already glowing! How will I track down the gift the kids can't stop talking about? Who is on the gift list this year (and who did I forget)? How can we cram all the parties in, and what will we all wear? If I find the right gifts, can I get them wrapped and put under the tree? How will I afford it, juggle it, and get it all done in just 23 days? Lord, help me!

When I read Exodus 16, I am humbled to see how the Lord provided for the Israelites and how abundantly he continues to provide for me. Lord, please slow me down and help me see and appreciate the many ways that you are meeting my needs each day. Help me focus on Jesus each day and the things You want me to accomplish. As I walk out the door, let me see the blessings You are raining down. Let me find satisfaction in knowing that God is my provider and that I can rest in His provision. God, You are faithful. I trust you.

ADULTS

1. What would it look like to find your satisfaction in Jesus instead of in comfort and control?
2. How can you slow down enough to recognize God's provisions in your life today?
3. What would a day of rest in the Lord look like?

STUDENTS & KIDS

1. What makes you happy? Are you trying to find happiness in the things of this world instead of trusting God daily?
2. What are you grumbling about?
3. Why do you think God only wanted the Israelites to gather enough food for one day at a time?

COME TO THE WATERS

ISAIAH 55:1-3

¹*"Come, everyone who is thirsty, come to the water;
and you without silver, come, buy, and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk without silver and without cost!*

²*Why do you spend silver on what is not food,
and your wages on what does not satisfy?
Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good,
and you will enjoy the choicest of foods.*

³*Pay attention and come to me; listen, so that you will live.
I will make a permanent covenant with you
on the basis of the faithful kindnesses of David.*

DAILY PRAYER

*Heavenly Father, thank You for inviting us to come to Your
living waters. In this busy Christmas season, help us to slow
down, listen to Your voice, and find our true satisfaction in
Jesus. Fill our hearts with Your peace and joy and teach us to
share Your love with those who are still thirsty. In Jesus' name
we pray. Amen.*

In this beautiful invitation from Isaiah, God calls out to a weary and thirsty world: “Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters.” It’s a picture of grace from a loving Father offering refreshment that cannot be bought or earned. During Christmas, we celebrate the coming of Jesus, the Living Water who satisfies our deepest thirst. While the world rushes to fill its emptiness with gifts, noise, and busyness, God gently reminds us that true fulfillment flows only from Him. The manger in Bethlehem was not just a cradle for a baby, but the wellspring of eternal life poured out for all who would come.

God’s call continues in verse 3: “Give ear and come to me; listen, that you may live.” This is not merely an invitation to attend a celebration. It’s a call to a relationship. Jesus came so that we might know the heart of God and find life in His presence. As we pause amid the lights and carols this Christmas, may we hear His voice above the noise, bidding us to come and drink deeply of His love. The greatest gift we can receive this season is not found under a tree but in a Savior who still whispers, “Come to the waters.”

ADULTS

1. In what ways do you see people trying to “buy” satisfaction during the Christmas season, and how does God’s free invitation challenge that mindset?
2. What does it mean for you personally to “come to the waters” this Christmas, and how can you help others find that same refreshment in Christ?

STUDENTS & KIDS

1. What are some things that people your age turn to for happiness or meaning, and how do those compare to what Jesus offers?
2. How can you make space this Christmas to listen to God’s voice in the middle of all the excitement?

BREAD OF LIFE

JOHN 6:32-35

³² Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, Moses didn't give you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. ³³ For the bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

³⁴ Then they said, "Sir, give us this bread always."

³⁵ "I am the bread of life," Jesus told them. "No one who comes to me will ever be hungry, and no one who believes in me will ever be thirsty again."

DAILY PRAYER

Lord, thank You that You are the bread of life, and only You satisfy the hunger and thirst of my soul. Help me to rest in the eternal, not in the temporal. Amen.

In this passage, Jesus reveals himself, makes himself known as the true "bread of life," and he does so in response to the crowd who were looking to Him for physical bread. To learn from these verses, one must understand the context of the manna in the desert (32-33), the crowd's desire, need, and request for more bread (34), and Jesus' declaration of himself as the bread of life (35). This last phrase establishes that Jesus is the spiritual food that satisfies the hunger and thirst of the soul and goes beyond mere physical sustenance.

Manna in the Old Testament was a sign of God's provision and favor through Moses, but it was a physical and temporal food. Jesus corrects the crowd, clarifying that it was not Moses, but God who gave them the "manna," and that the "true bread from Heaven" was a different and superior gift. The true bread from Heaven "comes down from Heaven and gives life to the world." There is a reality beyond physical sustenance: eternal life, which Jesus gives to the world through His coming. But the people, still focused on material things, ask for "that bread" and continue to think of physical food to keep them satisfied. Jesus tells them, "I am the bread of life." This is the central affirmation of the passage: "Whoever comes to me will never go hungry." This refers to those who seek Jesus with faith, accepting and receiving Him. "Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." Faith in Jesus provides a spiritual satisfaction that is lasting and complete. Jesus is the "bread" that satisfies the hunger and thirst of the soul, a nourishment that never runs out and leads to eternal life. Unlike manna, the "bread of life" is spiritual and is Jesus himself. He is the source of eternal life, and He satisfies the deepest needs of human beings.

ADULTS

1. Are we enjoying Jesus, the bread of life?
2. Are we resting in Jesus, who satisfies our needs?

STUDENTS & KIDS

1. Have you ever been very, very hungry and thirsty?
2. Have you ever been hungry and thirsty, but for Jesus and the Bible?

SEEK FIRST HIS KINGDOM

MATTHEW 6:25-33

²⁵ “Therefore I tell you: Don’t worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Isn’t life more than food and the body more than clothing? ²⁶ Consider the birds of the sky: They don’t sow or reap or gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren’t you worth more than they? ²⁷ Can any of you add one moment to his life span[a] by worrying? ²⁸ And why do you worry about clothes? Observe how the wildflowers of the field grow: They don’t labor or spin thread. ²⁹ Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was adorned like one of these. ³⁰ If that’s how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and thrown into the furnace tomorrow, won’t he do much more for you—you of little faith? ³¹ So don’t worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ ³² For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you.

