

DEVOTIONAL SERIES
GOD WITH US, IMMANUEL
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When John writes his gospel, he starts the story of Jesus in the ancient past – with the God who *“spoke, and it came into existence”* (Psalm 33:9). How can it be that the infant Jesus and the God who spoke light, stars, seas, orcas, and eagles into being are an integrated being? That the gentle breath on Mary’s chest as her baby sleeps is somehow a part of the breath that enlivened the mud-man Adam when God *“breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature”* (Genesis 2:7).

The celebration of Immanuel, God’s tangible presence among us, is a miracle of love. It tells us something about the generous love of God that is willing to put Himself in a place of humility and suffering to rescue us from our own.

It is a miracle of faithfulness. When Immanuel came, even Israel (His own people) overlooked what God was doing for them: *“He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him”* (John 1:11). He was faithful to their Covenant, even when they were unfaithful to Him.

It’s a miracle of new birth. The birth of every baby is a celebration, but John tells us this baby was born for the purpose of “birthing” a new kind of life in anyone who would believe in Him; a rebirth that would happen within us when the Spirit of Jesus abides in the believer. John 1:12 says, *“But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”*

It’s a miracle of *“charis.”* This is a word that means grace, kindness, and life. Jesus was overflowing with it, so much so that wherever He went, He gave life to dead things. This is the power and nature of the Spirit of God, and the work of Jesus was to give it to us. John 1:16 says, *“And from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.”* When Jesus speaks of the Spirit of truth, He tells his disciples, *“You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you”* (John 14:17).

Immanuel, God with us, is a gift of Christmas, yes. But through Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection, the Spirit of God dwells in us who trust in Him. God is with us EVERY DAY. The real, manifest, grace-and-truth-filled power of God is accessible to you and me for the purpose of maturing in faith and inviting others into God’s family. Remain in Him, and He will remain in you. Immanuel - every day.

Just as Jesus’ contemporaries didn’t always recognize that He was “God with them,” we sometimes take for granted the Spirit that God gifts us. To live an Immanuel (God with us) life, we can:

1. Pause each day and invite the Spirit of God to lead you.
2. Seek God’s Word in the Bible. Know His nature and His will.
3. Weave our story with other believers. The Spirit He gives us is to build all of us into one unified witness of Jesus in the world. You have gifts to share, and you have gifts to receive.
4. Take a risk. If the Spirit in us is the same as the Spirit that led Jesus, He might invite us into a few uncomfortable situations, but trust His leading. His purposes are bigger than what we understand, but they are always good.