

# God With Us

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Turn to your Bibles again, to the book of Matthew, the first book of the New Testament, Matthew chapter 1. Matthew chapter 1, I will be reading from verse 18 through to verse 25.

Let's hear the word of God. This is how the birth of Jesus came about. His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit.

Because Joseph, her husband, was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. 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.

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. All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet.

The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son and they will call him Emmanuel, which means God with us. When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife.

[ 1 : 3 2 ] But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son and he gave him the name Jesus. Let's hear the word of God preached.

In the text just read for us then from Matthew chapter one, we have an account of how the birth of Jesus came about. It was unlike any other child brought into this world in that his mother was a virgin.

She had never been intimate with another man. Indeed, man was not involved at all. Rather, we're told, the baby Jesus was conceived in her by or from the Holy Spirit.

Matthew then tells us in verse 22, So as shocking as this must have been and was to Mary and Joseph, and as strange as it sounds to our ears, yet this was exactly what Isaiah the prophet had prophesied by the Holy Spirit 700 years earlier.

When he wrote in chapter 7 of his book, verse 14, the virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son and they will call him Emmanuel.

[ 2 : 5 6 ] And Matthew says, which means God with us. So we're considering today this name of our Savior, Emmanuel.

How many Emmanuels do you know? Maybe some of you have heard the name Emmanuel Kant, Emmanuel Noriega, Manny Ramirez, and many, many other names like it.

Fact is, there's been a lot of parents who named their sons Emmanuel, or one of its variants. But none of them has ever fulfilled that name as our Lord Jesus Christ does.

He alone is truly deserving of that name, for he alone lives up to it to the full. Interesting that nowhere in the New Testament do we ever hear people calling him Emmanuel.

Verse 21, in fact, says they were to give him the name Jesus because he will save his people from their sins.

[ 4 : 12 ] Well, Jesus is his personal name, the name people used when speaking to him or about him. Not Emmanuel, but Jesus.

And though Emmanuel was not how others referred to him, yet this name describes him. It's much like what Isaiah says in chapter 9 and verse 6, that to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

These also were names given to him along with many more that we could recite. Now that doesn't mean that when Mary called him in for supper that she said, time to eat, Wonderful Counselor.

No, she didn't use that name. Neither did his friends refer to him as Prince of Peace. No, they called him Jesus. That was his personal name.

And yet all of these other names that were given to him are names that revealed amazing truths about him. So today we're considering his name Emmanuel, which means God with us.

[ 5 : 31 ] Think of it. For 700 years, this name waited for someone to really fill the bill. One who it truly belonged to.

And then he came, born of a virgin, rightly called Emmanuel, God with us. Now there's two big things that this name of Jesus teaches us.

It teaches us his person and his work. Or if you like, who he is and why he came. So let's look at how this name spells that out for us.

As we look at the baby in Bethlehem's manger then, we have these two questions answered. First of all, who is he? Well, he is Emmanuel. He is God with us.

Now don't miss this. He is God. Let's just stop there for a minute. He is God. As much God as the Father is God.

[ 6 : 30 ] As much God as the Spirit is God. Indeed, he shares the one divine nature equally with them. And that means he did not have his beginning in the womb of the Virgin Mary.

He existed before his birth. Indeed, before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world from everlasting to everlasting, you are God.

The eternal one without beginning or ending of time. So that means he's the creator of all things and without him, nothing has been made that was made.

He's the one who flooded the earth in Noah's day. He's the one who spoke to Moses out of the burning bush and performed the ten plagues in Egypt.

He's the one who opened a way through the Red Sea so that the Israelites could pass through on dry land and then swallowed up their enemies. He's the one that protected his people in Esther's day that we just concluded reading about in the book of Esther.

[ 7 : 39 ] How he protected them from Haman's wicked plan. He's the one who directed David's stone from his slingshot so that it found the one unprotected place on Goliath and brought him down and won the victory.