DAILY PRAYER

Dear Lord, thank You for the promise of always providing us with everything we will ever need. Help me to fully trust in You and lean on You and not myself. Remove any worry I may have that is keeping me from relying on You. Lord, I fully surrender my wants and needs to You today. Will You help me understand that You are all I need. Help me seek You daily. Fill my heart with Your presence because with You that is truly all I need. Father, forgive me for where I have failed You. Remove any sin that is keeping me from You. Thank You for always loving me. I pray today that I honor You in all that I do. Amen.

In a world that is full of chaos, it is very easy to find ourselves worrying about so many things. We worry about our future, friends, family, finances, appearance, or even not having a plan for tomorrow. As you read these verses, remember that they come directly from Jesus. His words aren't just advice for us, but it reveals truth that shape how we live and trust Him. "Therefore I tell you: Don't worry about your life", Jesus gives us the answer by clearly stating that in Him and only through Him, we have no worries. Why does He say this? We have a heavenly Father who already knows and cares deeply about these worries. Giving these worries to Him are crucial. Verse 26 Jesus points out the birds of the sky. This is encouraging to us because if God takes care of the birds, He will surely take care of us. Verse 27 shows us that worry accomplishes nothing and adds NOTHING to our lives. It takes away because we are giving Satan a foot hold into our lives since our trust is not in God. We still struggle with fully trusting God's plan.

The ending of this passage reveals the answer for everything. Verse 33 "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you", we see a promise. That is, if we are fully trusting in God, we have everything we will need because He is the answer, and the worldly things could not give us what truly matters. Seeking Him daily provides us with the rest. He promises the life in Him is far more abundant than trying to fix family, friends, finances, or whatever else holds our attention. Seek Him first. The most crucial thing we will ever need is us living in the full presence of God.

ADULTS

1. Jesus tells us not to worry about our lives. What kinds of worries tend to weigh on you most, and why do you think they have such a hold?
2. What would change about your life if you genuinely believed God would meet every need you have?
3. What's the difference between trusting that God can provide and living as if He will? Where do you see that gap in your own life?

STUDENTS & KIDS

1. Jesus says not to worry about food or clothes. What are some things you sometimes worry about?
2. How is trusting God different from trying to handle everything on your own?
3. How can you help a friend who is feeling worried remember that God loves them?



GOD WILL SUPPLY

PHILIPPIANS 4:19

*And my God will supply all your needs
according to his riches in glory in
Christ Jesus.*

DAILY PRAYER

*God, thank You for supplying all things in my life, but most
of all thank You for Jesus and for saving me. Help me today
to desire Your plans and to find satisfaction in Your presence.
Thank You for loving me and please help me today to share
that same love with someone else. Amen.*

When we're little, our "needs" are hilariously simple. We need that toy from the commercial (it was a Sega Dreamcast for me in 1999). We need dessert before dinner (my son is adamant that sugar is good for him). We need to stay up late because everyone else is and we don't want to miss out. Then we grow up, and our needs shift—maybe now it's a raise, a vacation, or just five more minutes of sleep. The truth is our list of what we think we need is always going to be changing. But if we're honest, even when we get what we want, there's usually another "need" waiting right behind it.

That's why the promise of Philippians 4:19 is so life-giving for us. When Paul says, "My God will supply every need," he's not talking about a wish list—he's talking about deep satisfaction that is found in a relationship with Jesus. Every need, every longing, every hole in our hearts finds its answer in Jesus, Immanuel—God with us. We can be content and at peace when we have a personal relationship with Him. God doesn't just give us what we need; He is what we need. This Christmas, let us remember that real satisfaction doesn't come from what's under the tree, but from the One who came to be with us and meet our every need.

ADULTS

1. How have your ideas of what you "need" changed over the years? What does that reveal about your spiritual growth?
2. In what areas of your life are you tempted to look for satisfaction outside of Jesus?
3. When have you experienced God meeting a need in a way that surprised you or looked different than you expected?

STUDENTS & KIDS

1. What's something you once thought you really needed—but later realized you didn't?
2. How can you remind yourself that Jesus gives you everything you truly need, even when life feels hard or unfair?
3. What's one way you can focus more on Jesus this Christmas instead of the things you hope to get?

IMMANUEL SATISFIES

LUKE 9:10-17

¹⁰ When the apostles returned, they reported to Jesus all that they had done. He took them along and withdrew privately to a town called Bethsaida. ¹¹ When the crowds found out, they followed him. He welcomed them, spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing.

¹² Late in the day, the Twelve approached and said to him, "Send the crowd away, so that they can go into the surrounding villages and countryside to find food and lodging, because we are in a deserted place here."

¹³ "You give them something to eat," he told them.

"We have no more than five loaves and two fish," they said, "unless we go and buy food for all these people." ¹⁴ (For about five thousand men were there.)

Then he told his disciples, "Have them sit down in groups of about fifty each."

¹⁵ They did what he said, and had them all sit down. ¹⁶ Then he took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, he blessed and broke them. He kept giving them to the disciples to set before the crowd. ¹⁷ Everyone ate and was filled. They picked up twelve baskets of leftover pieces.

DAILY PRAYER

Father, thank You so much for the gift of eternal life through Your Son, Jesus. Thank You for sending Him to do what we could not do for ourselves by taking away our sin. May we always be satisfied in all that You give us. Amen.

I have read and imagined this story a thousand times in my life. It is truly one of my favorites. As I reread it this year, God opened my eyes to a word I had always overlooked. It was the word “satisfied.” Verse 17 said, “They all ate and were satisfied.”

The word “satisfied” is a very important word as we think about our gift of salvation. The word “satisfied” in the Greek language also means “propitiation.” Propitiation sounds like a big scary theological word, but it really isn’t. Let’s say you borrowed \$1000 from the bank. And when it came time to pay the bank back, you did not have the money. A friend of yours hears about the problem and decides to help by paying off the debt for you. What a blessing! Your friend paying off your debt would be an act of “propitiation.” The bank would then give you a note that said, “Paid in Full.” Your friend made a way for you to live debt free.

In the same way that Jesus satisfied the hunger of the 5000, He also satisfied or paid the debt for our sin. The gospel reveals that we have all sinned and fallen short of God’s intended desire for us. A pure and just God could not look upon the failure of our sin. The consequence of our sin was death and hell. There was nothing we could do to satisfy God’s demand of perfection. That is why God the Father sent Jesus to pay off that debt of sin and separation. 1 John 4:10 says, “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

So, instead of us dying for our sins, in love, Jesus willingly died on the cross for us. What a precious gift of forgiveness. What a gracious gift of life.

