

Small Group & Personal Bible Study

During this Christmas Season we invite you to read together with us a weekly devotion from the free devotional, *Christmas, The Father's Gift* by Billy Graham. (You may pick up your devotional at the concerts on Friday or Saturday evening or at the Welcome Center on Sunday)

This Week's Devotion: "The Gift of Hope"

Christmas, The Father's Gift by Billy Graham (pages 5-16)

Memory Verse: John 1:14

"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."

Daily Bible Ready:

- Day 1: The Gift of Hope Christmas (pages 5-16)
- Day 2: Isaiah 9:2, 6-7
- Day 3: Luke 1:26-38
- Day 4: Isaiah 7:14
- Day 5: Matthew 1:18-25

Lesson:

Billy Graham says in his book that "the Hebrew prophets believed God had made the world but... they seem to be saying, 'I wish God would become personal.'" That really is the message of Christmas, that God became personal.

1. In Matthew 1:23. How does that message of "God with us" encourage you and draw you deeper into a personal love relationship with Jesus?

I am moved to know that God cared so deeply for me that He chose to make His dwelling among men. To know that the God who made the vast amount of stars in the sky. The God who made heaven and earth. The God who spoke into being, every plant, animal, and person who lives or has ever lived. The God who can do anything, is everywhere, knows everything has chosen to make His home with me is such an encouragement and gives me faith to face every challenge knowing He will never leave me or forsake me. (Hebrews 13:6)

2. When you look into the stars, can you imagine the greatness of our God, our Creator? How incomprehensible is it for you to imagine the God of the Universe making His dwelling among man?

I don't take the time often enough to stop and look deeply into the vastness of the universe or the beauty and awe of creation. But when I do, whether it is looking into the stars on a clear night, or walking along the ocean as the waves crash on the shores, or under the giant redwoods in the mountains, I am reminded just how amazing and overwhelming God is. Then when I ponder that He chose to humble himself and become one of us, to walk with us, love on us, and ultimately die for us so He could rescue us and now make His dwelling place in my heart I am speechless. Who are we God, that you would be mindful of us? Read the lyrics and meditate on this song "God With Us" by Mercy Me.

*Who are we--- that You would be mindful of us?
What do You see--- that's worth looking our way?
We are free--- in ways that we never should be.
Sweet release--- from the grip of these chains.*

*Like hinges straining from the weight,
My heart no longer can keep from singing.*

*All that is within me cries
For You alone be glorified:
Emmanuel, God with us.*

*My heart sings a brand new song.
The debt is paid, these chains are gone.
Emmanuel, God with us.*

*Lord, You know--- our hearts don't deserve Your glory;
Still You show--- a love we cannot afford.*

*Like hinges straining from the weight,
My heart no longer can keep from singing.*

*All that is within me cries
For You alone be glorified:
Emmanuel, God with us.*

*My heart sings a brand new song.
The debt is paid, these chains are gone.
Emmanuel, God with us.*

*Such a tiny offering
Compared to Calvary;
Nevertheless,
We lay it at Your feet.*

*Such a tiny offering
Compared to Calvary;
Nevertheless,
We lay this at Your feet.*

*All that is within me cries
For You alone be glorified:
Emmanuel, God with us.*

*My heart sings a brand new song.
My debt is paid, these chains are gone.
Emmanuel, God with us.*

3. What did you read this week that encouraged you to celebrate Christmas in a much deeper and richer way?

Let everyone share and let God be glorified in your hearts as you celebrate "God With Us".