He's the one that told Jonah to go to Nineveh and preach and then commanded the great fish to swallow him and to regurgitate him up again. This is the one in the manger.

He is Emmanuel, the infinite, eternal, unchangeable God. The great I am, dependent on none, needing nothing.

The maker of all things. That means he created the trees. Indeed, he sent sunshine and rain on one tree that grew and then was cut down and carpenters made it into a feeding trough for their animals and he is now lying in that manger built by the tree that he grew.

And he also made another tree to grow that would later be cut down and used for a cross on which those same little hands and feet lying in the manger would one day be nailed.

[ 8 : 59 ] That's who the baby Jesus is. He is Emmanuel. He is God. God. And having clear views of this baby Jesus is critical.

We dare not have foggy ideas about who Jesus is because if he's not God, then he cannot save us. Oh, but he is God.

His name tells us he's God. He is Emmanuel, God. But there's more. He is God with us. And this speaks of his presence, that he came near us.

And we say, how near? How far did he come? Well, he stooped all the way from heaven, as we've just sung, to come to earth and live among us. But there's more than that.

In fact, he identified so closely with us that he became one of us. John 1.14 says that this eternal word was made flesh and dwelt among us.

[ 10 : 06 ] And since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity. For he had to be made like his brothers in every way. If he's going to be our representative, he must be as much man, as much human being as you and I are.

So he took a real human body, a real human soul, and that all in order to be with us. So an eternal divine nature was forever joined to a human nature, a real human nature, in the womb of Mary.

One person with two natures, eternally bound together, unmixed, unseparated in the sense that they're found in the one person, Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

He is both God and man. In fact, he's so much man, he's so much one with us in our humanity that it was hard for people to believe that he was anything but man.

Because just to look at him, he looked like any other man. To peer into the manger made him look, he looked just like any other Jewish baby boy. Look, no halo, nothing about his appearance to mark him out as being God.

[ 11 : 26 ] A body that grew tired and thirsty and hungry, that needed sleep and rest and food. A body that winced with pain. A soul that felt both sadness and gladness, peace and pity, amazement and fear.

And so his deity had been eclipsed by his humanity. It had been somewhat hidden by his humanity when he visited us.

And that veil was rarely pulled back while he was here. We read of one time when it was pulled back on the Mount of Transfiguration as three other disciples were with him and his face shone like the sun and his clothes became as white as the light.

And yet, all the while he was with us. He was God with us. Though it wasn't seen and appreciated. For in Christ, all the fullness of the deity lives in bodily form.

Colossians 2 and verse 9. So here is his utter uniqueness. There is none like him. He alone is truly Emmanuel.

[ 12 : 44 ] Truly God with us. Veiled in flesh, the Godhead seen. Hail the incarnate, the enfleshed deity.

Pleased with men. Pleased as man, with men to dwell. Jesus, our Emmanuel. Well, is he God?

Then let's bring him the honor and worship right now. Let's do him as God. Let's treat him as God. Let's reverence him as God.

Let's give him our obedience as God. Our trust as God. And yes, let's give him our love and devotion that is due him as God.

But secondly, his name, Emmanuel, not only tells us who he is, it also tells us what he came to do. So it answers the question, why did God become man in Jesus Christ?

[ 13 : 49 ] Why did he come to this earth 2,000 years ago? What was his mission? What was his aim in coming? What was he up to? Well, he came to bring God's presence to man.

He came to bring about the result of God with us. Emmanuel. You see, it's far more than just a name.

It reveals the very purpose of salvation. The very aim for which God had a plan of salvation. It was so that God might live with man forever and ever once again.

in a relational nearness. God living with, fellowshiping with, communing with us. So we go back to Genesis 1 and 2 and what do we find?

We find that the first man, as he came from his creator, was sinless. He was righteous and therefore he was fit for the presence of God his maker.