ADULTS

1. Can you find the act of propitiation in John 3:16?
2. Ephesians 4:15 says “Speak the truth in love.” Jesus was not afraid to speak the truth because love for us was His motivation. Why are we so afraid to speak truth into the lives of those we love?

STUDENTS & KIDS

1. Several times, I have seen someone in a fast-food drive-through pay for the meal of the person behind them. That is an act of propitiation. You paid someone else’s debt. This act also defines what forgiveness is all about. When we forgive someone, we cancel their debt of failure against us. Why is forgiveness so important in a family?
2. Another form of propitiation is encouragement. When we encourage those around us who are hurting or feel bad about themselves, we can separate their negative image into a positive one by speaking words of love and truth into their lives. What are words that encourage you the most?





TO THE WORLD THE SAVIOR REIGNS
ET MEN THEIR SONGS EMPLOY

I AM REVEALED

EXODUS 3:13-15

¹³ Then Moses asked God, "If I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what should I tell them?"

¹⁴ God replied to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: I AM has sent me to you." ¹⁵ God also said to Moses, "Say this to the Israelites: The Lord, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is my name forever; this is how I am to be remembered in every generation.

DAILY PRAYER

Dear Heavenly Father, You are the I AM who was and is and is to come. You were there before the world began, and yet You came to us as a baby in a manger. This Christmas, help us remember that the baby in Bethlehem is the same mighty I AM who holds the whole world in His hands. We thank You for dying for our sins on the cross. In Jesus' name, Amen.

In this passage, God introduces himself to Moses as “I AM WHO I AM.” In Hebrew, the word for I AM is Hayah... It carries with it the idea of the very breath of God. I AM was a name that signified that He always was, always is and always will be. I AM wanted Moses to know that not only would He remain the same, but His name would also endure to every generation that would inhabit the earth – even to our generations. Christian author Louis Giglio, in his book I am not but I know I AM, writes “God was telling Moses: I AM the center of everything. I AM running the show. I AM the same every day, forever. I AM the owner of everything. I AM the Lord. I AM the Creator and Sustainer of life. I AM the Savior. I AM more than enough. I AM inexhaustible and immeasurable. I AM God. In a heartbeat, Moses knew God’s name.”

At Christmas, we celebrate that Jesus, the great I AM, came as a baby. The God who spoke to Moses came to live among us in Jesus. He came softly, as a tiny baby in a manger. When He grew up, Jesus referred to Himself as “I AM”. He was directly identifying Himself as God... the same God who spoke to Moses. In the book of John, it’s recorded that Jesus said I AM the bread of life (6:35), I AM the light of the world (8:12), I AM the gate for the sheep (10:7), I AM the good shepherd (10:11, 14), I AM the resurrection and the life (11:25), I AM the way the truth and the life (14:6) and I AM the true vine (15:1). I’m so grateful that the great I AM came into the world to save me from my sins, by dying on the cross. I am forever thankful that He transformed my life. Christmas should point us all to the cross.

ADULTS

1. Do you have a personal relationship with the great I AM? Do you know His name? Has your life been transformed by the truth of Jesus?
2. In your relationship with the great I AM, what has He shown you that has most transformed the direction of your life?
3. Do you have a family member or close friend that you need to personally introduce to the great I AM?

STUDENTS & KIDS

1. Did you know that Jesus is the same I AM that Moses talked to?
2. Have you asked Jesus, the great I AM, to be your Savior?
3. Who could you tell about the truth of Jesus, the great I AM?

THE HEAVENS DECLARE

PSALM 19:1-4

*¹The heavens declare the glory of God,
and the expanse proclaims the work of his hands.*

*²Day after day they pour out speech;
night after night they communicate knowledge.*

*³There is no speech; there are no words;
their voice is not heard.*

*⁴Their message has gone out to the whole earth,
and their words to the ends of the world.
In the heavens he has pitched a tent for the sun.*

DAILY PRAYER

The heavens declare the glory of God. Thank you, God, for revealing Yourself through creation. Help me to see You in everything around me and guide me each day to share with others what You have given me through your son, Jesus. Amen.

Working in Student Ministry has taken me to so many beautiful parts of Texas – and even abroad. Buildings, streets, houses, and even churches look different from place to place, but one thing that has been the same in every location I've visited is the indescribable sunrises, and sunsets. To know that the very same God who creates such beauty in the sky is the same God who sent His son to be the Savior of the World. The heavens declare His glory, and Jesus coming to save us reveals God's love for us.

Our passage today reminds us that the skies, day and night, are speaking to us. We see the sunshine warm us, the clouds give shade, and the stars give light. God uses creation to reveal Himself to us. But He doesn't stop there – He brings us Immanuel. He brings us JESUS...the LIGHT OF THE WORLD. The skies tell us we have a Creator, and the manger tells us we have a Savior. What JOY to know that by sending us Jesus, we have forgiveness and redemption. So, when you look up into the skies, day or night, let it remind you that the God who made all things also created a way for you and me to know Him.

Let's join in with the heavens and all creation and proclaim His Name!

ADULTS

1. Like the sunrises and sunsets, what are some ways you see God's glory revealed each day?
2. With the busyness of life, especially during this season, are you still finding time to stop, listen, and respond to God's voice? If yes, how are you doing that? If no, how can you change this?

STUDENTS & KIDS

1. What is something so big or so tiny in creation that makes you think about how amazing God is?
2. How would you describe what it means to be in awe or in wonder of God?

SIGN OF IMMANUEL

ISAIAH 7:14

*Therefore, the Lord himself
will give you a sign: See, the
virgin will conceive, have a
son, and name him Immanuel.*

DAILY PRAYER

*Thank you, Jesus, for Your presence with us and You're
undeserving love that we can experience every single day.
Thank You for not leaving us in our loneliness, in our fears.
Thank You for the promise of Immanuel. Forgive me for
the times I have lived as if I were alone, striving in my own
strength. Right now, I receive Your presence, knowing that
You are with me in every single detail in my life. When I
feel lost, be my guide. When I need help, remind me that my
help comes from the Lord, the Maker of Heaven and earth.
In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.*

Has there ever been a moment in your life where you felt alone in your struggle, your failures, or your pain? Looking for something to fill you, but couldn't find it anywhere? Personally, I have felt like that many times in my life. I remember as a seventeen-year-old looking for a place to sleep at night because my family was so far away. Now we can see in Isaiah that the heart of Ahaz and the hearts of his people are trembling with fear.

