

# Immanuel, God with Us

**SESSION IN A SENTENCE:** Jesus was born to fulfill Old Testament prophecy that God would provide a way to dwell with His people.

**BACKGROUND PASSAGE:** Matthew 1

The Christmas season fills many people with incredible delight in the experience of family, food, and fun. But for others, the Christmas season means anything but glee. Family strife, broken marriages, and illnesses protrude in this season like a mountain of pain standing in the way of joy.

What are some joys you're looking forward to this Christmas season?	What are some of the hurts you're feeling this Christmas season?

# Group Time

## Point 1: Jesus was conceived through the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:18-21).

<sup>18</sup> The birth of Jesus Christ came about this way: After his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, it was discovered before they came together that she was pregnant from the Holy Spirit. <sup>19</sup> So her husband Joseph, being a righteous man, and not wanting to disgrace her publicly, decided to divorce her secretly.

<sup>20</sup> 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. <sup>21</sup> She will give birth to a son, and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

The Messiah’s birth story began with a scandal, or so it appeared. Mary was engaged to Joseph but was found to be pregnant before they ever had sexual relations at the conclusion of their betrothal period. So Joseph naturally assumed that Mary had been unfaithful and adulterous. Joseph did not yet understand that Mary’s pregnancy was the work of the Holy Spirit in her virgin womb. Our sinless Savior was not born through a natural conception but through a **miraculous conception** as utterly unique as He is.



What are some ways the Old Testament foreshadows the miraculous birth of the Christ?

God intervened through an angel to clarify for Joseph the uniqueness and glory of Jesus’ conception, because while God had foreshadowed it in the Scriptures, nothing in human experience could prepare him for this miracle and its purpose. Mary’s son would be named “**Jesus**” not simply as an acknowledgment that Yahweh is the Savior of His people but because Jesus Himself would save His people from their sins (Matt. 1:21). Jesus is Yahweh, the sinless Savior of sinful people.



What are some earthly concerns people today focus on instead of their need for salvation from sin?

## Point 2: Jesus was born to be Immanuel (Matt. 1:22-23).

<sup>22</sup> Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

<sup>23</sup> See, the virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son,  
and they will name him Immanuel, which is translated “God is with us.”

Matthew unveiled a divinely orchestrated parallel between the immediate fulfillment of Isaiah’s Old Testament prophecy of a boy named Immanuel born to a young woman (Isa. 7:14) and the future fulfillment of Jesus’ birth to the virgin Mary. The immediate fulfillment entailed a young woman conceiving a son through natural means, but the complete fulfillment entailed an actual virgin conceiving a son through supernatural means. Matthew highlighted this prophecy to drive home his point: Jesus is the promised Messiah, the fulfillment of Israel’s expectation.

**Virgin Birth:** The Bible affirms that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin (Matt. 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-38). The virgin birth affirms both the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ of Christ.

The events surrounding Jesus’ birth lined up with Isaiah’s prophecy. The purpose of Jesus’ name—that He would save His people from their sins—implied that He, indeed, is Yahweh.

Understanding this divine implication, Matthew applied the name “Immanuel” to Jesus not just as a symbol but as reality. *Jesus is God with us in every sorrow. Jesus is God with us to save us from every moral failure. Jesus is God with us on mission. Jesus is God with us forever and ever.*



### Voices from Church History

“He dy’d for all who ever saw  
No help in them, nor by the  
law: I this have seen; and  
gladly own ‘Salvation is by  
Christ alone!’”<sup>1</sup>

—Olaudah Equiano  
(1745-1797)



Why is Jesus’ presence with His people such an encouragement?


**Point 3: Jesus was born as Joseph obeyed (Matt. 1:24-25).**

<sup>24</sup> When Joseph woke up, he did as the Lord’s angel had commanded him. He married her <sup>25</sup> but did not have sexual relations with her until she gave birth to a son. And he named him Jesus.

Don’t miss the incredible leap of faith Joseph took when he obeyed God’s command to marry Mary and assume legal fatherhood of Jesus. Joseph would be subject to the town’s confusion, distrust, and disdain. Who would believe Mary’s baby wasn’t the result of his lack of sexual restraint during their betrothal? Can you imagine the whispers and scoffs dripping from people’s lips at the mention of Joseph’s name? Joseph’s obedience wouldn’t be applauded by most people, but he sought the applause of the only One who matters. Empowered by God’s words through the angel, Joseph believed and obeyed.

