

Christmas The Gift of Hope

Craig Smith • God's Presence

Icebreaker: What do you look forward to? In other words, what is one hope for your/other's future? May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Rom. 15:13)

Helplessness doesn't equal hopelessness – “Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the Lord.” (Psalm 31:24) – are there any areas in life in which you tend to feel helpless? Do those same areas equate to a sense of hopelessness? If so, do you hand those areas over to God in prayer? What happens when you do?

One way our hope is strengthened is through the certainty of God's presence... do you tend to view God more “up there” or “around here?” How does that affect your life daily?

The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call Him Immanuel – which means, “God with us.” (Matt. 1:23)

God has always been with His people...

- **He was with Abraham** – “I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you.” (Gen. 17:7)
- **He was with Jacob** – “I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go...” (Gen. 28:15)
- **He was with Moses** – “I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you, that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain.” (Exod. 3:12)
- **He was with David** – “I have been with you wherever you have gone... I will make your name great, like the names of the greatest men of the earth.” (2 Sam. 7:9)

The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. (John 1:14) – What weight/significance does the truth of this verse have on humanity and our reality here on earth?

We find hope in the presence of our Shepherd who... with which of the three bullets below do you identify most? With which do you need to realize more in your daily life?

- **Leads us through life** – “He calls His own sheep by name and leads them out. When He has brought out all His own, He goes on ahead of them, and His sheep follow Him because they know His voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice...I am the good shepherd.” (John 10:3b-5, 11)

Do you know His voice?

- **Pastors us through pain** – “I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign LORD. I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will build up the injured and strengthen the weak...” (Ezek. 34:15-16)

Do you trust His heart?

- **Secured our salvation** – “I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me – just as the Father knows me and I know the Father – and I lay down my life for the sheep.” (John 10:14-15)

Have you received His forgiveness?