



## Series Overview (designed for Advent)

In the season of Advent, we prepare to welcome Jesus, the Messiah in *God With Us*. This year, as we await our Lord, we will put ourselves in the place of the first people who awaited and celebrated Jesus' birth. Through their stories, we will learn what it meant for God to be with them, and we will open our eyes to experience God with us, too.

### **Week 1: God with Zechariah, the Skeptic**

Scripture: Luke 1:5-16, 23-25, 76-80

There are moments when circumstances in life or deferred hopes and dreams may feel like a heavy burden with no relief in sight, from smaller expectations to deeper concerns, such as job security, financial responsibility and fragile relationships. While all of us face the mystery of what tomorrow may bring, the assurance we have is that when we pray, God is with us.

### **Week 2: God with Joseph, the Dutiful**

Scripture: Matthew 1:18-25

The Christmas story of Jesus' birth begins with a dilemma. Mary's pregnancy creates a real issue for Joseph. He is not the father; this situation not only creates personal pain; it also could cause a public scandal. Joseph chooses not to disgrace Mary, but instead he will divorce her, the best that could be hoped for in this situation. However, the Spirit of God moves Joseph from doing good out of a sense of obligation to the revelation of God's extraordinary plan. When God calls us to move beyond our duty, God is with us.

### **Week 3: God with Mary, the Faithful**

Scripture: Luke 1:26-38

God calls us into unknown places that we wouldn't foresee for ourselves. And even in the midst of uncertainty, God is with us.



#### **Week 4: God with the Shepherds, the Dismissed**

Scripture: Luke 2:8-20

Christmas shows us that God takes ordinary lives and does extraordinary things with them. The shepherds who were often dismissed play a prominent role in proclaiming the message of Emmanuel, God is with us.

#### **Christmas Eve/Christmas Day: God with Us**

Scripture: Luke 2:1-20

There is a big difference between God for us and God *with* us. The birth story is a perfect example of that. A bunch of shepherds and a couple poor kids gather at a barn in some backwater Roman province. Yes, God was with us there and any other "last place on earth" you might find yourself. God is with us here, too.

#### **Week 5: God with the World**

Scripture: Luke 2:25-35

Help is here. Our temptation can be to think that we're alone in our wait for help, but the truth of Christmas is that help is already here. Simeon waited many years for the "consolation of Israel," and when he met Jesus, he was finally ready to rest.