But this is the story of a faithful God relentlessly coming to be WITH His people. He dwelt with Adam in the garden in the cool of the day, and He was with Joseph in the prison, transforming his despair into purpose. God was with Moses throughout his feelings of inadequacy, providing and guiding each step, and here in Isaiah 7:14, He promises the most intimate presence of all. That one day He would come Himself, through a virgin to be called IMMANUEL. Your story is not defined by your loneliness or your struggles, but by His faithful presence that transforms it. He came for a seventeen-year-old with no place to call home. He came for the king, whose heart was heavy. And He came for you, so you don't have to face a single moment alone. This is the God of the Universe who has drawn near to us. He is with you. Immanuel, "God with us".

ADULTS

1. God transformed Joseph's prison into a place of purpose. What is one current struggle in your life where you can ask God to reveal His transforming presence and purpose?
2. The name Immanuel is a promise of God's initiative to be with us. How can you intentionally create space in your schedule today to simply acknowledge and rest in His presence?

STUDENTS & KIDS

1. Can you remember a time you felt scared or alone? How does knowing God is always with you make you feel about those times?
2. How does knowing God is with you change your view of a big challenge in your life?

WORD MADE FLESH

JOHN 1:14, 18

¹⁴The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We observed his glory, the glory as the one and only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth...

¹⁸No one has ever seen God. The one and only Son, who is himself God and is at the Father's side—he has revealed him.

DAILY PRAYER

God, I thank You for revealing Yourself to us in the person of Jesus. Thank You that we don't have to wonder if You love us or not. We were separated from You because of our sin but You gave us the greatest gift in Jesus, a way back to a right relationship with You and forgiveness of sins. God, thank You for Christmas, a time to remember and celebrate how You revealed Yourself to the world a baby in a manger. Amen.

In John 1:14, we read that "the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us." This is the essence of Christmas—the incarnation of God. Jesus didn't remain distant but chose to enter our world in the most intimate way possible. He did not come as a ruler or a king in grandeur but as a humble baby. He chose to reveal Himself to us in a way that we could understand. In the person of Jesus, we see God's glory and goodness in human form.

In verse 18, John emphasizes that while no one has ever fully seen God, Jesus makes God known to us. Through Jesus' life, teachings, death, and resurrection, we come to know the very heart of God. No longer are we left to wonder about God's nature. The invisible God became visible in Christ. He walked among us, demonstrating God's character in real, tangible ways. The Christmas story is a reminder that God is not distant or unknowable. We know God through the person of Jesus. He is Immanuel, God with us, the Word made flesh.

ADULTS

1. Who is the Word? Why would He be called this?
2. Why did God choose to reveal Himself by becoming human?
3. What encouragement do you find in Jesus leaving Heaven and showing us who God is with His life, teachings, death and resurrection?

STUDENTS & KIDS:

1. Who is Jesus?
2. What does the name Immanuel mean?
3. Why did Jesus come to Earth as a baby?

YOU ARE THE CHRIST

MATTHEW 16:13-17

- ¹³ *When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?"*
- ¹⁴ *They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others, Elijah; still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."*
- ¹⁵ *"But you," he asked them, "who do you say that I am?"*
- ¹⁶ *Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."*
- ¹⁷ *Jesus responded, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, *because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my Father in heaven."*

DAILY PRAYER

Dear Lord, help me to remember who You are today; but not only that, help me to remember who You are to ME! You desire a lifelong yet daily relationship with me and have given Your Son so I could have it. Give me strength and grace to walk with You now and always. Help me as I celebrate Advent this year and remind me that I am celebrating YOU. Amen.

My dad loved Merle Haggard. Of course, he did. As a truck driver, he spent thousands of miles driving to “Mama Tried” and “Workin’ Man Blues”. I must have heard “Okie from Muskogee” a gillion times on the record player at home. Very early one morning my dad pulled into a truck stop in Arizona, one he’d been to hundreds of times. Except this time there was a tour bus with no markings on it. Imagine his surprise when he stepped into the café and Merle Haggard was eating breakfast all by himself. Other than the wait staff and cook, the whole place was empty except for Merle. My dad walked up to him, thanked him for his music and told him how much he meant to him. Merle said, “thank you” and followed up with “can I buy you breakfast?” They shared that meal together like two long lost friends.

How do you think Peter felt when Jesus asked, “who do you say that I am?” We don’t know when Peter FULLY came to know that Jesus was “the Christ, the Son of the Living God”, but we know this moment defined Peter for the rest of his life. There was a before Jesus and an after Jesus. That’s certainly true for me. There was a distinct time and place when I came face to face, as it were, with Jesus and realized that He was exactly who He said He was. I asked for the forgiveness of my sins and made the same confession that Peter did. As soon as my dad realized who Merle Haggard was, he went right to him. No hesitating. This Advent Season, confess your sins and put your trust in Him. If you have already trusted Christ, whether your relationship is new or old, He’s waiting to fellowship with you. Sit down and spend time with Him today.

ADULTS

1. Remember when you really realized who Jesus is? What was your response?
2. If your relationship with Jesus isn’t the same as it was at first, what do you need to do to get it back?

STUDENTS & KIDS

1. How do we know that Jesus is God’s Son?
2. Why is Jesus the very best gift we could ever receive?

IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD

COLOSSIANS 1:15–20

- ¹⁵ *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.*
- ¹⁶ *For everything was created by him, in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through him and for him.*
- ¹⁷ *He is before all things, and by him all things hold together.*
- ¹⁸ *He is also the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything.*
- ¹⁹ *For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him,*
- ²⁰ *and through him to reconcile everything to himself, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.*

DAILY PRAYER

Jesus, You are more than a baby in a manger. You are the image of the invisible God, the Creator and Sustainer of all. Yet You came near to rescue and reconcile. Today, help me to worship You not just with nostalgia, but with reverence. Fill my heart with Your peace as I wait for You. Amen.

In the soft glow of Advent candles and the quiet waiting of this season, it's easy to picture Jesus only as the baby in the manger—gentle, small, and wrapped in humility. But Paul's words in Colossians 1 stop us in our tracks. Who is this baby?

