



Unit .16

Bonus Session

Immanuel, God with Us

Scripture



Matthew 1:18-25

18 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. **19** So her husband Joseph, being a righteous man, and not wanting to disgrace her publicly, decided to divorce her secretly. **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.” **22** Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: **23** 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.” **24** When Joseph woke up, he did as the Lord’s angel had commanded him. He married her **25** but did not have sexual relations with her until she gave birth to a son. And he named him Jesus.

In your own words, how would you explain to someone the importance of the virgin birth?

How have you seen God keep His promises in your life or in the life of someone you know?



99 Essential Doctrines

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 the historicity of the incarnation, where the eternal Son of God took on human flesh. The virgin birth is significant in that it serves as a reminder of Old Testament prophecies (Isa. 7) while also affirming both the deity and humanity of Christ.

Main Point

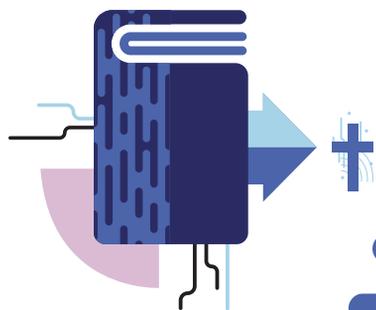
The gift of Christmas is the promise of God's presence.

Why is God's presence with His people such an encouragement?

What are some ways you are struggling to obey God?

What are some Scripture passages that speak directly to that sin and encourage faith in God?

How does the promise of Jesus encourage you to walk in faithful obedience this week? What might this look like in your day to day life?



Christ Connection

Jesus was born to the Virgin Mary to fulfill Old Testament prophecy and to affirm that He is the sinless Savior—God in the flesh who came to dwell with people and save us from our sin.



Head

Do we tend to think that following Jesus will result in an easy and carefree life? Why or why not?

How does the promise of Jesus, as Immanuel, help you to see difficulties in a different perspective?



Heart

How does God's Word increase our trust in who He is and His plan in our lives?

What are some verses you can focus on this week that will help increase your faith and trust in God?

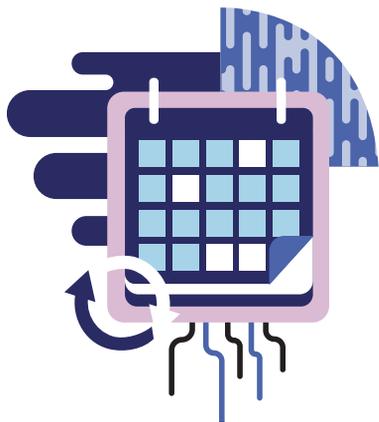


Hands

What are some practical lessons we can learn from Jesus' willingness to take up residence among us?

If someone's only picture of who God is came from the way you live, what kind of picture would they get? What needs to change this week to be a better representative of Christ to those around you?

Daily Devotions



Day 1

Genesis 3:15

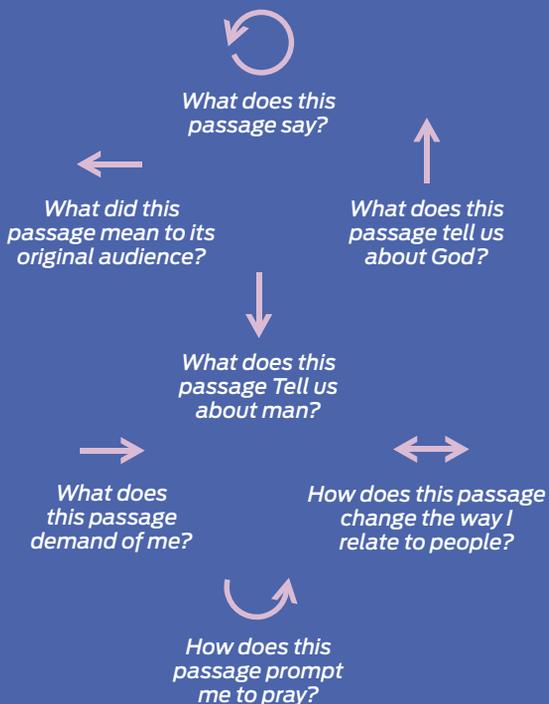
The Bible begins with a God who reigns supreme before and over all creation. He made human beings in His image as the pinnacle of His creation (Gen. 1:26-31). God wanted to partner with humans to fill the earth with His glory. But since humankind fell into sin (Gen. 3), we no longer properly represent 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 and 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. The seed would be the perfect, sinless “image of the invisible God”—Jesus the Christ (Col. 1:15).

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

The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



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 boldly began his account by claiming Jesus is the Christ (Matt. 1:1). Matthew began proving his claim by tracing Jesus' lineage back to Father Abraham and King David, through whom the promised Christ 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 had legal right to the throne of David. Thus, God kept His promises to Israel through the sending of Christ.

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

Matthew 1:18-21

The climax of history had come. The promised Christ had arrived. And how did God bring about this most blessed of occasions? Seemingly through a scandal, through a woman engaged yet 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 Christ. 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?

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 Christ'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?

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 fully grasped 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 fully grasp 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?