[ 14 : 53 ] It was God with man, wasn't it? God with man in the garden. God walking and talking with Adam, enjoying each other's company. It was God teaching Adam his role to work the garden and to keep it, to protect it.

It was showing him all the different trees of the garden. You're free to eat from all these trees, but don't eat from this one, son, because in the day you eat of this one, you will surely die. He was showing him all sorts of things, bringing all the animals and birds that he had made to Adam to see what he would name them.

What do you think this one should be? We could easily imagine them laughing together at the monkeys and some of the other funny creatures that he has made, teaching Adam in the process that none of these creatures, in none of them do you find a suitable match for you, my son.

And he's being made aware of that. They all had mates, but he didn't. And so God puts him to sleep and out of his rib he makes a woman perfectly suited, matching Adam in every way.

Then he woke him up and presented her to the man. And Adam's delight in God's gift was only surpassed by God's delight and seeing Adam's delight in his gift and seeing their delight in each other and delight in him, the giver.

[ 16 : 29 ] You see, he blessed them. He taught them to be fruitful and fill the earth and rule over it as his vice regents. And it was all very good.

It was God with us enjoying friendship and fellowship together. A holy God with holy human beings made in his image, made for God, delighting in the closest communion possible in his very presence.

That was paradise indeed. But the Bible doesn't end at Genesis 2. It goes on and in Genesis 3 we see that when men fell into sin by disobeying God and eating of the tree that was forbidden, he was separated from God.

That's the biblical word. Separated from God. Excluded from his garden presence where he manifested himself, where he enjoyed such intimacy with his creatures.

And that separation is the very essence of spiritual death just as physical death is the separation of body and soul. So spiritual death is the separation of man from God.

[ 17 : 49 ] And that's what happened. Your iniquities have separated you from God. Isaiah 59 2 Your sins have hidden his face from you so he will not hear you.

So how can God live with man anymore? God is holy, man is sinful. evil. These two cannot exist together. God is of two pure eyes than to look upon evil.

He cannot tolerate what is wrong. Sin is the very contradiction of his moral character just as some things can rub rub the wrong way on an animal.

So sin rubs God the wrong way. He's holy. He loves holiness. He loves justice. He loves what's right. But he hates what is wrong. And man is now wrong. How can God dwell with man?

And man on his part he by sin has been ruined. His mind is now hostile to God not friendly toward God. Romans 8 says that the sinful mind is enmity against God and it refuses to bend to God's laws and man's affections were turned away from loving God and now were disordered and set on other things and his will refuses to bend now to God and he seeks his own way not God's way.

[ 19 : 20 ] So instead of loving and enjoying God's presence as he did before sinful man now loves his sin and runs and hides from God's presence.

So instead of God with us it's now us without God separated from him to be without God is to be without hope in the world is to be without hope for the future.

This was paradise lost and that's what happened in Genesis 3. So man is now caught in a predicament. Though we are made for God and therefore can only find real satisfaction when we are living with God yet we're separated from him by our sin.

So the heart still thirsts for God with us. That's what we were made for. But being alienated from God we seek to gratify that thirst with anything but God and therefore we inevitably come up empty time after time after time.

But we're seeking that which only God can give us. You see no amount of created things can fill the void of the creator for whom we were made. That's our predicament. And so forfeiting God's presence and fellowship that was enjoyed in the garden we're now doomed to live our lives without God.

[ 20 : 49 ] To face all of life's troubles without him and to die without him to go to judgment without him and to spend eternity without him.

That is the destiny of all who have not bowed the knee to King Jesus and obeyed the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord.

Shut out. Separated from God. depart from me. I never knew you is what they'll hear from him.

So what a pity. What a predicament. Thirsty in life and thirsty for all eternity with nothing to satisfy that thirst.

They are without God and without hope. Well that's what we deserve. Every single one of us for our rebellion against God and going our own way for God just to leave us.

[ 21 : 55 ] You didn't want me enough. You won't have me forever and ever. Could have been. Would have been absolutely just if he had sent us all to such an end.

