

GROWTHguide

FOR THE WEEK OF DEC. 27, 2015

"Make Way for a Miracle"



THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURES

John 1:1-18, Isaiah 1:14, John 3:16-17, and 2 Peter 3:9

REFLECTION AND STUDY

DAY 1

God came down to earth to make sure we could hear his message, he came down and spoke our language. It's in Jesus we fully see who God is. 800 years before Jesus was born, the prophet Isaiah foretold it! Read Isaiah 7:14. Immanuel means "God with us" and when God became flesh, He was no longer just an idea or philosophy. What Jesus does, like no other, is reveal to us who God is. God makes himself known in the person of Jesus. *"The Word became flesh..."* Words are important and if we're going to understand each other, we need to communicate what we believe and why. There are times when we have to put our faith on the line and proclaim who Jesus really is. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, *"If you find the one thing worth living for, it'll be the one thing you're willing to die for."* **So, what is it we are willing to die for?** C.S. Lewis also once wrote, *"Christianity, if false, is of no importance, and if true, of infinite importance. The only thing it cannot be is moderately important."* **How important is your faith to you?**

Pray that God would help you to better communicate the truth of Jesus to unbelievers.

DAY 2

We can look at Jesus and see what God values and his ultimate priorities. Sometimes Christians want God to hate their enemies, which is a natural human emotion, but Jesus doesn't say we are to hate our enemies. Instead, He said, *"Love your enemies."* Jesus isn't just for Christians; he's also for Muslims, Jews, Hindus, and other non-believers because *"God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son."* If you study all the religions and philosophies of the world you will find there is no one who represents the heart of God, in bringing all humanity together, more than Jesus Christ. The only thing that matters is truth and truth can only come through Jesus Christ.

Pray that God would help you to remember that He loves the entire world and that He would open your heart to share His love with everyone.

DAY 3

God came to in the flesh to demonstrate who He loves, what He's about, what He values and what's of ultimate importance—but we don't always recognize Him. This is why we may find ourselves sometimes saying, "Jesus isn't the God I want" because when you make a commitment to Jesus He messes up your priorities and He changes your life. Jesus may not always be the God we want, but Jesus is the God we need! In Jesus we discover the best picture of God and we discover our own humanity. Sometimes when we try to find our humanity, we look to other people to define who and what we should be. We can allow other people to define us or allow circumstances to tell us who we are, or we can let go of these definitions and be defined by God!

- Have you ever been afraid someone would judge or leave you if you didn't do or say what they wanted?
- Have you ever let fear of other people's judgement change your words or actions?

Pray and give thanks to God that He is who we need and remember to look to God to define you.

DAY 4

It may be fair to say that all of us have darkness within us. Because of this darkness, we put up facades, hoping to make people see a pristine person on the outside. But God sees it all and knows every detail about our lives, good and bad. We withdraw from God because we think if he really knows the truth about us, sees the darkness in us, he wouldn't be interested in loving us. There's nothing further from the truth! God sees us the way we are, warts and all, and chooses to love us. God's love should define our identity! Read John 3:16-17 and 2 Peter 3:9. In Jesus we discover our human potential.

- Do you ever feel unworthy of God's love? Do you ever let this distance you from the Lord?

Pray and give thanks to God for loving you in spite of your sin.

DAY 5

Start by reading John 1:12-13. *"He gave the right"* literally translated in the Greek means, *"He gave the power"* to become children of God. Through Jesus we carry the DNA of God. Sometimes God puts us in timeout, not for condemnation but for the sake of correction and discipline, so that we might live into our full potential and, through Jesus, discover why we are here: to bear witness to the light and be the change we want to see in the world. Have you ever been asked by an unbeliever, *"What happens when you get to the end of your life and you discover you were wrong?"* Our response should be that if we are wrong, we've lived far better lives with Jesus than we would have lived without Him. Ask the unbeliever the same question and what can they answer?

- Think about what your life would be like without Jesus. How would you be different? What would change?

Pray and ask God to help you be a powerful witness for Him and give thanks for His refining fire in your life.

DAY 6

Jesus changes our lives, turning us away from selfishness and towards giving and serving. Jesus leads us to things we never thought we'd pursue—maybe even the ministry! At St. Paul we can humbly say that because of Jesus, thousands of hungry people are fed every year. Also, because of Jesus, we have brought hope to many people's lives, have facilitated groups that help heal people of addictions, have offered support to those in need of comfort. Because of Jesus we are able to help heal broken marriages, walk with people through the pains of divorce, and help those whose lights have been turned off when they were financially struggling. Christmas presents us with a choice: Who do we say Jesus is? An argument against the historical truth of Jesus' life will not stand against the evidence, so it comes down to who **He** said He is. Do you believe?

- Who do you say Jesus is?

Pray and ask God to lead you to unbelievers and use you to change their lives for the better!

DAY 7

Today is your "Sabbath" and a time for reflection. How has God been speaking to you over the week? Use what the Lord has said to you to remold and reshape your life. If you are having trouble hearing God's voice, slow down or even stop what you are doing so that the busyness of life's demands do not squelch the whispers of God's language of love upon your heart.