*He is the image of the invisible God.
He is the firstborn over all creation.
He is the creator of everything in heaven and on earth.
He is before all things.
He is the One who holds all things together.
He is the head of the church.
He is the beginning.
He is the One in whom all fullness of God dwells.
He is the reconciler of all things.
He is the ultimate peacemaker.*

Take a moment to soak in these truths. Advent is not just the celebration of Christ's birth—it is the mystery of divine majesty wrapped in human flesh. The same Christ who created the stars was born beneath them. The One who holds all things together entered a broken world to put us back together. Why? Because He came to reconcile. He came to make peace—real peace—between Heaven and Earth, between God and humanity, between your heart and His holiness. And He did it through the blood of the cross.

So, as we wait and prepare during this Advent season, we are not merely remembering a historical event. We are welcoming a King!

ADULTS

1. Who do you believe God is?
2. Who or what has influenced that belief? Is it true?
3. Where do I need His peace in my life today?

STUDENTS & KIDS

1. Am I trying to know what God is like by learning about Jesus, or just by what I think He should be like?
2. How can we reflect Jesus this week?

IMMANUEL REVEALS

LUKE 9:18–20

¹⁸ *While he was praying in private and his disciples were with him, he asked them, “Who do the crowds say that I am?”*

¹⁹ *They answered, “John the Baptist; others, Elijah; still others, that one of the ancient prophets has come back.”*

²⁰ *“But you,” he asked them, “who do you say that I am?”*

DAILY PRAYER

Lord, help us to know You in a personal and intimate way—not through secondhand information, but through Your Holy Word, the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and the example of faithful followers of Christ. May our lives reflect Your truth and grace, and may we live each day worthy of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Amen.

I've had the privilege of leading mission trips both nationally and internationally. During one trip to Mexico, people often began speaking to me in Spanish. At first, I would just nod politely, but when the conversation grew more serious, I had to admit, "No hablo Español." They were often surprised. After all, we have similar skin color and physical features. Smiling, I would explain, "Soy Filipino."

These moments remind me how easily people can mistake us for someone we are not, based on how we look, talk, or carry ourselves. At times, we even project an image of ourselves that isn't true. Either way, it reveals how outward appearances can mislead. Jesus faced a similar situation when He asked His disciples, "Who do the crowds say that I am?". People compared Him to great prophets, John the Baptist, Elijah, or others, but Peter boldly declared the truth, "You are the Messiah (Christ)".

Our identity, like Peter's confession, must rest not on appearances or assumptions, but on the truth of who we are in Christ, and even more importantly, on who He truly is.

ADULTS

1. If Jesus were to ask you, "Who am I to you?", what would your response be?
2. If you were arrested for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?

STUDENTS & KIDS

1. If your friends heard your name, what do you think they would say about you?
2. What is one way you can show others that Jesus is important in your life?
3. What does it mean for our family to follow Jesus daily?
4. As a family, how can you practically serve our Messiah together?
5. How can we encourage each other to grow in faith and obedience?





THE FIRST PROMISE

GENESIS 3:14-15

¹⁴ *So the Lord God said to the serpent:*

*Because you have done this,
you are cursed more than any livestock
and more than any wild animal.*

*You will move on your belly
and eat dust all the days of your life.*

¹⁵ *I will put hostility between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and her offspring.*

*He will strike your head,
and you will strike his heel.*

DAILY PRAYER

Lord, I thank You that from the very moment that Adam and Eve sinned against You, You revealed Your love for us and promised us victory. I thank You that You endured the pain of the cross (bruise your heel) and for crushing the serpent's head in victory over the grave. Thank You for the hope we have in knowing your victory is ours when we accept Your love and forgiveness in our lives. Amen.

As soon as the creation story is completed, Satan shows up in Genesis 3, in the Garden of Eden, to begin his strategy to “kill, steal and destroy” everything God created and loved. This is where the conflict of good and evil begins. Since the moment Adam and Eve disobeyed God, there was a judgment and penalty pronounced that still impacts every human being to this very day. There was also a judgment and curse pronounced on the serpent. From that day on, the serpent has been cursed to crawl on its belly and eat dust. We are reminded of these curses and judgments every time we see a snake. The snake became our enemy. In the four verses following today’s passage, God spells out the punishment for our disobedience. Verse 19 reveals the ultimate punishment of death – “for dust you are and to dust you will return.”

However, as quickly as God pronounces judgment and punishment on mankind for our disobedience, he also reveals there is a coming defeat over our enemy. In theological terms verse 15 is called “the protoevangelium” – meaning this is the first promise of our hope over the enemy. This is the first reference of Jesus in the Bible. God tells the serpent he is putting enmity (hostility and hatred) between his offspring and the offspring of the woman. God tells Satan, “One day you will bruise his heel.” Whose heel? The offspring of the woman. Galatians 4:4 says, “In the fullness of time, God sent Jesus into the world born of a woman.” Satan will strike out in hatred. Then God said to the serpent, “You’re only going to bruise his heel, but the woman’s offspring is going to crush your head.” When Jesus hung on the cross and said, “It is finished,” he crushed Satan’s head. Romans 16:20 says, “And the God of Peace will soon crush the head of Satan under your heel.”

ADULTS

1. Read Genesis 3:16-19 to learn more about the curses God pronounced on Adam and Eve. What “curses” (punishments) have you experienced in your own life because of your disobedience to God?
2. Have you ever considered how deep God’s love for us must be for Him to reveal His plan to crush the head of our enemy even before He pronounces the punishments for our disobedience?

STUDENTS & KIDS

1. What does it mean to disobey? How do we learn not to disobey?
2. What punishments have you experienced for disobeying your parents or breaking the rules?

THE SUFFERING SERVANT

ISAIAH 53:4-6

*⁴ Yet he himself bore our sicknesses,
and he carried our pains;
but we in turn regarded him stricken,
struck down by God, and afflicted.
⁵ But he was pierced because of our rebellion,
crushed because of our iniquities;
punishment for our peace was on him,
and we are healed by his wounds.
⁶ We all went astray like sheep;
we all have turned to our own way;
and the Lord has punished him
for the iniquity of us all.*

DAILY PRAYER

*Father, thank You for graciously bearing the punishment that
I deserved for my sins. Help me to lean into the peace that You
have already given me. Draw my heart closer to You.
In Jesus name, Amen.*

In Leviticus 4-5, we see the law clearly outline that in order to atone for our sin, an animal without blemish must be sacrificed. In Isaiah 53, we read the prophecy of the coming Messiah, without sin, who would bear the weight of our sin. This Christmas season, we celebrate Jesus coming to be the final sacrifice for our sin so that we could experience perfect peace in Him.

