



UNEXPECTED CHRISTMAS (Part 1) - "Unexpected Hope"

Isaiah 7:14 NIV

14 "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel."

Matthew 1:18-25 NIV

18 This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. 19 Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

20 But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 23 "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us").

24 When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. 25 But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

Key Points

- When we don't feel God's presence, we tend to take matters into our own hands.
- Prophecies are not given to prove something beyond a reasonable doubt but rather to reveal.
- For something to be unexpected, it implies that something was expected.
- God's salvation is revealed in Immanuel, God with us.
- To save us, God came to be with us.
- Jesus delivered us from the death that comes from life apart from God.
- The very name "Immanuel" means God with us, signifying His abiding presence as the source of hope.
- "God with us" is the invitation for life with God.
- When the long-expected Messiah finally came into the world, He came in such unexpected ways.

READ

Open your time together by reading the Scripture passages on Page 1. Then, take a moment to consider what you just read:

- **Read Isaiah 7:14.** How does this specific prophecy shape your understanding of the unexpected ways in which God fulfills His promises?
- **Read Matthew 1:18-25.** This passage narrates the angel's message to Joseph regarding the birth of Jesus. How does Joseph's response to the angelic message reveal aspects of faith, obedience, and trust in God's plan?

REFLECT

- **Reflect on a specific instance where your expectations played a role in the unexpected events of your life.** How did this experience challenge or strengthen your faith?
- **How do you navigate moments when you don't feel God's presence?** What practices or perspectives help you resist the temptation to take matters into your own hands?
- **Reflect on the significance of the name "Immanuel" and its representation of God's abiding presence as the source of hope.** How has this understanding shaped your outlook on hope in challenging circumstances?

RESPOND

- **Explore the invitation for life with God encapsulated in "God with us."** How do you respond to this invitation in your daily life, and how does it impact your relationship with God?
- **In what ways has the awareness of God being with you (Immanuel) shaped your approach to challenges and difficulties in life?**

PRAY

Close your time together with prayer requests. Ask how you can pray, support, and lift one another up. Pray over these requests collectively or by breaking into prayer partners.