

# GOD *With Us*



**GOD**  
*With Us*

**God With Us –  
Christmas –  
God's Love for US**

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- “Love” is a word that is thrown around in our culture today.
- Everyone wants to know that he or she is important to someone.
- Have you ever thought about the reason we all want to be liked and loved? Have we considered that it is because God created us for intimate, authentic relationships?
- If you could summarize the bible in one word what would that word be?

# GOD With Us

- God loves us so much and he wants a relationship with each and every one of us. In fact, God wants that relationship so much that he “became flesh and made his home among us.” We might not understand the magnitude of this sacrifice, but it is truly incredible. **The incarnation. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only son.” And that is at the root of what Christmas is all about.**
- I think it’s really difficult for us to grasp the expansiveness of God’s love for each of us.
  - We don’t really have a comparable love in our relationships here on earth, and the ones that we do have, we so often take for granted.
- It’s no wonder, then, that we so easily overlook and underestimate the desire God has to be in relationship with each of us because of his great love!

# GOD With Us

- **The Christmas account testifies to the outrageous, pursuing love of God for a world so broken that it had already rejected God and his covenants countless times before Jesus ever came on the scene.** God loves us and wants us, even while we doubt our worthiness. God loves us and wants us, even as we remain under the influence of unworthy lovers such as greed, selfishness, addiction, and deceit. God loves us and wants us so much that he has given his very own life for us. And God has created us to find our very life and meaning in him. But the only way to find that life and meaning is to believe in God's love for us, and then to devote ourselves exclusively to the God of love.
- **A Love Reality**
- Christmas is a love account. John frames it that way. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16, NIV) But, God's love account is not about roses, candlelight, and romance! It's more like blood, sweat, and tears. His is a bold love, offered in the face of rejection, persistently. It's an account of pursuit, an amazing account of just how far He would go to reach out to people who not only ignore Him, but actually love other things more than Him.

# GOD With Us

- We celebrate the incarnation of the Christ, i.e. the human birth of the Son of God.
- The prophet Isaiah in the Old Testament alluded to this:
  - Isaiah 9:6-7 For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His government and its peace will never end. He will rule with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David for all eternity. The passionate commitment of the Lord of Heaven's Armies will make this happen!
  - Isaiah 7:14 Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel (which means 'God is with us')
- "For unto us a child is born (a statement of His humanity)..."
- " "He will be called (among other things) Mighty God (a statement of His deity)."
- Earlier he calls this person "Immanuel" meaning "God with us (See Isaiah 7:14)"

- **What Christ came from:**

- John 1:1-5 In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He existed in the beginning with God. 3 God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him. 4 The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it.
  - Before Jesus ever came to earth, He existed in the spiritual realm with the Father. Though He in every way was in the very form (essence) of God, Jesus did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped (in the incarnation), but emptied Himself (i.e. made Himself nothing--See Philippians 2:5-7)!
  - Jesus gave up the status that was His in heaven by taking the form of a bond-servant. In so doing, Jesus chose not to pursue the glory that He had with the Father before the world began (John 17:5 Now, Father, bring me into the glory we shared before the world began.)
  - He gave up the glory that was rightfully His prior to His human birth and now is His again following His resurrection and ascension (See Philippians 2:9-11).

- 2 Corinthians 8:9 You know the generous grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty he could make you rich.”
- Application: Why did Jesus forego the glory that was His and take on human flesh? The answer is obvious: **He loves us** (Revelations 1:5 **All glory to him who loves us** and has freed us from our sins by shedding his blood for us.)
- There’s really no other explanation. It isn’t some need of God’s that demands it! The truth is that God has always done quite well existing independently of us.
  - Acts 17:24-25 "He is the God who made the world and everything in it. Since he is Lord of heaven and earth, he doesn't live in man-made temples, 25 and human hands can't serve his needs—**for he has no needs**. He himself gives life and breath to everything, and he satisfies every need.
- Neither does the justice of God for we could all just die in our sin and go to Hell and His justice would be satisfied.
- **It is the love of God expressed in His mercy and grace which compelled Jesus to take on human flesh. He wanted the best for us regardless of the cost to Himself even if it meant setting aside His glory.**

- **What Christ came to.**

- It is amazing when one thinks about it that the Son of God would come into our world at all! What is even more astonishing, however, is the response he received when He did so.
  - John 1:10-11 He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him. 11 He came to his own people, and even they rejected him.
- The coming of the Messiah had long been anticipated by nation of Israel. When He finally arrived, it was a kind of "homecoming" for Christ. The phrase "He came to His own" can be interpreted "He came home."
- The **Word** did not go where He could not have expected to be known. He came home where the people should have known Him. Yet we're told that they did not receive Him.

