

ReFocus Guide: Jesus Saves, Emmanuel Draws Us Near Focus:

In this final week of Advent, we receive two names that reveal the heart of Jesus' mission. Jesus means "God saves." Emmanuel means "God with us." These names speak to our deepest needs: forgiveness, presence, guidance, and hope. As we prepare to celebrate Christ's birth, we open our lives to the God who draws near and who brings light that no darkness can overcome.

Day 1: Jesus: The One Who Saves

Scripture: Matthew 1:20–23

Reflection:

When the angel tells Joseph to name the child Jesus, the meaning is clear: "God saves." Salvation is not only about life beyond this world; it is the steady, ongoing work of God making us whole. Jesus brings deliverance from fear, despair, shame, and the patterns that keep us from living freely. His name itself is a promise that God is always at work restoring, healing, and renewing.

Questions:

Where do you most need Jesus' saving work in your life today?

How have you experienced God's healing or deliverance in the past?

Prayer:

Jesus, my Savior, thank You for the ways You bring healing and hope. Work within me today, freeing what is bound and restoring what is broken. Amen.

Day 2: Emmanuel: God with Us

Scripture: Matthew 1:22–23; John 1:1–5

Reflection:

Matthew tells us that Jesus is Emmanuel, God with us. Not distant. Not watching from afar. Present. The Gospel of John echoes this truth by calling Jesus the eternal Word, the One whose light shines in the darkness and cannot be extinguished. God comes close into our struggles, our hopes, our questions, and our ordinary days. Emmanuel is the reminder that we are never alone, even when life feels overwhelming.

Questions:

Where do you need to experience "God with you" right now?

How can you practice awareness of God's presence throughout your day?

Prayer:

God who is near, remind me that I never walk alone. Help me rest in Your presence and trust Your light even when the path feels dim. Amen.

Day 3: Seeking and Finding Jesus

Scripture: Matthew 2:1–6; Matthew 2:9–12

Reflection:

The magi journeyed far from home, guided only by a star and a longing for hope. They were outsiders, yet God drew them close and welcomed their worship. Their persistence invites us to keep seeking Jesus, even when the way is long or unclear. True seekers always find Him; sometimes in quiet moments, unexpected places, or people we did not expect to teach us.

Questions:

What helps you stay open to noticing God's work around you? Where might God be inviting you to "seek" more intentionally this week?

Prayer:

Guiding God, open my heart to see the ways You are leading me. Give me the courage to follow wherever You shine Your light. Amen.

Day 4: The Word Who Bring Light

Scripture: Matthew 1:23; John 1:6–14

Reflection:

John writes that the eternal Word "became flesh" and lived among us. Jesus is the visible expression of God's heart. A God who chooses closeness over distance, compassion over judgment, and hope over despair. Some rejected this light, but others welcomed it and found new life. Jesus still brings light into places that feel shadowed by fear, grief, or uncertainty, offering hope that cannot be extinguished.

Questions:

Where do you need Christ's light to shine in your life today? How might you reflect that light to others?

Prayer:

Jesus, Light of the World, shine in my heart and bring hope where I feel burdened. Help me reflect Your love to those around me. Amen.

Day 5: The God Who Becomes Visible

Scripture: Matthew 1:23; John 1:15–18

Reflection:

“No one has ever seen God,” Scripture says, “but the Son has made God known.” Jesus shows us what God is like: gracious, compassionate, and full of steadfast love. When we look at Jesus, his kindness, his courage, his mercy, we see the heart of God revealed. This is the gift of Christmas: God made visible, God reaching toward us, God choosing to dwell with humanity so that we may know love that transforms.

Questions:

What do you learn about God’s character by looking at Jesus?

How is God inviting you to reveal that same love in your relationships?

Prayer:

God of grace, thank You for making Your heart visible through Jesus. Shape my life so that Your compassion, truth, and love can be seen in me. Amen.

Closing Prayer:

Emmanuel, God with us, thank You for drawing near in Jesus, the One who saves and the One who shines light into every shadow. As I move toward Christmas, open my heart to Your presence. Help me trust in Your saving work, walk in Your light, and share Your love with others. Let Christ’s hope be born in me again. Amen.