\_\_\_\_\_ to God is an act of \_\_\_\_\_.

Joseph is a model of faith for us. But could he ever have imagined the significance of his faith-driven obedience? He was a man from a small town who simply sought to pattern his life after God’s word. Yet this is the very kind of person God delights to use in great ways for His glory (Isa. 66:2). This was the kind of person God used in the birth of the Messiah, the Savior of the world. So too, the acts of our obedience, even the smallest ones, are used by God in eternally significant ways.

 What are some ways faith-driven obedience can have eternal significance?

Ways I’m Struggling to Obey God	Scriptures That Can Empower My Faith to Obey God in This

# My Mission

Because we have been forgiven of our sin through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, we present Christ in His fullness to others—as fully God and fully man, the One who provides forgiveness of sin.

- **How does the promise of Jesus as Immanuel, God with us, encourage you to obey in faith?**
- **What are some ways your group can show those suffering in your community that Jesus came to be “God with us” this holiday season?**
- **Who will you introduce to Jesus, the Christ, the Savior of the world?**



## Voices from the Church

“God’s will and the obedience of his people have great power in changing the course of individual lives and indeed the history of the world.”<sup>2</sup>

—Joe Kapolyo

## Notes

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# Daily Study

## Day 1: Read Genesis 3:15

The Bible begins with a God who reigns supreme before and over all creation. He made human beings in His image as the pinnacle of His creation (Gen. 1:26-31). God wanted to partner with humans to fill the earth with His glory. But since humankind fell into sin (Gen. 3), we no longer properly represent and display the character and mission of God.

Just after Adam and Eve sinned, God made a promise: A seed (a child) who would descend from Eve would defeat the serpent (Satan). In cursing the serpent, God was offering an incredible hope to rebellious humanity. This promised seed would suffer because of the serpent (“you will strike his heel”), but He would not be utterly defeated. Instead, He would deal a deathblow to the serpent (“He will strike your head”). This seed would redeem and restore humanity.

Many years later, a woman named Mary, a descendant of Eve, would carry that promised seed. Her Son would be the perfect, sinless “image of the invisible God”—Jesus the Christ (Col. 1:15).



### Voices from Church History

“Were it an angel that had interposed, we might have some fears; were it a mere man, we might go beyond fear, and sit down in despair; but if it be ‘God with us,’ and God has actually taken manhood into union with himself, then let us ‘ring the bells of heaven’ and be glad.”<sup>3</sup>

—Charles Spurgeon  
(1834–1892)



How does the defeat of Satan encourage you to keep trusting God when life feels chaotic and defeating?

## Day 2: Read Matthew 1:1-17

Matthew wrote his account of Jesus to awaken the faith of the Jews and to strengthen the faith of Jewish and Gentile Christians in the first Christian communities. He minced no words when he boldly began his account by claiming Jesus is the Messiah (Matt. 1:1). Matthew began proving his claim by tracing Jesus' lineage back to Father Abraham and King David, through whom the promised Messiah would come (Gen. 12:3; 2 Sam. 7:11-16).

Matthew 1:16 dramatically hints at the unique, divine origin and identity of Jesus. Joseph did not “father” Jesus as all the others in the genealogy “fathered” their sons (Matt. 1:2-15). Instead, Joseph is listed as “the husband of Mary, who gave birth to Jesus” (1:16). Joseph was not the biological father of Jesus but the legal, adoptive father of Jesus by whom Jesus has legal right to the throne of David. Thus, God kept His promises to Israel of sending the Messiah.



What promises of God do you need to cling to this season?

## Day 3: Read Matthew 1:18-21

The climax of history had come. The promised Messiah had arrived. And how did God bring about this most blessed of occasions? Seemingly through a scandal, through a woman betrothed but found to be pregnant.

Thankfully, an angel of the Lord interrupted Joseph's thought process with some very special revelation: Mary's child was conceived by the Holy Spirit, so Joseph was to marry Mary and to assume legal fatherhood of the child, who would “save his people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21).

This was not the kind of salvation that many Israelites expected from the Messiah. But God knows that our greatest problem is our sin, and nothing can solve that problem except God Himself. Jesus saves us from the penalty, the power, and (one day) the presence of our sin.



How do you need to respond today to the promised Savior who has come to save you from your sin?

