

Immanuel

Week 1

The Season of Expectancy

Introduction

- Reflect on childhood Christmas experiences: the long buildup to Christmas morning and the feeling of time stretching. Today, we recognize that the expectancy leading up to a moment is as precious as the moment itself.
- Theme: "The season of expectancy" – a time when all we have is a promise (the Word of the Lord).

Scripture Reference

- **Luke 1:26-38, 1:45**
- **Isaiah 7:14 (NKJV):** "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel."

Key Points

1. Mary's Response to the Promise

o Mary responds: "I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said."

Trust in God's plan without knowing the process or the "how."

Anticipate doubt, ridicule, and skepticism from others, but remain firm in what God has spoken.

2. Mary's Qualifications

o Commentary by Darrell Bock emphasizes her lack of credentials except for her willingness and availability.

o God uses those available to Him, providing strength to overcome limitations.

o Mary serves as an example of faith and humble acceptance in God's plan.

3. The Nature of Expectancy

o Expectancy began with God's Word and Mary's acceptance.

o Reflect on the idea of "What to Expect When You're Expecting" – The Bible serves as our guide for anticipating God's plans.

4. Spiritual Growth and Gestation

o Prayer womb: How well do we carry God's promises once He speaks?

o Different dreams and visions have distinct gestation periods, reflecting Habakkuk 2:2-3.

Example of gestation: rabbits (1 month), humans (9 months), elephants (22 months), and God's vision concerning Jesus took 4000 years and 9 months.

5. Growth in Faith and Character

o Spiritual growth involves stretching, discomfort, patience, trust—carrying something divine.

o Mark Batterson (Draw the Circle) speaks to how God stretches our limits to build faith and character.

6. Biblical Examples of Expectation

o **Abraham:** 25 years waiting for Isaac (Genesis 12:2, 21:1-5).

o **Joseph:** 13 years from dreams to fulfillment (Genesis 37:2, 41:46).

o **David:** 15 years from anointing to kingship (1 Samuel 16:13, 2 Samuel 2:4).

o **Anna and Simeon:** Long wait and faithfulness, waiting for the Messiah (Luke 2:25-38).

Reflective Questions

- Is the vision growing within you aligned with God's purpose?
- Does your spiritual womb leap at the presence of Jesus? (Referencing John the Baptist in Luke 1:41-44).
- When in worship, does your spirit resonate with excitement for God's presence and plans?

Conclusion

- Where there is no vision, the people perish (Proverbs 29:18).
- Seek God's voice in dreams, visions, prophecies, and scripture. You are alive for a purpose, as recipients of God's plans here on earth.
- Closing Prayer: Invite God to reveal dreams and visions to each individual, establishing a fresh connection to His promise.