

Fearless “I am with you” Living

When the angel announced the baby’s name would be *Immanuel* (Matthew 1:22-23), God sent a message and a promise to people of every generation—“*I am with you.*”

The name *Immanuel* has three parts in Hebrew. “Im” means *with*. “Anu” means *us*. “El” means *God*. What does it mean in the context of your life that God is “*with you?*”

Songwriter and musician Todd Agnew writes:

“You know when I wake, when I rise, when I pray, when I curse You . . . And You love me the same.”

“And You know when I stumble and fall, and You’re there through it all, the only unchanging one.”

“You know my inmost being. You know my deepest scars. You know my darkest secrets.

You know. . . and You love . . .”

This “knowing” and “loving” God is not perched in an ivory tower peering through a glass ball at His creatures. He is right there beside you as you sit on the brink of despair. The shame in your heart or the stench of alcohol on your breath does not repulse Him. He offers acceptance and life when others pronounce judgment and death. *“I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days.”* (Deut. 30:19-20)

When you feel utterly alone, He wraps you in the blanket of His love. *“Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you.”* (Jeremiah 31:3)

When you are terrified, He shelters you under His wings. *“He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge.”* (Psalm 91:4)

When you’re anxious and uncertain about the future, He goes before you to prepare the way, and provides backup to protect you from being ambushed. *“For the LORD will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your rear guard.”* (Isaiah 52:12)

When you lose faith in God’s ability to come through for you, He will increase your faith through the truth of the scriptures. *“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”* (Romans 10:17) *“God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.”* (Romans 12:3)

When you’re tempted to exchange evil for evil and seek revenge when life is unfair, God will walk alongside and provide you with integrity and courage from the inside out. *“Keep my soul, and deliver me; Let me not be ashamed, for I put my trust in You. Let integrity and uprightness preserve me, for I wait for You.”* (Psalm 25:20-21)

John Piper, pastor and author, urges you to **“stop defining and limiting your future in terms of your past, and start defining it in terms of your God. Recognize that God is greater than your personality . . . greater than your past experiences of timidity . . . greater than your family of origin.”**

In his exposition of Isaiah 41:10-13, Piper lists five ways that God is “with you:”

“I am your God” (over you)

“I am with you” (by your side)

“I will strengthen you” (from inside of you)

“I will help you” (all around you from wherever the enemy comes)

“I will uphold you” (from underneath you)

Over you

Beside you

Inside you

Around you

Underneath you

The “I am with you” God can make this promise because He has been where you are. *“Jesus was angry enough to purge the temple, hungry enough to eat raw grain, distraught enough to weep in public, fun loving enough to be called a drunkard, winsome enough to attract kids, weary enough to sleep in a storm-bounced boat, poor enough to sleep on dirt and borrow a coin for a sermon illustration, radical enough to get kicked out of town, responsible enough to care for his mother, tempted enough to know the smell of Satan, and fearful enough to sweat blood.”* (Max Lucado, *Next Door Savior*)

God is not just “with us”—He is **always** with us. Even though you may not hear His voice or recognize His presence, God is there . . . always.

Another song by Todd Agnew (*Reflection of Something* album) describes it well:

“I’ve been leaning on things I’m finding unstable.

I’ve been standing on things that are unsure.

*I’ve been surrounding myself with things I’ve finding unable to fill me,
unable to still my trembling soul.*

I’ve been reaching for things that are no good to me.

I’ve been wrestling with things that are bringing me down.

I’ve been losing sleep over things that really don’t matter . . .

But You’re always there when I turn around even though I’ve been running for so long.

You’re always there when I cry out

Even when I’ve been silent for so long.

You’re always there when I need You. I need You!”

Along with God’s presence comes power! When you invite Him to come “near,” He brings everything you need to face the most vicious life storms and the most terrifying enemy. His presence brings:

Light—How long have you sat in the darkness of depression or addiction—hiding in shame and hopelessness? *“Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, I am the light of the world. He who follows*

Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.” (John 8:12)

Truth—Think of all the lies you have believed about yourself. When you invite Jesus to come near, the power of His truth will set you free! *“When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth . . .” (John 16:13)*

Acceptance and Healing—Acceptance is one of the heart’s deepest desires. How many times has your heart been broken because you were not good enough, not pretty enough, not smart enough? When God comes near, He accepts you for who you are, and heals your brokenness so you can become all He created you to be. *“He gathers together the outcasts of Israel. He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.” (Psalm 147:2-3)*

Justice—Don’t you sometimes want God to ride in with a vengeance to straighten out our legal system and make all those who have hurt you pay? He promises to set things right, but it will be in His time and in His way. *“Therefore all those who devour you shall be devoured; and all your adversaries, every one of them, shall go into captivity; those who plunder you shall become plunder, and all who prey upon you I will make a prey. For I will restore health to you and heal you of your wounds,” says the LORD.”*
(Jeremiah 30:16-17)

Freedom—Even if you are not a prisoner in your home, you may be one in your own skin, unable to let the real “you” be known. God brings freedom, passion, and expression to a passive, timid soul. *“Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.” (Galatians 5:1)*

Joy—God’s presence does not guarantee you will always be happy, but He does promise joy . . . and the best part is that no one can take it away! *“Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.” (John 16:22, 24)*

Purpose—Have you discovered your purpose for being born? When God comes near, He gives you a unique perspective on your eternal value. *“Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. But if you stay joined to me and my words remain in you, you may ask any request you like, and it will be granted! My true disciples produce much fruit. This brings great glory to my Father.”*
(John 15:5-8)

Peace—How much would you give for a little peace in your chaotic world? *“I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33)*

When God comes near, He brings power, passion, and purpose. Live fearlessly—God is with you. Immanuel!