## Day 4: Read Matthew 1:22-23

Seven hundred years prior to Jesus' coming, God promised King Ahaz, an unfaithful king of Judah (2 Kings 16; 2 Chron. 28), that He would protect him from the military invasion of Aram and Israel (Isa. 7:1-9). Despite Ahaz's persistent lack of faith, God promised him and the rest of Judah a sign that this destruction wouldn't happen (Isa. 7:10-16). However, God would then allow Judah to face great suffering at the hands of Assyria because Judah had put their faith in Assyria's military power rather than in God (Isa. 7:17-8:10).

The sign was a boy named Immanuel—"God with us"—whose name would serve as a reminder to them that God was with them in both judgment for the faithless and His grace for the faithful (Isa. 7-12). Jesus was born to be the complete fulfillment of that prophecy. As Immanuel, "God with us," the Messiah's coming would mean salvation for those who believe and judgment for those who will not (Luke 2:34).



How does Jesus' being "God with us" comfort you as you put your trust in Him?

## Day 5: Read Matthew 1:24-25

God used Joseph's obedience in bringing about the coming of the Savior of the world. There's no way Joseph could have grasped fully the historical, theological, and eternal implications of his obedience to the angel's command to marry Mary and assume legal fatherhood of Jesus. Likewise, there's simply no way for us to grasp fully the historical, theological, and eternal implications of our day-by-day obedience to God's Word.

Just because he obeyed God's command, Joseph wasn't guaranteed a pain-free, easy life. Quite the opposite. But by obeying God's call, Joseph took his place in God's great story of His glory as a partner with God and not a foe (like Herod, Caiaphas, and many others). Our limitations are no limitation for the God who works mightily in the margins of society to display His power and grace.



What limitations and weaknesses do you think keep you from being used by God? How does Joseph's story inspire you to trust God with the results of your day-to-day obedience?

# Encourage One Another

*Join together with 2-4 people from your group, or with your family, sometime during the week to reflect on the session and to share how God is working and you are responding.*

Share your thoughts and reflections on the truths from Scripture in this session:

- Jesus was conceived through the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:18-21).
- Jesus was born to be Immanuel (Matt. 1:22-23).
- Jesus was born as Joseph obeyed (Matt. 1:24-25).



How have you responded to these truths from Scripture?



How do Matthew's references to the Old Testament inform and strengthen your faith in Jesus?



What actions can we take to help one another share the gospel with non-Christians during the Christmas season?

## Notes

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***The Gospel Project®***

Adult Daily Discipleship Guide CSB  
Volume 8, Number 2 Winter 2019-20

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Printed in the United States of America

*The Gospel Project®: Adult Daily Discipleship Guide*  
CSB (ISSN 2162-7207; Item 005461524) is  
published quarterly by LifeWay Christian Resources,  
One LifeWay Plaza, Nashville, TN 37234.  
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## A Word from the Editor



### Brian Dembowczyk

Managing Editor—*The Gospel Project*  
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Answers to Learn Truth*

Think about the encouragement people often share to help others through times of adversity. We might hear someone speak of how pressure is required to transform coal into a diamond; thus, pressure can be good for us, transforming us into someone better. Or we might be told of the hatchling that has to work to break through its eggshell, and that struggle is good for this creature—even necessary—so that it grows strong. Likewise, adversity strengthens us and positions us to be who we were meant to be.

While these illustrations might provide encouragement, they reveal something quite important about the world's view of adversity. The world sees adversity as an opportunity for a person to dig deep, gaze within their soul, and discover who he or she truly is. But the gospel tells a different story—a better story. The gospel sees adversity as an opportunity for a person to look high above, gaze upon Christ, and see who He truly is. For it is Christ, not ourselves, who carries us through all trials and suffering. Adversity positions us to rely on Christ's power, not an inner human strength that has been lying dormant.

In this volume we pick up the story of Scripture with the Jews living in bondage in a foreign land, the result of their rebellion against God. But even in the midst of judgment, God's faithful love still shines forth brightly. We will witness God continuing to guide, strengthen, and protect His people in their time of great adversity, not to help them discover who they were but rather to understand who He is. At the same time, we will see God continue to drive the events of history toward the fulfillment of His ancient promise to provide the Rescuer, the One who would free people from an even greater bondage, that of sin and death.

# EDITOR