We have a gracious God that is intimately familiar with our pains, struggles, and sins because he bore them for us on the cross. He endured the weight of our punishment, so that we would find peace in Him. Whatever you are carrying this Christmas season, know that you are not alone. You are seen and loved by the God who created you.

ADULTS

1. What are you carrying that you need God's peace for?
2. When was a time in your life where you experienced God's perfect peace?

STUDENTS & KIDS

1. What does it mean that Jesus has forgiven your sins?
2. Have you ever felt God's peace?
3. How can you share God's peace with others?

CALL HIS NAME JESUS

MATTHEW 1:20–21

²⁰ But after he had considered these things, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, don’t be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because what has been conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

²¹ She will give birth to a son, and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

DAILY PRAYER

Father, thank You for sending Jesus, our Savior and Immanuel. Thank You for being with us in every moment of life. Help us to reflect Your light and share the hope of Jesus with everyone we meet this Christmas. Amen.

It's the most wonderful time of the year! Christmas is a season filled with joy, warmth, and the reminder of God's greatest gift to us. In our home, my wife, Alisha, our five children (Lucas, Micah, Tucker, Elijah, and Carolina), and I look forward to Christmas with great anticipation. From the smell of Alisha's seafood gumbo simmering on the stove to the early morning cups of coffee by the Christmas tree, there's something special about the way the season fills our home with warmth, light, and laughter. My favorite part of Christmas in our home is when all the other lights are turned off except the glow of the Christmas lights. There's something peaceful about that stillness, a moment to pause and remember that Jesus came into a dark world to bring light and hope. As parents, Alisha and I love watching our children experience the awe and wonder of Christmas, but even more, we love helping them understand the reason we celebrate: the hope we have in the name of Jesus!

Every year before we open gifts, our family gathers in the living room to read the Christmas story from Luke 2. It's one of our most cherished traditions. Each of our five children takes part by helping share the story through our old flannel board nativity. One by one, they add the shepherds, angels, wise men, Mary, Joseph, and finally, baby Jesus. Everyone has a part in the story, and every year it becomes a moment that anchors our family in the truth of Christmas. We are reminded that Immanuel means "God with us." He is not distant or removed. He is our Savior who rescues, comforts, and walks beside us in the greatest and hardest moments of life. When we gather with our church family at Green Acres on Christmas Eve and lift our candles high, I'm reminded again that the light we hold represents the light of Christ that lives within us. The same Jesus who came to save us now sends us to carry His light into a world that desperately needs hope. Jesus came to rescue, redeem, and remind us that He is with us!

ADULTS

1. How does the name Immanuel encourage you in both the joyful and difficult seasons of life?
2. When have you experienced God's presence in a personal and powerful way?
3. How can you reflect the light of Jesus to those around you this Christmas season?

STUDENTS & KIDS

1. Why is it important to remember that Jesus is God with us?
2. What part of the Christmas story reminds you most that Jesus loves you?
3. How can your family share the light and hope of Jesus with others this Christmas?

GOOD NEWS OF GREAT JOY

LUKE 2:8-11

⁸ In the same region, shepherds were staying out in the fields and keeping watch at night over their flock. ⁹ Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, "Don't be afraid, for look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people: ¹¹ Today in the city of David a Savior was born for you, who is the Messiah, the Lord.

DAILY PRAYER

Lord Jesus, thank You for being Immanuel, God with us. Help me see Your presence even in the ordinary moments of my day. Fill my heart with joy and remind me that You came near to bring hope and salvation. Let my life reflect the good news that You save. Amen.

The shepherds weren't expecting anything miraculous that night, just another long night under the stars. But in an instant, their normal evening became holy as Heaven broke through with a message that would change everything. "A Savior was born for you." God didn't send this message to kings or priests but to everyday people simply doing their jobs. That's how God works, meeting us right where we are, often when we least expect it. His message to the shepherds was clear: joy had come, and salvation is here. Over 1,900 years later, on Christmas Eve in 1914, that same message spoke across a battlefield as soldiers from opposing sides laid down their weapons and cried out "Silent Night." For one night, fear gave way to peace, and darkness gave way to light, because even during war, the story of Jesus still had the power to unite people.

That same truth is still for all of us today. No matter how heavy life may feel, Jesus, THE Immanuel, has come near. He enters our schedules, struggles, and spaces with His truth that transforms lives. The good news of great joy is not just that a Savior was born, but that He was born for us. This Christmas, pause and marvel at the same wonder that filled the shepherds' hearts and remember that Immanuel saves.

ADULTS

1. How can you intentionally share the joy of Jesus with someone this Christmas season?
2. What does it mean to you personally that God came for you?

STUDENTS & KIDS

1. Why do you think God chose to tell the shepherds first about Jesus' birth?
2. How can you tell a friend about the "good news of great joy" this week?



FOR GOD SO LOVED

JOHN 3:16-17

¹⁶ For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

DAILY PRAYER

Lord, thank You for the reminder of how very much You love us. Help us to trust in Your unwavering love and seek opportunities to share that love with others this Christmas season. Amen.

According to multiple sources, John 3:16 is the most memorized verse in the Bible. Many of us grew up learning to recite it at an early age, right along with the days of the week and months of the year. However, if we're not careful, our familiarity with the words can diminish their meaning. We roll right through the phrase "For God so loved the world..." and forget how truly incredible that truth is. The Creator of the universe loved the world—broken, sinful people just like us. And His love didn't stop at words. He gave His one and only Son. Jesus entered the world as baby, lived a perfect life, and ultimately gave His life for sinners just like you and me.

Verse 17 reminds us that God's goal in sending Jesus was never punishment, but redemption made possible through faith. Salvation isn't about trying to be good enough for God, it's about receiving the gift of grace He freely offers through Jesus. That truth changes everything about Christmas. This season, as lights shine and gifts are exchanged, remember that our greatest gift has already come. Jesus is the Light of the World!

ADULTS

1. How does remembering God's love shown through Jesus change the way you approach Christmas?
2. How might you share God's love with someone around you this season?

STUDENTS & KIDS

1. Why did God send Jesus into the world?
2. How can you show God's love to your family or friends at Christmas?
3. What makes Jesus the best gift ever?

