



ANNOUNCEMENTS/NEXT STEPS:

- Leaders Lab (December 7, 7:00PM Lakeland College)
- The Beat: Downtown Interest Meeting (Dec. 10, 6:30PM)
- Christmas Prom (December 22, 7:00PM Grace Hall)

PRAY TOGETHER FOR

- A meaningful Christmas season with a deep sense of Christ's Presence in your life.
- Your DGroup's growth as you unwrap God's gifts together.

GOAL FOR THIS STUDY:

To show us that we are not alone; God is always with us. But not only is He with us, there is incredible power available as we practice His presence.

Matthew 1:23

"The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us").

The first gift we will unwrap in this series is the gift of God's presence.

As we begin this series, remember that there is more to Christmas than what we think; and that the out of that one gift of Christmas, Jesus, we receive more gifts that are at our disposal and designed for our good. We learned last Sunday that one of God's gifts to us is His presence. All throughout the Bible, we find how God wants to have a relationship with people and He initiates that personal relationship by personally revealing Himself to individuals. Christmas is all about God making His presence known. In this study, we will learn about the three natures of God's presence,

1. **His omnipresence.** Psalm 139:7-14 teaches us of the Omniscience and Omnipresence of God. David is saying here: Look upon God: He knows you thoroughly; He is with you everywhere you go; He has wondrously created you and sovereignly ordained the days of your life. And because God knows everything we do and is present everywhere we go, we must always examine how we live and please God by yielding ourselves to His ways.
2. **His manifest presence.** John 1:14 teaches us about His manifest (the incarnational) presence of God. The *Amplified Bible*, tells us in John 1:14, *And the Word (Christ) became flesh, and lived among us; and we [actually] saw His glory, glory as belongs to the [One and] only begotten Son of the Father, [the Son who is truly unique, the only One of His kind, who is] full of grace and truth (absolutely free of deception).* The birth of Jesus was the fulfillment of a promise and the culmination of prophecies. In Jesus, the God we read about in the Old Testament is manifested (Read John 14:5-10). The gift of God to us on Christmas is His very own presence (Matthew 1:23).
3. **His indwelling presence.** 2 Timothy 1:14 teaches us that when we receive Jesus as Lord and Savior, His Holy Spirit indwells us. Jesus makes His home in our heart and begins to make His presence known in various ways like faith, growth and fruit (Galatians 5:22-26).

This Christmas, and everyday, we must be reminded of one of God's greatest gifts to us, the gift of His presence. His presence makes a lot of difference in the way we live our lives, how we view things, how we make decisions and choices and our fruitfulness. In coming to know Him, we come to know ourselves. In the blinding light of His holiness, we recognize instantly the desperate need we have for inner purity. It is also in knowing that we cannot escape from this all-present, all-wise God, that we realize the beauty of grace; that despite our imperfections and our unworthiness, God still came to gift us with His indwelling presence so that He can manifest (reveal) His power by working in our lives and use us for His glory. His presence in our life satisfies, heals, restores, rebukes, encourages and reveals all that He is to all that we are. As the *God who is always with us*, He wants to remind us that no matter where we find ourselves in, He is with us; and it's up to us how we can practice His presence and receive its benefits.

Connection and Action

Questions to promote conversation and connection

Question:

What kind of person are you:

1. one who doesn't mind sharing or revealing your personal life, needs and struggles with people you just met?

2. one who cannot share anything about yourself with acquaintances? And...

Why do you think you are the way you are?

Why do you think are people afraid to be known thoroughly?

How vulnerable should we be? What guidelines do you have on which you should share or not share?

Bible and Belief

Questions to help believers develop a biblical point of view.

Read Psalm 139:7-12.

How does it make you feel to know God is everywhere?

What are some practical ways you can cultivate a sense of God's presence at all times?

How would this change your behavior? How would it change the way you view yourself and others?

Read Matthew 1:23.

What is the special name of the Messiah and where in the Old Testament is this prophecy found? What does this name imply?

Read John 1:1-3, 14-18.

Where was the Word (verses 1-3)? Who was he (verse 14)? What did the Word do? What does it mean that the Word became flesh? What did it cost him to come and live among men? Why did he do it?

Read verses 13-14 again. Why do you think the writer changes to "us" and "we"? What did he see? How can they see his glory? How can we?

What did God give through Moses? Why is this a blessing? What came through Jesus Christ? How are these blessings related?

How can we see and know God (verse 18)? Why is Jesus the only one who is qualified to make God known? How has he made him known?

Growing in Leadership

Questions to help people grow as leaders.

Here's how we can practice the presence of God in our life:

1. Begin Your Day With Intentionality. How can you start and carry your day on right?

2. Turn Complaints Into Cries Of Praise. How can we train our minds to choose praise especially when there are more things to complain about?

3. Turn Suffering Into Surrender. What areas are you suffering from and struggling with these days? How can you train yourself to surrender these things to Jesus?

4. Turn the Mundane Into A Holy Moment. What part of your day seems so routine and uneventful? How can you turn them into moments in which God can work through you and in you?

5. Lead Yourself In Worship. How can you turn an ordinary day into a day of worship? What practical ways can you think of or suggest?

NOTICE:

We will not issue study guides for the weeks of December 24th and 31st. We suggest a 2-week study break during the holidays.

We will resume our DGroups on the week of January 7th 2018.