



GOD
WITH US

365 DEVOTIONS ON
THE PERSON AND WORK
OF CHRIST

COMPILED & EDITED BY

JUSTIN S.
HOLCOMB

READINGS *from* CLASSIC CHRISTIAN WRITERS

GOD WITH US

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OF CHRIST



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Language has been updated for today's reader.

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Dedicated to my daughters,
Sophia and Zoe.
My deepest hope is that you
will continue to enjoy and explore
the abundance, capacity, and immensity
of Christ's love for you.

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INTRODUCTION

The goal of this devotional is to expand upon a simple yet elegant line from George Herbert that captures two essential features of the Christian teaching about Jesus Christ: “In Christ two natures met to be thy cure.”*

The first is the person of Jesus Christ, who is fully God and fully man. At the Father’s bidding and by the power of the Holy Spirit, the Son assumed human nature at the incarnation: “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). The divine nature and human nature “met” in the one person of Jesus Christ.

The second is the work of Christ. The Lord took on the form of a servant to be our “cure.” By subjecting himself to the frailties and temptations of our condition and yet remaining without sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, undoing the consequences of sin. In His incarnation, obedience, death, resurrection, ascension, and future return, Jesus Christ accomplished redemption.

Let us ponder the astonishing truth that, as the Nicene Creed eloquently states, the Son of God “for us and for our salvation came down from heaven and became incarnate by the Holy Spirit and of the Virgin Mary, and was made man.” The Nicene Creed, the cornerstone of orthodox Christian belief, attaches saving significance not only to Christ’s death and resurrection but also to His incarnation and birth.

*George Herbert, from *The Temple* (1633). For more on the two essential features of the Christian teaching about Christ, see Scott R. Swain, “In Christ two natures met to be thy cure,” *Modern Reformation* 24:6 (2015), 20–23.

This book celebrates that Jesus Christ is God with us and God for us. It explores the abundance, capacity, and immensity of Christ's tender and powerful love for you. It explores His sovereign rule as Lord and King. We will see that the person and work of Christ have very personal implications for you. Those same implications are also comprehensive for all creation. The Lord delights in showing mercy to you, and He is making all things new.

The selected texts in this devotional display the wonder of the person of Christ, the fullness of His marvelous works, and the tenderness of the very heart of God incarnate. These excerpts from classic Christian writers, theologians, and pastors have been gently edited to enhance their readability.

DAY
1

Matthew 1:23: “They shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us).

It was of supreme importance that He who was to be our Mediator should be both true God and true man. If the necessity be inquired into, it was not what is commonly termed simple or absolute but flowed from the divine decree on which the salvation of humanity depended. What was best for us our most merciful Father determined. Our iniquities, like a cloud intervening between Him and us, having utterly alienated us from the kingdom of heaven, none but a person reaching to Him could be the medium of restoring peace. But who could reach to Him? Could any of the sons of Adam? All of them shuddered at the sight of God. Could any of the angels? They had need of a superior, by connection with whom they might adhere to God entirely and inseparably. What then? The case was certainly desperate if the Godhead himself did not descend to us, it being impossible for us to ascend to Him. Thus, the Son of God took it upon himself to become our Emmanuel, *i.e.*, God with us; and in such a way, that by mutual union, His divinity and our nature might be combined; otherwise, neither was the proximity near enough, nor the affinity strong enough, to give us hope that God would dwell with us; so great was the divide between our lost state and the spotless purity of God.

Had humans remained free from all corruption, they were of too humble a condition to approach God without a Mediator. What, then, of humanity’s true state, when by fatal flaw they were condemned to death and hell, defiled by sin, made loathsome through the curse, in complete and utter despair? It is not without cause, therefore, that Paul, when he sets forth Christ as the Mediator, distinctly declares Him to be man. “For there is one God,” he says, “and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5). He might have called Him God, or called Him man; but because the Spirit, speaking through him, knew our infirmity, he provides for it by the most appropriate remedy: setting the Son of God familiarly before us as one of us.

—JOHN CALVIN, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, vol. 2, trans. Henry Beveridge (Edinburgh: The Calvin Translation Society, 1845), 2–3 (*Institutes*, 2.12.1).

DAY
2

Matthew 9:36: When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

Compassion is no doubt the emotion we would naturally expect to find most frequently attributed to Jesus, whose whole life was a mission of mercy, and whose ministry was so marked by deeds of generosity that it was summed up in the memory of His followers as a going through the land “doing good” (Acts 10:38). In fact, this is the emotion that is most frequently attributed to Him. The term *compassion* first appears in common use in this sense in the Synoptic Gospels.

The divine mercy has been defined as that essential perfection in God “whereby He pities and relieves the miseries of His creatures.” It includes two parts: an internal movement of pity and an external act of kindness or generosity. It is the internal movement of pity that is emphasized when our Lord is said to be “moved with compassion,” as the term is sometimes excellently rendered in the English versions. In the appeals made to His mercy, a more external word is used; but it is this more internal word that is employed to express our Lord’s response to these appeals: the petitioners sought Him to take pity on them; His heart responded with a profound feeling of pity for them.