NO OTHER NAME

ACTS 4:11-12

- ¹¹ *This Jesus is
the stone rejected by you builders,
which has become the cornerstone.*
- ¹² *There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name
under heaven given to people by which we must be saved.*

DAILY PRAYER

Lord, thank You for the gift of the Christmas season and more importantly thank You for the birth of Your Son. In a season of noise and distraction, help us remember that there is no other name but Jesus under which we may be saved. As we celebrate the birth of Jesus, may we also be reminded that the baby in the manger is our risen Lord, who was rejected by the world but who You exalted above all. Thank You for sending your Son, Jesus. Amen.

At Christmas, we celebrate the birth of Jesus not as only the baby in the manger but as the foundation for our salvation. From the time of Jesus' birth in the manger to His death on the cross, His entire life points to glorifying the Father. Jesus was rejected by many, and it starts that night in Bethlehem when there was no room in the inn (Luke 2:7). From the very beginning, many have claimed to have no room in their life for Jesus. May this not be the case for us, may we be a people who even amidst the busy holiday schedules we make room for Jesus - the cornerstone of our faith.

Jesus is the only name under which salvation can be given to us. Jesus can be called many names – Messiah, Christ, Son of God, Immanuel, Savior but He is the only one true name who can save us. This passage calls us back to the core of Christmas: salvation through Christ alone. As we celebrate Christmas with gifts, lights, and treats may we remember it is not just about celebrating Jesus' birth but recognizing that God sent His Son to be our Savior.

ADULTS

1. Who are the “builders” that verse 11 is referring to? How does that apply today?
2. What are some areas in your life that you may be saying you have “no room” for Jesus?

STUDENTS & KIDS

1. What does it mean that Jesus is the cornerstone of our salvation?
2. Knowing that our salvation is given under no other name than Jesus, how does this impact the way we share our faith? How does this impact the way we live our lives?

IMMANUEL SAVES

LUKE 9:21-22

21 But he strictly warned and instructed them to tell this to no one, 22 saying, "It is necessary that the Son of Man suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, be killed, and be raised the third day."

DAILY PRAYER

Lord, I confess that I do not often understand Your plan. Help me Lord to follow You when life does not turn out according to my expectations. I commit my ways to You. Cause my desires to come in accordance with Your desires. Accomplish Your plan and purpose in my life. Amen.

Today represents a turning point in the life of Jesus with His disciples. They thought the Messiah would be a great political leader or a conquering king coming in great power. They expected Him to lead in command, glory, and authority. But they were wrong. That is not why He came. He explained He would suffer many things, be rejected, and be killed, and raised on the third day. He told them what was about to happen, yet they did not understand His purpose. This is likely why Jesus told them to tell no one.

Jesus came with a Holy Purpose. The pain He was about to endure was filled with purpose. His mission was so that His death, burial, and resurrection would save a fallen world from sin and death and offer us eternal life. “They thought” and “they expected” indicates their assumptions and predictions were not God’s intentions and plan. Often time we do not understand God’s plan and purpose. But we can rest assured His will is always filled with purpose.

ADULTS

1. Are there circumstances in your life where you want or expect God to do a certain thing a certain way?
2. Will you be frustrated or disappointed if God uses pain in these circumstances to accomplish His purpose?

STUDENTS & KIDS

1. Are you asking God to “fix” something in your life? If so, please share it.
2. Are you going through a time of hurt and/or painful circumstances? If so, choose hope. God has a plan and it is for your good.





PRINCE OF PEACE

ISAIAH 9:6-7

⁶For a child will be born for us, a son will be given to us, and the government will be on his shoulders.

He will be named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

⁷The dominion will be vast, and its prosperity will never end. He will reign on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish and sustain it with justice and righteousness from now on and forever. The zeal of the Lord of Armies will accomplish this.

DAILY PRAYER

Father, thank You that Jesus is the Prince of Peace and that we can experience that peace through a relationship with Him.

This season, help us move closer to Jesus, to recognize His goodness in our lives, His faithfulness to us and yes, His peace in our lives. Amen.

What do you think of when you think of peace? Absence of conflict? Problem free life? I think most people would agree we all have conflict and problems in our lives. And looking around us, it doesn't seem to be any better.

We see conflict and wars around the world, division and distrust in our country, our communities and even at times in our own families. It can lead a person to think can there even be peace? Real peace?

Isaiah was writing in the 8th century BC. Scripture states that God would give us this gift of peace and that He would do that through a baby. A baby that would grow up to carry all our burdens, all our fears, and all our problems.

We would call him by many names, but the one that speaks to us here is He would be called the Prince of Peace. What you and I could not do for ourselves, Jesus did for us. He provides peace, real peace. Peace is not determined by circumstances, or external outcomes, but by a relationship of faith with Him. Our relationship with Jesus brings us real internal peace.

This Christmas season celebrates the One who brings peace to us and to the world. The Prince of Peace-Immanuel!

ADULTS

1. What area of your life has you distracted and is not allowing you to experience the peace of Jesus?
2. What do you need to do to refocus on Jesus so you can experience His peace?

STUDENTS & KIDS

1. Why do you think at times you don't have peace? What are you thinking about or focusing on at those moments?
2. How can you allow Jesus, the Prince of Peace, to change how you are feeling? How does experiencing God's peace help you with the areas you are worried about?

DECEMBER 23

JOHN ROACH, MISSIONS PASTOR

FROM BETHLEHEM

MICAH 5:2

*Bethlehem Ephrathah,
you are small among the clans of Judah;
one will come from you
to be ruler over Israel for me.
His origin[a] is from antiquity,
from ancient times.*

DAILY PRAYER

Lord Jesus, thank You for entering our world in humility and power. Help us to see Your hand in the small places and quiet moments. This Advent, fill our waiting with hope, knowing that Your promises are sure and Your reign is eternal. Amen.

A cursory reading of Micah 5:2 may miss the very beginning of the verse, “Bethlehem Ephrathah.” In short, this name is an easy way to identify a geographic location or a way to distinguish this Bethlehem from other areas called Bethlehem. In other words, we know that Paris, Texas is very different from Paris, France even though they both have an Eiffel Tower (haha). There is so much more meaning however to this name Bethlehem Ephrathah. The word Bethlehem simply means “house of bread” and the word Ephrathah means “a place of fruitfulness” or “abundance.” So one could say this reference means “a house of abundant bread.” This may sound familiar. In John 6:35, Jesus says He is the “bread of life.” Later in John 10:10, Jesus says that He came to give us “life abundantly.” So Jesus, the unlikely King from the unassuming town of Bethlehem, is the “bread of abundant life.”