But God already had a plan. He had an eternal plan to deal with this unfixable problem of man. A plan that was born in everlasting love.

An amazing grace. A plan of salvation. A plan for paradise to be restored. And it centers on a person whose name reveals his aim.

He's Emmanuel. God with us. For it's through the person and work of Emmanuel that God with us can once again become the glorious reality of our life and eternity.

This eternal plan of love to restore God with us has been progressively revealed from Genesis chapter 3 right on through to Revelation 22. It reveals God's determination to dwell with his people.

[ 23 : 05 ] And it was seen in the tabernacle that God commanded to be built under Moses and then the temple that was built under Solomon. Because there in the most holy place of all of this temple and tabernacle God's presence dwelt in the midst of his people.

There he manifested himself to his people. His presence was with us you see in the temple. His relational presence with his chosen people.

God was with them leading them through the desert leading them into the promised land. He made his dwelling among them with them. It was a taste you see of God with us.

Well but they were still a sinful people weren't they? They were still a sinful people so the tabernacle worship had at its core the whole sacrificial system.

And the message of these ongoing animal sacrifices was clear. A holy God cannot dwell with sinful man and he will only be pleased to dwell in some sense with sinful men by means of an atonement and a sacrifice.

[ 24 : 29 ] It's only when man's sins are atoned for and that dividing separating barrier of sin is really taken out of the way that God and man can be brought back together.

and because these animal sacrifices were only provisional types and shadows and were not the real sacrifice that could take away sin therefore the presence of God in the temple was also somewhat provisional and limited.

Remember who could go back into the most holy place where God's presence was? Only the high priest could go and only once a year and never without the blood of a sacrifice to make atonement for sin.

You see God was showing by that that he is holy and can only dwell with sinful man once his sins have been paid for in full, atoned for.

So this cannot be this temple worship with all of its sacrifice, this cannot be God's final answer to our problem of God and man being separated. there's the thick curtain going into the most holy place.

[ 25 : 45 ] He was telling Israelites they must keep their distance, stay out on pain of death. I'm holy, you're sinful, therefore you're unfit for my presence, though my presence dwells among you.

You see the provisional nature of it. so the Old Testament sacrifices showed that the way into the most holy place had not yet been disclosed, Hebrews 9 says.

The way in had not yet been disclosed. These were just pointers. No amount of animal sacrifices could actually take away sin and make us fit for God's presence. They could just point to God's coming lamb, that coming sacrifice that would be the full answer to our greatest problem.

Even as Isaiah pointed when he said a virgin will be with child and will bear a son, and he will be called Emmanuel, God with us.

And so Emmanuel came, God the eternal son, who by his very presence here with us was God with us. That's who he is, and he's come on a mission to restore the forfeited blessing of God with us.

[ 27 : 00 ] And he's come as the only mediator between God and man. He is the man, Christ Jesus, and he's come to effectively deal with that sin problem that divides us and that separates us from God.

So, this is where I need three hands. Here's God, holy, and here's man, sinful. Sinful. But between us is this infinite chasm of our sin that keeps God and sinful man apart.

But Emmanuel, he stepped in between God and man, and he's come to take away our sin, the cause of separation.

salvation. And he's not like the animal sacrifices. He is God. And that's why only he can deal with our problem of sin.

There was no other good enough to pay the price for sin. He only could unlock the door of heaven and let us in. So the father laid on him, his son, Emmanuel, the iniquities of all of his people.

[ 28 : 19 ] And he bore those sins in his body to the tree where he was bruised for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities, punished for our peace with God, and wounded that we might be healed.

He stood in as our substitute and bore what our sins deserve. father. And that's why Emmanuel cried on the cross, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

He felt the separation, you see, that you and I would have felt for all eternity to be without God. And he's feeling it on the cross as God the father turned his back upon his son because he's now been made sin for us.