His compassion fulfilled itself in outward acts; but what is emphasized by the term used to express our Lord’s response is the profound internal movement of His emotional nature. This emotional nature was aroused in our Lord as well by the sight of individual distress as by the spectacle of humanity’s universal misery. The sight of their desperate plight awakens our Lord’s pity and moves Him to provide the remedy.

—B. B. WARFIELD, “On the Emotional Life of Our Lord,” in *Biblical and Theological Studies* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1912) 40–42.

DAY
3

Mark 2:17: “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.”

Just as the use of common remedies is the way to physical health, so Jesus took up sinners to heal their souls and restore them. And just as doctors, when they bind up wounds, do it carefully, and neatly, so as not to cause further discomfort, so Jesus by His assumption of humanity adapted to our wounds, our suffering, our helplessness. And just as one who ministers to a bodily injury in some cases applies the contrary, such as cold to hot, moist to dry, and does not fit the same bandage or treatment to all cases, in the same way the wisdom of God in healing humanity has applied himself to his cure, being himself both healer and medicine. Seeing, then, that humanity fell through pride, Jesus restores them through humility. We were ensnared by the “wisdom” of the serpent; we are set free by the “foolishness” of God. Moreover, just as the former was called wisdom, when it was the folly of those who did not trust God, so the latter is called foolishness, when it is true wisdom in those who overcome the devil.

We used our immortality so badly as to incur the penalty of death; Christ used His mortality so well as to restore us to life. The disease was brought in through a woman’s disobedience; the remedy came through a woman’s submission to God’s will. To the same class of opposites, it belongs that our sins are cured by His sinless sacrifice. On the other hand, the following are, as it were, applications made to match the wounds to which they are applied: He was born of a woman to deliver us who fell through a woman; He came as a man to save us who are human; as a mortal to save us who are mortals; and by death to save us who were spiritually dead.

—AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO, *On Christian Doctrine*, in *St. Augustin’s City of God and Christian Doctrine*, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, 1st ser., vol. 2, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. J. F. Shaw (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1887), 526 (Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, 1.14).

DAY
4

1 John 2:1–6: My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says “I know him” but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

Jesus is the only high priest of all, and the only king of every creature, and the Father’s only supreme prophet of prophets.

—EUSEBIUS, *Ecclesiastical History*, trans. S. E. Parker (London: Samuel Bagster and Sons, 1847), 43 (*Ecclesiastical History*, 1.3).

The three miserable consequences introduced by sin—ignorance, guilt, and bondage to sin—required Christ to fulfill three roles for us. Ignorance is healed by Christ the Prophet; guilt by Christ the Priest; the tyranny and bondage to sin by Christ the King. Prophetic light scatters the darkness of error; the merit of the Priest takes away guilt and procures a reconciliation for us; the power of the King removes the bondage of sin and death. The Prophet shows God to us; the Priest leads us to God; and the King joins us together and glorifies us with God. The Prophet enlightens the mind by the Spirit of illumination; the Priest by the Spirit of consolation tranquilizes the heart and conscience; the King by the Spirit of sanctification subdues rebellious desires and emotions.

—FRANCIS TURRETIN, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, vol. 2, trans. George Musgrave Giger (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1994), 393.

DAY
5

John 6:35: “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.”

It is not in our nature to be holy, to submit to Christ, to give up our own will and pleasure, selfish love, earthly hope, and a heart after this world and its carnal ways. But the call goes out: Come to Christ! See what He offers, find new life and hope in Him. He is the nearest, surest way to be relieved of all your earthly burdens. I can vouch for the fact that you shall be dearly welcomed by Him; He waits to impart to you joy as you have never known on this earth. I daresay, neither angels’ pens nor angels’ tongues can convey all that He can and will be to you if you submit yourself to His keeping. Having been a prisoner myself to sin and selfishness, I cannot describe the depth of His compassion, His sweetness, His longing to commune with us. Oh, for a soul wide enough and deep enough to contain His love! It is wider and deeper than we could ever comprehend. And yet it is available to us. Oh, wonder of wonders! If my soul could but rest within the fragrance of His love, could but grasp its fullness! I long for the day when I shall know Him as He longs to be known to us!

And oh, what awaits those who truly believe and trust in Him for the salvation of their souls: that fair orchard of the new paradise; to see, and smell, and touch, and kiss that fair field flower, that evergreen Tree of Life! Even His mere shadow would be enough; the sight of Him would be heaven itself! We have neglected what is right beside us, wasted our lives upon some loathsome object, and Christ waits for us to come. Woe, woe unto us! The world is full of madmen, seeking a fool’s paradise, even some good and desirable things, but without and apart from Christ, nothing in this world can satisfy our deepest needs and longings. Will you not set Christ, the well of life, before you and drink your fill?

—SAMUEL RUTHERFORD, *The Letters of Samuel Rutherford*, ed. Andrew Alexander Bonar (Edinburgh and London: Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier, 1891), 172–173.