

TALKINGPOINTS WALKINGPOINTS



A publication of **DISCIPLE**, the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. –Psalm 145:11

Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

Pastor Doug quoted John Stott, who said: "If you read the Bible you'll see that nobody who ever met Jesus ever had a moderate reaction to him. **There are only three reactions to Jesus:** (1) they either **hated** him and wanted to kill him; (2) they were **afraid** of him and wanted to run away; or (3) they were absolutely **smitten** with him and they tried to give their whole lives to him."

- Do you agree or disagree—and **why**?
- **Read Luke 6:6-11**, and then discuss the following questions:

Who are all the "actors" in this little drama?

Describe what happens in each of the following "acts":

Act 1 (v. 6-8)

Act 2 (v. 9)

Act 3 (v. 10-11)

Why do you think that the Pharisees were Stott's 1st sort who hated Jesus and wanted to kill him?

- **Read Mark 5:1-20**, and then discuss the following questions:

Who are all the "actors" in this little drama?

Describe what happens in each of the following "acts":

Act 1 (v. 1-13)

Act 2 (v. 14-17)

Act 3 (v. 18-20)

Why do you think that the swineherds and townsfolk were Stott's 2nd sort, who feared Jesus?

Who ended up being Stott's 3rd sort of person who was absolutely **smitten** with him and tried to give his whole life to Jesus? **Why** was he so smitten with Jesus?

- **Which sort** of person are you? **How** do you react to Jesus? **Why** that way?

Read Luke 7:36–48. What will it take to grow more and more into Stott's 3rd sort of person?

Sermon Summary

Key Text: Matthew 1:18-25

One of the great challenges we face with familiar passages is that we tend to say to ourselves, “I know this passage—nothing new to see here.” And we don’t allow the passage to move our hearts towards worship. My prayer is that we will overcome this natural tendency today. Last week, we looked at the meaning of the name, “Jesus”. Today we focus our attention on the word, “Immanuel.” Actually, this one word is really three words in English, “God with us.” In their context, each one of these words is incredibly meaningful.

I. Jesus is God. Jesus, the Creator King of the universe, became a human being. That’s the main message of Christmas. Nothing about Christianity makes sense if you don’t see this. John 1:1, 14 and Acts 20:28, and hundreds of other ways, the Bible identifies Jesus as God. Some passages come right out and say it directly, others reveal it in a more indirect way. For example, Jesus forgives sins—but only God can do that. Jesus receives worship—but only God can do that (Revelation 22:8-9). Furthermore, his followers—who lived with him, day in, day out, for three years—came to believe that Jesus really was who he said he was: God. Polytheists will believe that anyone or anything is God, but Jesus’ followers were strict monotheists. Pretending to be God would get you killed! But his followers saw his moral glory, his transcendent personal greatness. They concluded, “Jesus must be who he claims to be—God in the flesh! As insane as that conclusion sounds, all other alternatives are more insane. He must be God with us.”

And this explains the irritating exclusivity of Christianity—that Jesus claims to be the only way to God (John 14:6 & Acts 4:12). Every other religion says, “Morality and goodness are enough to save you.” Christianity says, “No, your situation is so dire that morality and goodness will never be enough.” But—are these exclusive claims true? (It’s like when the specialists at the Mayo Clinic disagree with the diagnosis your local primary care physician gave you—you don’t just reject it, you do your research to find out who’s right!) But if Christmas really happened the way the gospels present it, everything else about Christianity makes sense—the miracles, the exclusive claims, the need to place your trust and reliance upon Jesus. If Christmas is wrong, then everything else in Christianity falls apart.

II. He’s God with us. This is the relational part. This great majestic God who transcends the universe has come alongside us. Prior to Jesus showing up, the presence of God always was terrifying (smoke, fire, earthquakes, whirlwinds...). In fact, when Moses asked to see God’s face, he said, “You can’t see my face. It would kill you, but I’ll show you my hind parts” (Exodus 33:18–23). Moses would have loved to experience what Jesus’ disciples did (John 1:1 & 14). Moses would say to us: “This is the very thing I was denied! In Jesus all of that majestic glory came. Where’s your amazement? Where’s your joy? Jesus needs to be the driving force in your life!” It’s possible for us to have an intimate family relationship with God because on the cross Jesus took away our sin, and therefore the reason for our terror and fear of God. He took away the barrier of guilt between us and God. Why do you think God showed up as a baby on that first Christmas? No pillar of fire, no smoking furnace. Why come as a vulnerable child? Because in Jesus, he came not to judge, but to be judged on our behalf. He came to die, to take away the sin and guilt that separated mankind from God.

III. God with us. The word “us” limits and reflects exclusivity. It doesn’t say “God with all”, but “God with us.” So, who’s the “us”? It’s not those who somehow have earned it. No, it’s those who come to God empty-handed, who come with only their faith. So, if Jesus is truly God with us, we should remove all limitations we have placed on him in our lives. If there is no sense of his power and joy in your life when you sing these Christmas hymns, then you are just going through the motions! Christmas is all about Jesus drawing near to us, so are you holding him at bay, giving him the stiff-arm? If so, why? Surely you can make time for the King of the Universe in your schedule! Of course there is a cost, but it’s nothing compared to what it cost him to be with you. Finally, if Jesus truly is God, a lukewarm response to him is irrational. In his book entitled “Basic Christianity,” John Stott says: ***“If you read the Bible you’ll see that nobody who ever met Jesus ever had a moderate reaction to Him. There are only three reactions to Jesus: They either hated him and wanted to kill Him; they were afraid of him and wanted to run away; or they were absolutely smitten with him and they tried to give their whole lives to Him.”*** No other response is rational, if you see who he says He is.



Think of a personal experience—either one that your kids experienced with you or one from your own childhood—in which kids got separated from parents (but make sure it turned out OK! We don't need any nightmares!). Tonight at dinner, retell the story, noting the impact that "reconnecting with Mom and Dad" had. Then discuss what you learned about Immanuel—"God with us".

Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

"Five Question Bible Study" (see page below) is a simple way to study any passage. Let's use it to explore the significance of God being "with us". Here's some context: Israel sinned by making an idol, and God threatened to destroy them (Exodus 32:1-10).

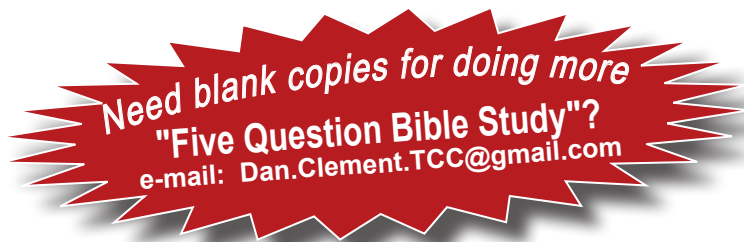
Monday—Read Exodus 32:11-28.

Tuesday— Read Exodus 32:29-35.

Wednesday— Read Exodus 33:1-11.

Thursday— Read Exodus 33:12-23.

Friday— Read Exodus 34:1-9.



What idea particularly strikes me from this text? [Note in which verse(s) it is found.]



What question does this text raise in my mind—and how would **this text** answer it?



What about Jesus Christ—his character and/or his redemption—relates to this text?



What action must I take as a result of this text? Be concrete and specific.



With whom will I share what I learned from this text? [and what was their response?]