And his wrath is all that he has for sin. No mercy. No grace. No love. He has holy justice and his wrath was poured out upon the sin bearer.

And that was enough. He suffered enough. And in his death he took away sin. So he was separated from God that we might never be separated.

[ 29 : 40 ] He took away the thing that separated us, our sin. God with us. And all to bring us back together that we might know the blessed reality once again of God with us.

And folks, if you don't learn anything this morning, if you're Christian, that's what I want you to go away with. And if you're not, that's what I want to make you hungry for. To realize that was the aim of God sending his son Emmanuel.

love. That was the whole purpose for the plan. It's the whole reason he took sin away. The whole reason that he died taking the punishment so sin could be removed.

That's not the end. No, it was that he might bring us and him together again. Second, 1 Peter 3, 18. And Christ died for our sins.

The righteous one for the unrighteous. To save us from hell. No, it doesn't say that, does it? You who know your Bible. Though that's about all that many professing Christians care about.

[ 30 : 50 ] If only I could be saved from hell, I'm good to go and that's all I care about Christ. But that's not how it reads. For Christ died for sins.

Once for all time. The righteous for the unrighteous. To bring us to God.

To bring us back into that personal relationship of fellowship, of friendship, of shared life, shared love.

intimate communion, union and communion with him as our best friend. And knowing that he counts us as his friend.

That's even better than me counting him as my friend. To know that he would call us friends, his friends. To restore us to the life of paradise Christ, which was God with us.

[ 31 : 55 ] And that's why the very moment when Jesus breathed his last on the cross, outside of Jerusalem, inside the temple that Solomon built in Jerusalem, the restored temple, something happened to that huge curtain that said to everyone but the high priest once a year and without blood.

Stay out! It was torn in two from top to bottom. A clear act of God almighty. So now the presence of God is no longer saying stay out.

But now that sin has been atoned for, it says come in, draw near to me, and draw near with confidence through this new and living way opened up into the presence of God through my body.

So yes, Christ died for our sins and made atonement for sins, but for what aim? Let the very word atonement tell you why he took our sins away.

That's what atonement means, to take sin away. And why? That we might have at-one-ment. Take that word atonement, divided into three, atonement.

[ 33 : 22 ] God with us. That's why he atoned for our sins, taking it out of the way that we might be restored to this glorious paradise life of God with us.

So, Christian, I want you to think hard about your privilege of dwelling together with God. To right now in this life have God with us.

God, by his Holy Spirit dwelling in us, bringing to us the very presence of the Father and the Son and the Spirit as his new temples. So that we do all of life together with him.

In loving friendship and fellowship with the living God, enjoying God's loving and abiding presence. to know him in the closest relationship possible to anyone.

In the same way that the Father and the Son know each other and enjoy love with each other, we've now been invited into that fellowship with God. And this is eternal life, Jesus says, that we might know the one true God and Jesus Christ whom he sent.

[ 34 : 38 ] Not just know cognitively in our facts about it, but to know him as our Savior, our Lord, our Shepherd, our King, our Prophet, our Priest, our very best friend, our Savior and Lord, knowing him.

That's why Paul, to his dying day, was crying, I want to know Christ and the fellowship of his suffering. I want to know him in fellowship. 1 Corinthians 1.9, Paul says, God has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

He's called you back into this glorious fellowship with Jesus. And John in 1 John 1.3 says, our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

That's what we've been called into with Christ. Fellowship with the Father, fellowship with him. And then 2 Corinthians 13.14 includes the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

To have the triune God with us in all of our living, all of our trials, our sorrows to help us and comfort us, to lead us, to empower us.

[ 35 : 48 ] So we may be walking in the dark, but we're not walking alone. He is with us, God with us. We may be going through stormy seas, but he's in the boat with us just as really as he was physically in the boat with his disciples that day on the Sea of Galilee.

With us in our losses, with us in our crosses and all our unknown tomorrows, whatever they will bring, they'll never find us alone. They'll always find him with us.

