

“The time is fulfilled, and the **kingdom** of God is **at hand**; repent and believe in the **gospel**.” *Mark 1:15*

The Kingdom of God means that God is with us.

“The **Kingdom** of Heaven is like a treasure that a man discovered hidden in a field. In his **excitement**, he hid it again and sold everything he owned to get enough money to buy the field.” *Matthew 13:44*

Christmas is the story about how God made it possible for us to be with him.

“Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and they will call him **Immanuel**, which means ‘**God is with us**.’” *Matthew 1:22-23*

“If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our **home** with him.” *John 14:23*

God is with you in the valley.

The dominating emotion in the valley is fear.

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in **green pastures**. He leads me beside **still waters**. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake. 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. *Psalms 23:1-4*

When you become aware of God’s presence fear disappears.

“Have I not commanded you? Be **strong** and **courageous**. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is **with you** wherever you go.” *Joshua 1:9*

1. God is all-powerful.

“You shall not be in dread of them, for the Lord your God is in your midst, a **great** and **awesome** God.” *Deuteronomy 7:21*

2. God loves you.

There is no fear in love. But perfect love **drives out** fear... *1 John 4:18*

Psalms 16:8-9

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One Year New Testament Devotionals

Small group discussion questions related to the weekend message will resume in January during our next 10-week group semester. Until then, use these One Year New Testament questions to discuss with your small group or answer individually.

Sunday, December 2: Read 1 John 2:18 – 3:6

When God Feels Distant

We may occasionally hit a season where we are trying to seek God’s direction through prayer or the Bible, but we can’t see His work in our life. John, one of Jesus’ closest friends, reminds us that we are still children of God no matter how we feel if we’ve come to Christ. We can remain faithful in our fellowship with Him through the Holy Spirit. Have you ever felt like you couldn’t hear from God? What did He teach you in that season? What’s one step you can take this week to remain faithful to Him?

Monday, December 3: Read 1 John 3:7-24

Real Love

John describes authentic love through the example of the cross. Identifying what you’ve given up for someone else is a great measure to gauge your love for them. John pleads with us to guard our hearts against merely saying we love another because He knew this would create a false sense of security in our faith. It is our sacrificial actions that truly show the depths of our love. Who needs to feel the love of God through you today, and what will you sacrifice to help them experience it?

Tuesday, December 4: Read 1 John 4:1-21

Fear Has No Place

Getting rid of fear is the negative way of saying “become confident.” The point of John’s text is to help us enjoy confidence in God’s acceptance of us on the day of judgment. Coming to Christ means living a life defined by love. As Christians who have placed trust in Christ, God’s love should be seen more and more through our interactions with others. Over time, our confidence in our faith will grow and fear will decrease. How should a healthy focus on judgment day change the way we live? What change needs to be made in light of this?

Wednesday, December 5: Read 1 John 5:1-21

Don’t Follow the Rules

It can be difficult to wrap our minds around how Jesus loves. We easily fall into the habit of viewing Jesus’ commands as rules to follow instead of a means to intimacy with Him. John reminds us that we obey the rules out of love for Jesus, not the other way around. If we measure our value on how well we follow the rules, we make our faith about us instead of Jesus. How could valuing obedience produce oppression instead of freedom in Christ? How will you prioritize Jesus over the rules today?

Thursday, December 6: Read 2 John 1:1-13

Separating Truth from Lies

Culture feeds us many lies about the Christian faith. Many Christians spend far too long saying they’re Christians without truly understanding what they should and shouldn’t believe. The first step to guarding against these lies is having the humility to know we are all vulnerable. The only way to know what’s true is to cling to Jesus. What are some common lies you’ve heard about Jesus, the Bible, or church? What are two ways you can grow in your understanding of who Jesus was and what He said?

Friday, December 7: Read 3 John 1:1-15

Spreading the Good News

Our actions mean more than our words. As followers of Christ, John pleads with us to allow the Gospel to affect every aspect of our lives: our relationships, our finances, and how we spend our time. Gaius may not have been on the front lines as a missionary but he took advantage of the opportunities he had to support what he believed in. In what ways does your life show others that you believe the Gospel can change the world? What’s one opportunity you can use to make your faith more visible to others?

Saturday, December 8: Read Jude 1:1-25

Fighting for Your Faith

Jude got fired up when people misrepresented Jesus. He was passionate about defending the faith Jesus died for, and Jude asks us to do the same. Because our salvation is a gift from God, Jude encourages us to fight with courage and patience for others to hear the same message. For us to defend Jesus and our faith, we must spend time with Him in order to distinguish lies from truth. We will only defend what we are passionate about, so how could you spend time growing your passion for Jesus?