



prayer *life!*

Weekly Prayer Focus

December 21, 2014

Emmanuel

It is the LORD who goes before you. He will be with you; He will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed. —Deuteronomy 31:8

Every day begins with a question mark. No matter how well we order our lives, we have no idea what each day will bring. A sudden traffic accident, a serious illness, unexpected job loss, death of a loved one—all are very real possibilities that we shove to the margin of our awareness, until we are forced to deal with them. Life is uncertain and can be a wrestling match—a daunting quest.

Even good news comes with its challenges. A job promotion brings new expectations or moves us to a new place. Settling into a new home adds new bills and new demands. Children move away, forcing us to shift our sense of purpose. Graduation moves life's most formative questions right to the forefront. Pregnancy brings new life, with all its possibilities and quandaries. Even God's call gives us a sense of significance, but it challenges our faith.

Scripture is filled with examples of life lived, challenges faced, and questions addressed through faith. Its pages are filled with people we identify with and feel like we know. Wisdom and life principles take on life as Bible biographies unfold the benefits and consequences of obedience and disobedience. But all God's lessons center on Him, and all the Bible's narratives remind us of His immense presence in every place and every moment—whether or not we sense or acknowledge it.

Relive the story of a young, principled Jewish girl deeply desiring to honor her God. Clinging to the hope that some day her Lord would act, she looked for righteousness to enter her world, so twisted by sin, and deliver His chosen people, trapped in bondage. Her life was changed by a dream come true—a blessing that would define and nearly overwhelm her. It began when she became pregnant out of wedlock.

How many people really believed that Mary remained faithful and truly carried God's child? What pressure weighed on the young couple, who dedicated their lives to faithfully fulfilling God's mysterious call to bear and raise Him? How many times must they have questioned God's plan during times of His silence, as an unexpected journey came at the end of Mary's term or as Jesus' life began with the threat of death and a flight into Egypt. Did they have the support of Nazareth's Jewish community, as they brought Jesus up from childhood to maturity? Did hope die as Mary looked on the death of her Son? After 2,000 years, we look back and see God's faithfulness. But the very fulfillment of God's promises was fraught with trials and doubts. How did they face and overcome them.

The active presence of God in the world is the proverbial elephant in the room, and Jesus' great ancestor brings it to our reluctant attention. *Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me* (Psalm 23:4). The God who is faithful on an eternal scale does not neglect His children in their daily lives. He is there. God is with us, every step of the way. The One who fulfilled His promise to Israel and all the world on that first Christmas was present with the holy couple through each joy and pang. He is with you and me right now, no matter what happens. And He always will be.

Prayer for Northpoint: Ask God to anoint our church's leaders with His Holy Spirit, giving them understanding of His Word, insight into the heart of our church, and power for life-changing ministry.

Prayer for the United States: In recent weeks, we've seen scandals in the lives of a number of celebrities and leaders. Ask God to use these revelations to convict those individuals of sin and lead them to Jesus as Savior. Ask God to open our eyes to see the truth of our sin and the hope that Christ alone brings.

Prayer for the World: Pray for the Church on the internet. Good or bad, expressions of the Christian faith are everywhere in cyberspace. Pray that God will speak and empower His truth through this medium, which reaches every nook and cranny of the world. Pray for His truth to go forth with power.

Prayer Supporting Ministry:

- *Ministry of the Word:* Ask God to fill our hearts with His love this Christmas season, especially love for the lost.
- *Winter Camps:* Ask God to be present in power at our camps for children and youth. Pray that His truth will establish Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord in young lives.