

Week 2: Immanuel, God With Us

TEXT: MATTHEW 1:18-25

The message of Advent deepens from hope to faith. From the very beginning, God's desire has been to dwell with His people. In the garden, He walked with Adam and Eve in the cool of the day. Later, His presence filled the tabernacle in the wilderness and the temple in Jerusalem—signs that the Holy One of Israel longed to live among His people. God promised through the prophet Ezekiel, *"My dwelling place will be with them; I will be their God, and they will be my people"* (Ezekiel 37:27).

In the miraculous conception and birth of Jesus, that promise takes on flesh. The God who once appeared as a cloud by day and fire by night now comes wrapped in human skin. Isaiah had foretold this mystery centuries before: *"The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel"* (Isaiah 7:14). In Jesus, God is no longer distant or hidden—He is present, personal, and near. The Word has become flesh and made His home among us, fulfilling every longing for God's presence that began in Eden.

Faith means trusting that this same God is still with us—working, guiding, and redeeming even when we can't see the full picture. Just as Joseph and Mary stepped forward in obedience, unsure of what lay ahead, we too are invited to respond to God's Word with faith. When we believe that His presence truly transforms every circumstance, our ordinary lives become places where the divine dwells—where Immanuel still meets His people today.

Week Two Activity Suggestions:

- **Light of Faith:** Add a second candle to your Advent wreath and talk about how light grows brighter with each week. Let each person share one way they've seen their faith "shine" this week—through a prayer, a decision, or an act of love.
- **Immanuel Moments:** Each evening, take turns sharing a moment from your day when you noticed God's presence—an answered prayer, an act of kindness, a quiet moment of peace. Write them on slips of paper and keep them in a small jar labeled *"God With Us."*
- **Faith Walk:** Bundle up and take a short walk together. As you go, talk about how Mary and Joseph traveled to Bethlehem in faith, trusting God's plan. End by praying together, thanking God for walking with you every step.
- **Faith Step:** Do one small act this week that stretches your faith—something you feel God nudging you toward, even if it feels uncomfortable.
- **Faith Chain:** Create a paper chain where each link represents a promise of God. Add one new link each day this week with a verse written on it.
- **Music Moment:** Listen to *"Breath of Heaven"* by Amy Grant together. Talk about what faith looked like for Mary.

Week 2 Advent Reading: The God Who Comes Near

Reader: When fear filled Joseph's heart, the angel spoke: "Do not be afraid. What is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit."

All: God is with us. We will not be afraid.

Reader: To Mary, the angel said, "You will give birth to a son, and you are to call Him Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."

All: God is with us. We will not be afraid.

Reader: Long ago, the prophet Isaiah declared, "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call Him Immanuel."

All: God is with us. We will not be afraid.

Reader: The Word became flesh and made His home among us. God stepped into our world so we could know His love and peace.

All: God is with us. We will not be afraid.

Reader: As we light the second candle of Advent, we remember that the God who once spoke through angels still speaks peace to our hearts today.

All: God is with us. We will not be afraid.

Day 1 – The Announcement

Read: Matthew 1:18–19; Isaiah 7:14

Focus: Joseph learns of Mary’s pregnancy, unaware that this is the fulfillment of God’s promise: a virgin will bear a son called Immanuel.

Devotional:

Joseph’s world turned upside down when he learned that Mary was expecting a child—and he knew the baby wasn’t his. Imagine the confusion, the hurt, and the questions that must have filled his heart. Yet even in this uncertain moment, God was at work. What looked like a disruption was actually the unfolding of divine promise: a virgin would conceive and bear a son, and His name would be *Immanuel*—God with us.

Sometimes God’s plans interrupt ours in unexpected ways. But just like Joseph, we can learn to trust that God is doing something bigger than we can see. Even when His ways don’t make sense, His purposes are always good.

Reflect: Talk about a time when your plans changed unexpectedly. How did God use that situation for something good? What might it look like to trust Him when life surprises you?

Prayer Prompt: Ask God for faith to trust His purposes when life takes unexpected turns.

Day 2 – The Angel’s Message

Read: Matthew 1:20–21; Exodus 29:45–46

Focus: The angel reveals that Mary’s child is from the Holy Spirit and will save His people from their sins.

