



NG Study Guide: Christmas 2018 Matt.1:21-23 “God With Us” [12.23.18]

Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. *Leader note: Please review the brief instructions for leaders at the bottom.*

The Study

Thesis: It can be difficult to imagine God the Father being with us, because God is spirit. Jesus helps us to understand what it is like to have God with us. Jesus’ first disciples grew in their relationship with Him and began to appreciate over time the comfort, courage, and conviction of having God with them. The person and the work of the Christ are described by two names: Jesus, and Immanuel. These names describe His mission. He has come to save us, and to be God with us. Understanding and responding to His mission can give you everything you want this Christmas and beyond! Let’s consider the birth and mission of Jesus and discover how to live like God is with you...

²¹ **And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.**²² **So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying:** ²³ **“Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which is translated, “God with us.”**

1. Jesus is the God who saves [21]

And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.” The Hebrew *Yeshua* is the English Joshua, and in Greek, Jesus. The name means YHWH is salvation. His name is Jesus. Christ is a title meaning the Anointed One or Messiah, it is not Jesus’ last name. Jesus’ mission is to save His people from their sins.

Jesus saves from the penalty, the power, and the presence of sin. First, we need to understand that we can be saved from the *penalty* of sin. Before we can appreciate the good news of Jesus, we need to comprehend the bad news. All of us have sinned against God, and fallen short of God’s standard of moral perfection [Rom. 3:23]. It is not only the nature of the offense, but the One that we’ve offended is God. Sin separates us from God, and a penalty must be paid to restore our relationship with God. Since, we constantly sin against God, whether we realize it or not, we’re simply unable to pay the penalty we owe, and deserve God’s judgment [Rom. 6:23]. But God demonstrates His own love toward us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us [Rom. 5:8]. Jesus came not only to reveal the grace and truth of God, but to be the perfect sacrifice to take the penalty for sin for all who would receive Him. All who trust in Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross, as proven by His resurrection, and choose to yield their life to Him shall be saved [Rom. 10:9].

Second, we are saved from the *power* of sin. Jesus sets us free from being controlled by our flesh; and has given us his Spirit so that we can live primarily to please and honor God rather than in rebellion against God.

Third, we are saved from the *presence* of sin. Ultimately, our home is with Jesus in heaven; and there we will be delivered from the presence of sin. There will no longer be anything that will obscure God, nor anything that can separate us from His presence.

2. Jesus is Immanuel – God with us [22-23]

22 So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: 23 "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us."

The prophet Isaiah foretold that God would provide a sign that would ultimately be fulfilled in the Incarnation or birth of Jesus [Is. 7:14]. The prophecy foretold the virgin birth. That Mary would bear the Messiah, and would be pregnant although she had never known a man. And not only would His birth be wonderful, but also His very nature, because this special Son is in fact God manifest in the flesh as a child.

Jesus' life, teaching, and ministry help us to better understand the nature of God. There was a small boy was drawing a picture when an adult asked, "What are you drawing?" The boy replied, "A picture of God." The adult said, "No one knows what God looks like." To which the boy confidently responded, "They will when I get through." For many of us it is difficult to wrap our minds, let alone our arms, around God the Father, but because Jesus became a man, while remaining God, it makes it easier for us to understand God. Jesus declared that if we have seen Him, we have seen the Father [Jn. 14:1-9]. To know Jesus is to know God the Father.

Matthew's gospel begins and ends with the assurance of God being with us [Cf. Matt. 28:20]. As proverbial bookends, God through Matthew signals the importance of the reality of God's presence. The fact that God has drawn close to man, and wants to be near, was a radical ideal in the ancient world. To the Greeks and Romans, there pagan gods were distant and removed; and whenever they interacted with man humans regretted the interaction. Similarly, the Egyptian, and Babylonian gods were distant. To the Jews, there was a reverent fear of God, but Jesus came to replace fear with reverent respect and worship.

The proximity of God is not merely a theological concept or lofty ideal, but should have practical impact upon the lives of Jesus' followers...

3. How might God being with you change your life?

I think that our lives might be very different if we lived with a conscience awareness of God being with us. Here are some of the ways:

Comfort: Jesus' presence provides comfort to His disciples. There is a sense of peace and hope that no matter what the circumstances that He has it under control, and He is the Good Shepherd [Jn. 10].

Courage: When you recognize Jesus calling you to walk on the water, you do what seems improbable, or even impossible, because you know that He won't command you to do what He won't enable you to do [Mk. 14:22-33].

Conviction: When confronted by Jesus, and He declares, "Neither do I convict you, but go and sin no more" there is a sense of conviction by His presence that produces repentance rather than condemnation [Jn. 8:1-11].

Commandments: When Jesus declares His commandments, in your presence, you appreciate that they are commandments and not merely suggestions to improve your quality of life [Mt. 22:37-39].

Commitment: knowing that Jesus loves you to the end motivates you to return that love [Jn. 13:1].

The challenge for us is to become more aware of his presence. To know the Bible, to be sensitive to His Spirit, to quiet the distractions of this world, and to contemplate Him. Imagine how your life could be different by receiving Christ's salvation, and living like the reality that God is with you ...

Study Guide Qs

Q1. Why might it be challenging to remember that God is with us?

Q2. Consider the concept that Jesus offers salvation from the penalty, power, and presence of sin. How has this truth impacted your life? Describe your thoughts, feelings or experiences.

Q3. How do you think the fact that God the Son (Jesus) became man and came to dwell with man might help people to understand God the Father?

Q4. Review the section, “How might God being with you change your life?” How can you relate to some of ways that an awareness of God’s presence is life changing?

“Digging Deeper” (optional or alternative study)

1. Search the phrase, “God with us.” It occurs almost 200 times in the Bible in approximately 50 verses. Review some of the verses, and consider what you discover about God being with us.

Love your neighbor *outside* the group better:

1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors where they live, work, study, or play this past week?

2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor outside the group?

3. Here is a neighboring idea(s) for us to consider for the week(s) ahead:

Check out this link for some ideas for your group this Christmas:

[Accept your neighbor’s invitation to a holiday gathering and/or invite neighbors to join you for a holiday get together.](#)

Love your neighbor *inside* the group better:

1. Are there some needs in our group that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor within the group?

2. What might we do about that need to help?

Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don’t force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

Leader Notes:

1. Seek to involve as many group participants as possible. A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.

2. Feel free to pre-select the discussion questions that you want to focus on in case there isn’t enough time to answer them all.

3. The “Digging Deeper” section provides some optional or alternative study and discussion activities. As a group leader, you can choose to focus on the “Digging Deeper” section, include part of that section in your group meeting, or not use it at all. Try to give the group sufficient notice so they can be prepared for the meeting.

4. Every time you meet consider asking:

a. What about this passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing? If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don’t hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.