

Emmanuel – **God with Us! Let Your Light Shine!**

It's that beautiful Christmas season once again! I hope you are enjoying it and centering your focus on what Christmas really means. I know it's kind of cliché but it is easy to be distracted by the trappings of Christmas and forget the incredible truth of what happened on that night! Well, it really started about 9 months before that night. Can we really grasp the concept that GOD CAME HERE TO THE EARTH TO BE WITH MAN!? How is that possible? Why would He want to leave heaven and come? It was all part of God's grand design to save people from their sins and pay that price once for all time.

Matthew 1:23 and Isaiah 7:14 tell us, "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which is translated, "God with us".

That is so amazing! GOD WITH US! Don't you just love the scripture in **Hebrews 13:5** that tells us that God's says, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." The NASB translation says it this way, "I will never desert you nor will I ever abandon you."

What a wonderful promise God has given us. God with us, no matter what happens! Our pastor shared about Emmanuel last Sunday. He said that God is with us in the good times, God is with us in the hard times, and no matter what lies ahead in our lives, Jesus Christ is still and always will be Emmanuel, God with us! I don't know about you but that gives me great encouragement.

Regardless of whether we are facing loneliness, mourning the loss of a loved one, grave illness, or any other human condition, God is right here with us and will never let us go. Now that's a Christmas message that brings me JOY!

We most often read the Christmas story from Luke chapter 2 and it is a beautiful rendition of the facts of that night which was, without doubt, the most crucial night in all human history. God's Son, Jesus made His first appearance in human flesh, fully God and fully man. It's hard to grasp that concept, too, but God's Word tells us it is fact. Only God could make something so miraculous happen. My personal favorite Christmas scripture account is in the Gospel of John.

John 1:1-5 "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men, and the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it."

The Word spoken of here is Jesus! God clearly tells us that Jesus was always with the Father and He was the one who created everything. Jesus' life was the light of men. His light shone in the darkness of mankind and the darkness didn't understand who He was. Our world today is in great darkness, too, and most of the world doesn't understand who Jesus is.

I was sitting in my favorite chair the other day enjoying the Christmas tree. It has lots of little LED lights on it. Those lights were shining bright but then suddenly, the sun came out and shone through the window directly onto the tree and where it shone, it looked like all the lights had gone out! As I studied that phenomenon, I felt in my spirit that it was like that with Jesus. When He came and shined His light on the world, it was so strong and powerful that it overwhelmed the little lights of men. I think it can be that way in us as believers. If we let the light of Christ shine in and through our lives, our personal light is consumed by the light of the Lord and people can see only the light of Jesus instead of us. That's the way I want to live. How about you? All the beautiful lights of Christmas can remind us to let Christ shine through us. Not just at Christmas time but all throughout the year. I want to encourage you to press in to Jesus, our Emmanuel, and let Him be very near to you. I have enclosed a sign in this letter and I hope you will find somewhere to tape it up so you can see it every day just to remind you that whatever you are facing today or tomorrow, Jesus is with you, Emmanuel.

Dear Lord, Thank you for sending Your Son Jesus to be our Emmanuel, to be God with us. Thank you for loving us that much and for the gift of salvation. Please help me to remember to put my faith and trust in You alone no matter what comes my way. We give you glory and praise! AMEN

I have enclosed the lyrics to a wonderful Michael W. Smith song entitled "The Promise". You may not know this song but the words are very special.

THE PROMISE

Fear not, oh, Israel for there is peace still to come
A word to break the silence, a promise set to bloom
The promise to redeem us, one to free us
Break this silence in the violence in our lives
Emmanuel is sure to find us soon
The mighty rule to Jesse's star of truth
And bring us unto glory, tell His story
Heal the broken and restore thee to His name
The star will guide us to the humble place
Where Christ the King reveals His earthly face
And we will see Emmanuel, **God is with us**
God is for us, God is in us, we will sing

We're singing Hallelujah, We're singing Hallelujah
Emmanuel, our God is with us (repeat 4 times)
Emmanuel, our God is with us

May all the joy of Christmas be yours!
Love in Christ Jesus, our Emmanuel, Jan