Micah’s prophecy was written more than seven hundred years before Jesus’ birth, during a time of political chaos and despair. Yet God’s promise through the prophet declared that hope would come from a small, overlooked place. Out of Bethlehem, the “house of abundant bread,” would come the One whose origin is “from ancient times.” The eternal Son of God would enter human history to bring salvation and satisfaction to all who believe.

Bethlehem reminds us that God’s greatest work often begins in the most unlikely of places. The King of Glory chose a manger over a mansion, a stable over a palace, and a small town over a great city to show that His power is made perfect in weakness.

I pray, during this Christmas season, that the people of God can wait with confidence. God’s promises may take time, but they never fail. May we also look for God in the ordinary. He often works through small places and humble people. And lastly, let us trust His plan. The same God who brought forth the Bread of Life from Bethlehem is still providing abundantly today.

ADULTS

1. In what ways have you experienced abundant life?
2. What are some ordinary people or experiences in your own life that you have seen God work in?
3. Are there areas of your own life that you have trusted God’s plan or that you need to trust God’s plan?

STUDENTS & KIDS

1. Why do you think God would choose an unknown town for Jesus to be born?
2. Jesus calls Himself the “Bread of Life.” In what ways have you experienced His abundance in seasons that felt small or ordinary?

THE TRUE LIGHT

JOHN 1:1-5, 9

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was with God in the beginning. ³All things were created through him, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created. ⁴In him was life, and that life was the light of men. ⁵That light shines in the darkness, and yet the darkness did not overcome it...

⁹The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.

DAILY PRAYER

Jesus, You are the Light that no darkness can overcome. Shine in my heart today and in every place that feels shadowed by fear, sin, or sorrow. Help me walk in Your light and reflect Your love to others. Amen.

As we celebrate all of the wonder and excitement of the birth of Jesus, we must remember that before there was the ubiquitous manger, there was an all-mighty Maker. And long before shepherds “heard angels sing” or “wise men followed a star”, the Word already existed. In the verses above, John reminds us that the baby wrapped in cloths was the same “eternal Word” who spoke galaxies into being. That means the light that broke through the darkness of creation is the same light that breaks through the darkness of our hearts. No matter how deep the shadow of sin or sorrow, Christ’s light cannot be overcome.

As we wrap up Advent, remember this: the story of Christmas is not just about a birth; it’s about re-creation. The Light came to make all things new—including you! The very nature of light demands that darkness cannot win. Every flicker of hope, every act of grace, every answered prayer is a reflection of “The Word” who still shines. The darkness may press in, but it cannot win.

ADULTS

1. Where do you see “darkness” most at work in your world or your heart right now?
2. How does it change your perspective to know Jesus has existed and triumphed from the very beginning?
3. What is one way you can reflect His light this week?

STUDENTS & KIDS

1. What happens when you turn on a light in a dark room?
2. How can you be a “light” at school or in your home this week?
3. Why do you think Jesus is called “the Light of the world”?

CHRIST THE LORD IS BORN

LUKE 2:1-20

¹In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole empire should be registered.

²This first registration took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. ³So everyone went to be registered, each to his own town.

⁴Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family line of David, ⁵to be registered along with Mary, who was engaged to him and was pregnant. ⁶While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. ⁷Then she gave birth to her firstborn son, and she wrapped him tightly in cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

⁸In the same region, shepherds were staying out in the fields and keeping watch at night over their flock. ⁹Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, "Don't be afraid, for look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people: ¹¹Today in the city of David a Savior was born for you, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹²This will be the sign for you: You will find a baby wrapped tightly in cloth and lying in a manger."

¹³Suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying:

¹⁴Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to people he favors!

¹⁵When the angels had left them and returned to heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go straight to Bethlehem and see what has happened, which the Lord has made known to us."

¹⁶They hurried off and found both Mary and Joseph, and the baby who was lying in the manger. ¹⁷After seeing them, they reported the message they were told about this child, ¹⁸and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. ¹⁹But Mary was treasuring up all these things in her heart and meditating on them. ²⁰The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had seen and heard, which were just as they had been told.

DAILY PRAYER

Our Good and Gracious Heavenly Father, thank You for the beautiful gift of Your Son, Jesus, who came into our world in such a humble and loving way. Just as the angels sang and the shepherds rejoiced, we, too, want to praise You for Your goodness and mercy. Thank You for reminding us that Your love reaches everyone.

Lord, we are grateful that You bring light into darkness and peace into troubled hearts. Help us to carry the joy of Jesus' birth with us every day, to share Your love with others, and to live with wonder and gratitude like the shepherds who first saw Your glory. We give You all the praise and thanks for the Savior who brings hope to the world. In Jesus' name, Amen.

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

In Luke 2:1-20, we are reminded that God's greatest gifts often come in the most unexpected ways. The Savior of the world was not born in a palace, but in a humble manger. The King of kings entered the world wrapped in cloth, surrounded by animals, and greeted not by royalty, but by shepherds—the ordinary, the overlooked, the lowly. This powerful contrast shows us that God values humility over grandeur and faithfulness over fame. When our lives feel small or unnoticed, we can take heart knowing that God's glory often shines brightest in simple obedience and quiet faith.

The shepherds' response to the angel's message is a beautiful picture of faith in action. They didn't hesitate or question; they said, "Let's go straight to Bethlehem and see what has happened" (v.15). Their immediate response led them to witness the fulfillment of God's promise firsthand. Then, filled with awe, they shared the good news with everyone they met. Like the shepherds, we are called to move when God speaks—to seek Him with urgency and joy, and to share His hope with others. Today, may we approach the Savior with the same wonder, gratitude, and eagerness to proclaim His peace to a weary world.

ADULTS

1. The birth of Jesus took place in humble circumstances, yet it revealed God's glory in a profound way. What does this teach us about how God works in unexpected or ordinary situations in our own lives?
2. When the shepherds heard the good news, they hurried to see Jesus and then shared what they had witnessed. How can we follow their example in responding to God's message with both action and testimony in our daily lives?

STUDENTS & KIDS

1. Jesus was born in a stable, not a fancy place. What does that tell us about what's really important to God?
2. The shepherds were so happy to hear about Jesus that they ran to see Him. How can we show our joy and love for Jesus in our everyday lives?



CHRISTMAS

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