



IMMANUEL

GOD WITH US

— 2018 Advent Devotional —



For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

— Isaiah 9:6, *ESV* —

"... She will give birth to a son and will call Him Immanuel (which means 'God is with us')."

— Isaiah 7:14, *NIV* —

One of my children is especially cautious. Any time we encounter an intimidating situation, whether a busy parking lot or a visit to the doctor, I've learned to expect her to reach out and grab my hand. Somehow my presence makes the difference. Though she knows getting a shot at the doctor won't hurt any less if I am holding her hand, she needs the comfort of knowing I am right there with her. It makes her willing to be more courageous for the challenge before her.

Imagine what it means that God *is with us*. Unlike a parent who is limited in power and knowledge, God is God. He is present with us as the Divine King —full of power, wisdom, goodness, and love. When we remember that He is with us, it makes all the difference.

But sometimes we are like the child who doesn't reach out for a hand. Isn't that our struggle — to remember that God is with us? We forget that He is present in our greatest times of need, walking with us through brokenness, sin, and fear. It is for this reason God announced through Isaiah that Immanuel, God with us, would come. "... *She will give birth to a son and will call Him Immanuel (which means 'God is with us').*" (Isaiah 7:14, *NIV*)

We read the profound words that describe Jesus taking on human form: "*The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us ...*" (John 1:14, *NIV*). He became fully God and fully man and entered our dirty and needy world. The very words of Isaiah's prophecy are echoed in the explanation of Jesus' birth, in case there was any doubt about what was

going on. We read, *"The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call Him Immanuel" (which means "God with us"). (Matthew 1:23, NIV)*

Jesus put on flesh and blood and joined our messy and sinful world to live with us. He laid aside the comfort and joys of heaven to embrace the chilly air and the strong animal smells of a dusty bed of hay. He became the poor son of a carpenter with a questionable history. He was born into an insignificant family during a long journey far from home. He was welcomed into our world by dirty shepherds and restless sheep. He came as a helpless baby to an inexperienced young mother. He was born into a world of violence and captivity. All of this makes Jesus accessible to any of us. No matter who you are or where you are from, this God is the One who is with you.

When Jesus ascended after His resurrection, He left with a clear statement: *"... And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."* (Matthew 28:20, NIV) We live in this reality, as followers of Christ who trust that He is surely with us always. We cannot see Him, but we trust that God, the Divine King, is with us. We believe the truth He has given us in the Bible, about who He is and His love for us. We trust Him in the circumstances of our lives and look for ways to love Him and show kindness to others. His

presence is what makes the difference when we face unspeakable hardship, because we know it isn't just anyone with us — it is God who is with us.

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As you go about your day, or when you find yourself in one of those tough moments, stop and thank God for being with you. Thank Jesus for how He entered into a messy world to become Immanuel, God with us. Just like a child who knows they need to turn to someone bigger, we can reach for Him and daily draw courage and comfort from His presence. It can make all the difference in our lives too!

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Questions for You:

- How does it make a difference for you to know that God is with you?
- When we think about Jesus' humility in coming to earth as a baby, how can that influence the way we approach humble tasks as well?
- Who is someone you know that seems to grasp the idea that God is really with them, and what can you learn from them?

Questions for Kids:

- Can you talk about a time when having a parent with you made something you had to do less challenging?
- How could it help someone who worried a lot to know that God is with them?
- Could you describe a time when it helped you to remember that God is with you?