- Though the Jews had enjoyed many advantages, in particular the revelation made known to them "at many times and in various ways (See Hebrews 1:1)," they did not receive Him.
- What motivated Jesus to come to a world that did not recognize Him and a people that did not receive Him? It was love plain and simple.
  - A love that does not seek its own and does not take into account a wrong suffered. A love that bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things and endures all things. A love that never fails.

- **Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow**

- We wouldn't do that? The present and the future will be the same as the past unless we chose to change it!
- The love account of Christmas was foreshadowed in the tawdry lines of Hosea, written 7 centuries before the birth of Jesus.

- Hosea 1:2 When the Lord first began speaking to Israel through Hosea, he said to him, "Go and marry a prostitute, so that some of her children will be conceived in prostitution. This will illustrate how Israel has acted like a prostitute by turning against the Lord and worshiping other gods."
- What an assignment for this ancient preacher. "Hosea, go marry a woman who will not be faithful to you! Your marriage will be an object lesson in front of the nation about the way they are living and my persistent love."
- It was tragic marriage, one that had to cause everyone involved a great deal of pain. Gomer involved herself repeatedly with other men.
- She left Hosea and returned as her affairs brought disappointment. "She'll go on the hunt for her lovers but not bring down a single one. She'll look high and low but won't find a one. Then she'll say, 'I'm going back to my husband, the one I started out with. That was a better life by far than this one.'" (Hosea 2:7, The Message)
- The couple had two sons and one daughter. Hosea named them for their mother's sins.
  - His first son he named, "Jezreel" which means depending on context- "God scatters" or more positively, "God plants."
  - His daughter he named, "Lo-Ruhamah" which means- "Not loved."
  - And his last son he named, "Lo-Ammi" which means - "Not mine, or not my people."

- But as the story unfolds, we learn that even her children were not sufficient reason for her to leave her sin. She left once again, sinking into an awful life of depravity, eventually becoming a prostitute offering herself for sale. Once again, Hosea is given a tough assignment.
- Hosea 3:1-4 Then the Lord said to me, "Go and love your wife again, even though she commits adultery with another lover. This will illustrate that the Lord still loves Israel, even though the people have turned to other gods and love to worship them." 2 So I bought her back for fifteen pieces of silver and five bushels of barley and a measure of wine. 3 Then I said to her, "You must live in my house for many days and stop your prostitution. During this time, you will not have sexual relations with anyone, not even with me." 4 This shows that Israel will go a long time without a king or prince, and without sacrifices, sacred pillars, priests, or even idols!
- Can you imagine that kind of love- finding your wife, the mother of your children, in a cheap place, paying for her, and bringing her back home? Though it is a story of sad degradation, of great pain, and ugly sin. **Hosea's love for Gomer, his wife, is a revelation of the deep and persistent love of God for His people.**
- **This is us! Keep that in mind.** How easily we forget the promises we make to God in our time of desperation. How easily some walk away from their first love, from the promise they made when they were baptized into the family of God, from the joyful newness of they find when they respond to Christ in faith.

- **And God's love pursues them.**

- Hosea 2:16 "When that day comes," says the Lord, "you will call me 'my husband' instead of 'my master.'"

- Hosea 2:23 "At that time I will plant a crop of Israelites and raise them for myself. I will show love to those I called 'Not loved.' And to those I called 'Not my people,' I will say, 'Now you are my people.' And they will reply, 'You are our God!'"

- **This is the story of God and those He created. We were made to love Him, to find life in Him, to belong exclusively to Him. But sin entered the world and broke our relationship.**

- People become enthralled with things other than God. They chase wealth with a religious fervor. Pleasure becomes a god to whom health, wealth, and reputation are sacrificed. Money, sex, food, power all become lovers to whom people give themselves. Like prostitutes, degraded and abused, life is stolen and a slavery befalls those who have abandoned God. **But, He does not abandon us!**

- **What Christ Came for**

- This is the amazing, often overlooked, story of Christmas. God came to buy us back from that slavery. He came to restore our relationship to Him. The Bible says that "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8, NIV)
- Romans 8:15-16 So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, "Abba, Father."
- Colossians 1:21-22 This includes you who were once far away from God. You were his enemies, separated from him by your evil thoughts and actions. 22 Yet now he has reconciled you to himself through the death of Christ in his physical body. As a result, he has brought you into his own presence, and you are holy and blameless as you stand before him without a single fault.
- John 15:13 There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends.
- **Even though we talk about it all the time, do we really understand the love of God?**

