



The Advent of Hope

December 3-9, 2023

MAIN POINT

God has sent his son to dispel our darkness, giving us great HOPE, and saving us from sin and death.

INTRODUCTION

What do you love most about Christmas?

What holiday traditions do you get most excited about this time of year?

Christmas is one of our most important and beloved holidays, but it takes place during the darkest time of the year. That is a strange contrast, but it's not an accident. Christmas celebrates the birth of Jesus, Emmanuel, God with us. It reminds us that God has entered our wintry darkness of sin to bring us light, love, joy, and peace. Jesus has come so that we might be with God now and into eternity.

Watch Session 1: Emmanuel, God With Us (11 minutes).

DISCUSSION

In the book of Isaiah, God uses multiple names to describe Jesus. God calls him Emmanuel, Wonderful Counselor, Prince of Peace, and Everlasting Father. These names are rich with meaning—meaning that will change your life. In this first session, J.D. Greear discussed the first name, Emmanuel, and the powerful truth of God being with us.

Emmanuel literally means “God with us.” In what ways have you recognized that God is with you? How does this give you HOPE?

What, if anything, can make you think he is not with you?

It can be easy to feel disconnected from the people and promises of the Old Testament. But, while we are not in the same situation as the ancient Israelites, we all are living in some kind of darkness, be it the darkness of fear, betrayal, illness, loss, or hopelessness.

What darkness are you currently living in?

What in your life do you wish God would rescue you from?

Think about God's promise to his people. He promised he would send Emmanuel, God with us. J.D. said that if God is with you, he will work everything out for your good and his glory. This is good news!

In what ways would your life change if you HOPED that every situation would work out for your good?

What could it look like for you to glorify God in your current circumstances?

J.D. said Jesus took on death so that we would only have to experience its shadow. If you trust Christ, your current darkness is passing.

In what ways does seeing your darkness as a passing shadow change your perspective on your circumstances?

If you are not a Christian or are just learning about Jesus, the name Emmanuel is an invitation. God came because our lives were shrouded in darkness. If you feel like you are in darkness, know that for you a child has been born. To you a son has been given. Jesus came for you in your darkness to offer His salvation, peace, joy and HOPE.

What, in your mind, makes Jesus's arrival good news?

What questions do you have about Jesus?

J.D. taught us that all of our greatest problems are rooted in a separation from God. We often look for God's gifts apart from him.

What are you hoping for most in life?

What "light" do you wish for more than anything else?

God has not abandoned us to darkness. He knows what we need and sent Jesus to enter our darkness so that we could receive his light.

How might what you long for be fulfilled in Jesus?

The birth of Jesus is a gift of HOPE in our darkness. But like any other gift, you must receive it.

Do you believe that Jesus is Emmanuel, God with you?

LAST WORD

In the dead of winter, when we are surrounded by darkness, we celebrate the light of Jesus. We gather in decorated homes to give one another good gifts as signs of our love.

This is Christmas: that in our darkness and spiritual coldness, God has sent light and HOPE into the world and has given us the gift of his Son as a sign of his love. More than that, Jesus took on our sin, rose from the grave so that we might be saved, and promises to be with us until he returns.

Christmas is not just a sentimental holiday; it is the good news that for us a child is born, a Son has been given, and his name is Emmanuel, God with us...HOPE everlasting.

LIVE IT OUT

READ: Read Matthew 1:18-23 and 28:16-20. Take note of the promise of Emmanuel in both Jesus's birth and Great Commission. He came to us and is with us even now.

PRAY: Pray to see God's presence in your life more clearly. Even though he may feel far away, his presence never leaves us. Pray that His HOPE would be clearly manifested in you day to day life, and that you are able to share that HOPE with others.

MEMORIZE: John 1:11-12, "He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."