Devotional:

As Joseph wrestled with what to do, God sent an angel to bring peace to his troubled heart. The message was simple and powerful: “*Do not be afraid.*” The child growing within Mary was from the Holy Spirit, and His name would be Jesus—which means “the Lord saves.” From the very beginning, God made His purpose clear: He came to dwell among His people and rescue them from sin and fear.

The same God who lived among His people in the Old Testament now came even closer through Jesus. He didn’t stay distant or unreachable; He entered our world so that we could know His love firsthand.

Reflect: The name “Jesus” means “the Lord saves.” What does that mean to you? How can your family remember that Jesus came to bring hope and rescue to everyone?

Prayer Prompt: Thank Jesus for coming near to rescue you from sin and fear.

Day 3 – God With Us

Read: John 1:14; Ezekiel 37:27

Focus: The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. God’s presence is no longer distant but personal and real.

Devotional:

The story of Christmas is the story of a God who didn’t stay far away. John tells us that “*the Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us.*” God didn’t just visit for a moment—He came to live with His people. His presence wasn’t confined to a temple or a cloud of glory anymore; it became real and personal in the person of Jesus.

Because of Jesus, God’s presence is with us today—in our homes, our struggles, our laughter, and our prayers. We don’t have to look far to find Him. Every moment can be holy when we remember that *Immanuel* means “God with us.”

Reflect: Where do you notice God’s presence in your daily life—at home, at school, or at work? How can your family make space to notice and thank Him more often?

Prayer Prompt: Invite God to make His presence tangible in your home and heart today.

Day 4 – The Gift of Faith

Read: Matthew 1:24–25; Luke 1:26–38; 2:1–7

Focus: Joseph obeys in faith, just as Mary did. True faith responds to God’s Word with trust and action.

Devotional:

Both Mary and Joseph responded to God’s call with quiet courage. When the angel spoke, they didn’t have all the answers, but they had faith. Mary said, *“May it be to me as you have said,”* and Joseph obeyed God’s instruction to take Mary as his wife. Their faith wasn’t just belief—it was action. They trusted God enough to do what He asked, even when the path was uncertain.

Faith often asks us to take the next step before we see the whole road. Like Mary and Joseph, we learn that obedience and trust go hand in hand. Each “yes” we give to God makes room for His presence to work through us.

Reflect: Is there something God might be asking your family to do in faith—like showing kindness, forgiving someone, or helping a neighbor? How can you respond with trust like Mary and Joseph?

Prayer Prompt: Ask for courage to follow God’s leading, even when the path is uncertain.

Day 5 – The Presence That Transforms

Read: Revelation 21:3; Psalm 46:1–2

Focus: The promise of Immanuel finds its ultimate fulfillment in eternity—God dwelling fully with His people.

Devotional:

From the garden to the manger to the promise of eternity, God’s heart has always been to dwell with His people. One day, His presence will fill all things completely—no more pain, fear, or separation. Revelation gives us a glimpse of that future: *“Now the dwelling of God is with men, and He will live with them.”*

Advent reminds us that what began in Bethlehem isn’t finished yet. Jesus came once to redeem us, and He will come again to make all things new. Until then, His Spirit lives within us, transforming our hearts and filling us with peace that lasts forever.

Reflect: What do you think it will be like when God lives fully with His people forever? How can your family live in that hope and share it with others today?

Prayer Prompt: Thank God for His faithful presence now and the eternal peace to come.

Summary: The God Who Comes Near

This week's readings remind us that Advent is about *God coming close*. From the angel's message to Joseph's obedience, every part of the story shows a God who enters our world with compassion and purpose. Jesus is *Immanuel*—the God who doesn't stand at a distance but steps into our lives with love that saves and stays.

As your family reflects on these stories, remember that the same God who came to Joseph and Mary is still speaking to hearts today. His presence is near, His promises are sure, and His invitation remains the same: "*Do not be afraid—I am with you.*"

Go Deeper Discussion Questions

- How do you relate to Mary's faith when she said, "Let it be to me according to your word"?
- What is one area of your life where God might be inviting you to take a step of faith right now?
- How can faith grow during seasons when you don't see immediate results?
- How do you balance faith and wisdom—trusting God while also taking practical action?
- How can we encourage faith in one another as a community of believers?