That's what he bought for us with his own precious blood. What's that worth in life? We owe it to Emmanuel. Are you living up to that privilege?

How much of that friendship and intimacy marks your day? Do you start the day with him?

Is that the last of it? Or is there that union with Christ all through the day, the fellowship, the friendship, the shared life of koinonia with our God?

[ 36 : 57 ] That's it. That's why he came. That's why he died. God with us in life. But it will also be God with us in death because death is the destiny of every one of us. The living should take this to heart.

And what will it be worth to have God with us on the day of death? We don't know when it will come today, tomorrow, years from now. But for everyone who is in Christ, joined to him, we do know that whenever it comes, we will face it, God with us.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. Why not? Because thou art with me. With me. That's it.

So there's that thief on the cross and he's dying beside Jesus. The day of death for him began by his mocking and scoffing at Jesus. And then right there on his dying cross, he was given faith to see who Jesus really is, the king.



And he repented and he trusted in him. He said to him, when you come into your kingdom, remember me.

[ 38 : 09 ] And then he heard the sweetest words any dying man will ever hear from the Son of God. Today you will be with me in paradise. There it is, Savior of sinner with the sinner together in paradise forever.

What a way to meet death. With a promise. A blood bought promise. And then it will be God with us on the day of Christ's return. The happy hope of all believers. The glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.

For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, with the trumpet call of God. And the dead in Christ shall rise first. And after that, we who are still alive and remain will be caught up together with him in the air, in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air.

And so shall we ever be with the Lord forever and ever. God with us. Us with God. You see how Emmanuel keeps filling up his name.

God with man. And for everyone who has received Christ as Savior and Lord, it will be God with us in the day of judgment too. God with us in the day of judgment.

[ 39 : 26 ] That may not weigh in so heavily with you now, but we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

And in that day when the books are opened and every mouth will be silenced and every excuse will evaporate before the eyes that penetrate our souls to the depths.

What will it be worth to have God with you there? Jesus, Emmanuel, answering for you. She gave me her sins, Father, and I gave her my righteousness.

She's one of ours. One of the redeemed ones. Yea, thou wilt answer for me, righteous Lord. Thine all the merits, mine the great reward.

Thine the sharp thorns, mine the golden crown. Mine the life won, and thine the life laid down. Yes, Jesus with us in the day of judgment, answering for us.

[ 40 : 38 ] So, that's why he came. That's why he is Emmanuel, to bring God and us together through his work.

You know, Matthew's gospel, as we've read together, begins then with the birth announcement of Emmanuel, God with us. And it ends in chapter 28, in verse 20, with Emmanuel's promise.

Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. And it's not only Matthew's gospel that's bookended by God with us, it's the whole Bible, isn't it?

Back in the beginning, in Genesis 1 and 2, it's God with us. Oh, and then it was man without God. Separation. When you come to Revelation 21 and 22, for those who have been washed in the blood of Jesus, it's God with us again.

For I saw a new heaven and a new earth. The old heaven and the old earth were done away with.

[ 41 : 49 ] And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride, beautifully dressed for her bride, her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, now the dwelling of God is with man.

And he will live with them. And they will be his people. And God himself will be with them and be their God. Some three times, Emmanuel is emphasized.

God with man. Man with God. And all through the merits of this one who is called God with us. So, behind his coming, behind God sending, behind him coming willingly, behind him living a perfect life and refusing temptation every time it addressed him, behind him suffering and dying and rising and ascending into heaven and coming back again.

Behind it all, the aim that he was shooting for was to have a people who would be brought back together. God with us. May we savor that.

He told his disciples before leaving them in my father's house are many mansions. And if it were not so, I would have told you, I'm going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you may be where I am.

[ 43 : 25 ] That's it. Take you to be with me. You where I am. And later that night, Jesus prays to the Father, Father, I want all those you've given me to be with me where I am.

