

### WARM-UP

- Tell us about someone or something that helped you in a time of loneliness.
- Name two people you can call true friends. What made you good friends?
- Recall a difficult situation you had to face. Who helped you go through it?

**WORD** *“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us).*

**MATTHEW 1:23**

(Read also **MATTHEW 1:18–22.**)

The nativity story is familiar to many. But just imagine being there while it was happening. Joseph, in the center of the story, was afraid and must have been confused and shaken to discover that Mary, his betrothed, was already pregnant. An angel appeared to him in a dream, saying this pregnancy was by the Holy Spirit. In fact, Mary had become pregnant to fulfill a prophecy spoken by Isaiah: that *the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel* (Isaiah 7:14). Immanuel means “God with us”—God had come down to mankind. Joseph’s story shows us three ways that we can still experience Immanuel today.

## 1 | God is with us in the midst of our fears.

*But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit."* **MATTHEW 1:20**

In the time of Joseph and Mary, a betrothal was legally binding. As far as Joseph knew, Mary was an adulterer and could be stoned as punishment for adultery. Instead of exposing her to public disgrace and physical harm, Joseph considered divorcing her quietly. But God drew near to Joseph in this time of anxiety, quieting his fears and assuring him that all of this was part of God's plan for him and Mary. In the midst of fear and uncertainty, God was with Joseph. Describe one time that God calmed your fears and gave you assurance of His sovereignty.

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## 2 | God is with us to save us from our sins.

*"She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."* **MATTHEW 1:21**

In the dream, the angel told Joseph that Jesus, the son Mary was carrying, would *save his people from their sins*. This was Immanuel—God sending His Son, Jesus, to die on the cross for us, so that our sins would not separate us from Him and so we can live in His righteousness. Until today, this is how we know without doubt that God is with us. How have you started seeing God's forgiveness and sanctifying work in your life? How has your life changed since you put your faith in Christ for salvation?

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## 3 | God is with us throughout our lives.

*When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife . . .* **MATTHEW 1:24**

Joseph obeyed the Lord, and he and Mary raised Jesus from childhood to manhood. This is one small picture of God being with us, day after day. In fact, He is *the beginning and the end* of all things (Revelation 22:13). Today, God is with us through the Holy Spirit, day after day, listening, comforting, and teaching us to live holy lives in His grace and mercy. In what ways do you experience God's presence daily?

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## APPLICATION

- We can take comfort in God's continuous presence in our lives. How can you pause daily to listen for God's voice?
- Was there a situation where you felt God was not with you? Ask God to revisit the moment with you and remind you that He has been there with you all along, even when you could not sense Him.
- How has God's presence in your life changed the way you live daily? How is this visible to those around you?

## PRAYER

- Thank God that we can experience His presence with us even today. Pray to hear clearly from Him as you seek Him daily.
- Pray that, like Joseph and Mary, you will obey when you hear God's voice. Pray for His grace to respond in the right way.
- Ask God to show you a friend or family member that you can encourage with the truth about God's presence this week.

## NOTES