

MAKING ROOM FOR
CHRISTMAS

Room for God

December 2 | Chris Stevens, Lead Pastor

“Joy to the world! The Lord is come!” Someone put on the ritz, because Jesus is here! Imagine if the King of Kings and Lord of Lords showed up at your door – you’d probably break out the good china, set the table and ask a few questions. The hospitality would be a natural response to His arrival. And yet He has arrived – He came to this earth as an infant, *Immanuel*, God with us. The beauty and gift of this truth can be lost in the hustle and bustle of the holiday season. This morning, let us remember anew that Christ is indeed God with us.



MESSAGE NOTES

Matthew 1:22-23

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel.”

God is with us. That changes *everything*.

Matthew 1:18-24

v. 18 – This young Mary is “found” to be pregnant by the Holy Spirit.

- In Isaiah 9:6 we see that a child is born (indeed, God in the flesh, with us) but a son is *given* – He is a gift from God. Jesus existed before His birth; He was given to us.

v. 19 – Joseph is in a tricky position. In this verse, we see the tension of his experience.

v. 20 – But the angel reveals this is no ordinary child – He is to be called “Jesus,” which is the Greek way of saying “Yeshua,” which we normally pronounce “Joshua.” From the Hebrew scripture, Joshua was a military leader. But this *Yeshua*, whom Mary was carrying, would save in an entirely unexpected way.

v. 22 – Matthew is referring to the prophecy of Isaiah.

v. 23 – With each name, we get a better and deeper understanding of what God is up to through this birth. *Immanuel*, God with us, is God’s desire – to be close to us as He was in the beginning (Genesis 1-3).

As the Gospels unfold, we know that God is not only with us once in history through the life of Jesus, but dwells in those who believe through the Holy Spirit.

v. 24-25 – The angel is God’s presence with Joseph. The presence of God changes everything for Joseph.

The message of the Bible is not about the desire of people to be with God. It’s about God’s desire to be with us.

In this season of busyness, both good and hard, how will you cultivate your relationship with *Immanuel* – God with us?

HOME GROUP MATERIALS

Merry December!

Many of you may be finishing up *A Firm Foundation*, and we encourage you to finish that well.

For those ready to move on, here are some options for your Home Group meeting this week.

OPTION 1: SCRIPTURE

Read Matthew 1:18-24 and ask the following questions. Give a lot of time to each one before moving to the next.

- What do you notice? Are there any patterns or repetitions? What questions do you have?
- What would it have meant to the original audience?
- What is the transferrable truth for us today?

Conversation starters:

- Are you familiar with this story? If you are, what strikes you afresh today?
- Are you unfamiliar with this story? If you are, what surprises you? What feels different from the version you might have heard from culture?
- What difference would it make, in your life, if the very presence of God showed up and asked you to do something unimaginable? How would you respond?
- Knowing that the Spirit dwells in us, what is the presence of God in you calling you to do?



HOME GROUP MATERIALS

OPTION 2: CULTIVATING PRESENCE

One of the main ways we can cultivate a presence with God is through silence and prayer. Both of these practices can feel easier to do alone, but take on deep significance when done in community. Those who are also listening help us to check what we have heard against scripture, ask important questions and be accountable to our call.

As a group, try Lectio Divina. This ancient practice is a powerful way to listen in silence but also hear from God as a group. This option will be included throughout the month of December as one does not cultivate anything overnight. Cultivation happens through patience and practice.

Lectio Divina

This is a prayerful reading of scripture that allows the Spirit to reveal His truth for individuals and the group. It's a simple practice, but it can yield much fruit. Follow these simple steps.

In a prayerful space:

1. Read the scripture, slowly, out loud. Just listen.
2. Read the scripture a second time, asking God to reveal a word or phrase He wants you to pay attention to.
3. Read the scripture a third time, slowly, out loud. Listen for an invitation from God around the word/phrase He has revealed and consider a response.
4. Read the scripture a final time, slowly, out loud. Just listen.

As a group, share what the Spirit revealed and your responses. Look for any patterns that might have implications for the whole group.