That was his aim in coming. That is his great reward. Let's respond to this reality then. With communion with him. Did he die for my fellowship with him?

And will that mean three minutes a day? Will it mean an hour a week? What will that aim affect in my life? Will I start the day with him?

Will I go through the day with him? Bringing him my joy and my sorrow, my cares, my petitions, my thanks, my praise, and then end the day with him and lay my head on my pillow in peace at night.

That's why he came. That's why he's Emmanuel. That we might enjoy that now in life. Fellowship with the unseen Christ. But he also purchased one day living with him in his very physical presence where we'll see him eye to eye, face to face, and enjoy his presence and his fellowship forever and ever.

[ 44 : 50 ] How much of this communion is there in your daily experience? Is that why you've come today?

You want to worship. You want to worship. You want to meet with God. Well, that's the aim. That's why he died, that we might come together.

And where two or three have met is his church. He's there in a special way. He's come to meet with us. Did that bring you here today? I want to meet with him.

Is it what drives you to your Bibles at home? I want to hear him. I want to hear his voice. There's no voice like his. It's my shepherd. I need him. I want him. And he talks to me in this book.

I want him with me, talking to me. Is it what drives you to the throne of grace with all your praise and thanks and burdens and petitions? Because you want to pour out your heart to your best friend who sits on the throne of the universe, who knows you as father, knows you as shepherd, knows you as Lord and Savior.

[ 46 : 01 ] It was for that that he came and died and rose again and is coming again. It's not finished yet. He wants that face-to-face intimacy. You know how humbling it is to think that he wants to be with me more than I want to be with him.

That should not be, brothers. So often it is true and all I can do is come and say, this is the way I am and I come and I tell you because you're my best friend and you've atoned for all my sins so I can come and freely tell you what I am.

But I don't like what I am. Please change me and make me more captivated by your love. More a worshiper at your feet.

More a life of fear and reverence and awe of what you've done for me. And the glorious reality is that he says, John, draw near to me and I will draw near to you.

I stand at the door and knock. You think about that. You have a time with God? He's ready. He's knocking. And as you open his word, you're opening the door.

[ 47 : 14 ] And he's coming in with you and he's supping with you. He's eating with you. He's enjoying table fellowship. Nothing like fellowship lunch. Why? Because there's fellowship over food and that's what he's doing each time we meet with him here in our privacy.

That's why he came. Let it be the aim of everything you do to do it not only for him but to do it with him. He died that that might be the reality.

God with us. And lost person, you were never meant to live apart from God. You were made for God but sin has separated you from God. and there's only one way to get that separation fixed.

It's the Lord Jesus Christ. And his heart toward you is come to me. Come to me. Trust in me.

Turn from your way. Put all your faith in me and I will save you. You know he's never turned one away. Are you going to be the first one, you think, in all of human history to ever be refused?

[ 48 : 18 ] No, you're not. He's the faithful, unchanging God, Emmanuel. The way is open and he welcomes you to come. Receive him today and he'll take up residence in your heart by the Holy Spirit and then you will know what we're talking about when we say God with us.

There's no life like it and there's no eternity to come like it. No wonder the angels sang in joyful wonder at his birth and we want to join them in worship as we close.

It's number 168. Hark the herald angels sing. In your Trinity hymnal 168, let's stand and sing it to the praise of our Savior, Emmanuel.

Blessed Father, thank you for the gift of your Son. Thank you for the aim that sent him and that brought him.

Thank you for the aim of the gospel that it's far more than just saving us from hell, but it is bringing us to you in this intimate relationship that will only grow sweeter as the years go by and then when we see you face to face, we'll leap forward and continue to grow for all eternity.

[ 49 : 40 ] Captivate our hearts now. Forgive us that our minds are so far from you so often. Fill them with love and praise and help us then to live more upon our privilege, our blood-bought privilege for our joy and peace and for your glory.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Hallelujah.