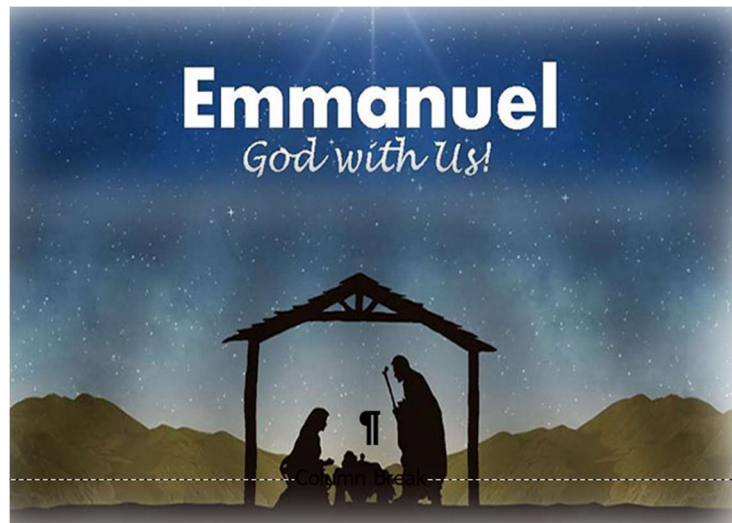


Life With God In Recovery

CHRISTMAS WITH GOD IN RECOVERY



The coming of Jesus to our world to reconcile us to our Heavenly Father is a powerful witness to the truth that our seemingly ordinary lives matter to God. Our story of the transformation of our lives through God's love and grace can be an extraordinary gift to our family and friends this Christmas season.

For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And having chosen them, he called them to come to him. And having called them, he gave them right standing with himself. And having given them right standing, he gave them his glory. What shall

***we say about such wonderful things as these?
If God is for us, who can ever be against us?***
(Romans 8:29-31 NLT)

Christmas reminds us that we don't have to clean up our lives before we make room for Jesus to enter our hearts. Jesus existed with God before the beginning of time. For love of us, Jesus was willing to leave heaven and enter a world unfit for his royal presence. He was born in a shelter for animals and His cradle was their feeding trough. The animal shelter would have been poorly lit, drafty and cold, and probably smelled strongly of the animals and their food. God comes to us in the muck and mire of our daily existence and says, ***“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest”***.
(Matthew 11:28 NIV)

When Jesus was on earth He paid special attention to the poor, the despised, the hurt, and the sinful. He rejected no one. He ignored no one. God hasn't changed. God chose simple people like Mary and Joseph to care for His beloved infant son. Mary and Joseph did not know the full plan God had in mind but they were willing to do what God asked of them. God shared the message of Jesus' birth with shepherds, ordinary people, who were just doing their job on a cold night in Bethlehem. They followed the instructions they were given, found God's message to them to be true, and joyfully told the world around them what amazing things God had done.

Because Joseph was a descendant of King David, he had to go to Bethlehem in Judea ... He took with him Mary, his fiancée, who was now obviously pregnant. And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born. She gave birth to her first child, a son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them. (Luke 2:4-7 NLT)

We too are ordinary people and yet God has done great things for us. We are loved by God. No one is beyond the scope of God's love or His ability to save. When our lives seem most unmanageable and we feel that no one understands or cares, we need to remind ourselves that God both understands and cares. The birth of Jesus is God's message to us that He loves and tenderly cares about each one of us. We are rescued from the loneliness, darkness, and hopelessness of addiction by faith in Jesus Christ.

Whatever it takes to provide healing and restoration in our lives, God will supply. Why? God wants us to have the amazing life He planned for us when He created us. He wants us to partake of His power that is unstoppable when individuals, no matter how broken and marginalized, come to Him and receive Him into their lives. Christmas with God in recovery is about enjoying the journey and sharing the joy and hope with others.

You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every

moment was laid out before a single day had passed. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ.
(Psalm 139:16, 2 Corinthians 4:6 NLT)

We may never comprehend how or even why God chose to do this but, the fact remains He came to earth by way of a Bethlehem manger. No matter how dark and unworthy we believe ourselves to be today, God desires to live within us so we can have new life. It is this individual attention and affirmation by the God who created us that gives meaning and purpose to our lives. We are loved not simply as one of the masses but as individuals with unique personalities. We are significant people because of our connection to God through Jesus Christ.

So the Lord's promise came true, just as the prophet had said, "A virgin will have a baby boy, and he will be called Immanuel," which means "God is with us." (Matthew 1:22-23 CEV)

Jesus came to earth to save us from our sins and offers us forgiveness, peace, comfort, healing, and new life. He awaits our invitation to come into our lives and make His home with us. If we invite Him in, we can truly experience the joy of new life with God in recovery this Christmas.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. How has the coming of God to my dark and broken world given meaning and hope to my ordinary, everyday life?
2. How does celebrating Christmas with God in recovery look different than Christmas celebrations of other years?
3. What are the particular challenges I face during this Christmas season?
4. How am I making space for God and others in my journey this Christmas season?

Heavenly Father, Thank you for sending Jesus to earth to save us. We may not fully understand what You have planned for ordinary people like us but, we know your plans are for good and not for disaster, plans for hope and a future with You. As we prepare for Christmas gatherings with friends or family, we ask you to fill our hearts with Your love so that, together with them, we can celebrate Christmas well. Jesus You are the reason for the season. Happy Birthday Jesus. Amen