

Dig Deeper
Isaiah 7:10-14, Matthew 1:18-25, and 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12
Otisville Church of Christ
December 23-29, 2012

Isaiah 7:10-14 / Matthew 1:18-25 / Jesus is God's Sign

Signs are helpful because they point the way. Without traffic signs, accidents would occur. Without highway signs, we may not know which exits to take, or even if we are on the correct highway.

In Isaiah 7, King Ahaz is fearful of an alliance that is forming against him. To reassure him, the Lord sends Isaiah out to meet him and tell him that the alliance will not be successful. The Lord tells Ahaz to ask for a sign that the Lord has spoken the truth, Ahaz curiously decides not to. Thus, the Lord provides his own sign, which signals the truth of his promise to Ahaz but also testifies about a future moment, when a virgin will give birth to a son who will be named Immanuel.

This sign is fulfilled in the birth of Jesus. Matthew 1:18-25 picks up this prophecy and, in naming Jesus as “Immanuel,” demonstrates how God's plan has been fulfilled. The promised “son” had arrived, and “he will save his people from their sins.” God's deliverance is found in his sign to his people, a baby who grew up to become the Savior of the world.

1. Why do you think Ahaz refused to ask the Lord for a sign?
2. What does the angel tell Joseph in a dream about Jesus?
3. What does the name Immanuel mean?
4. How is this an appropriate name for Jesus?
5. How does the idea of God being with his people through Jesus encourage you?

Notes

1 Thessalonians 2:1-12 / Encouragement

Encouragement is one of those Christian virtues we can take for granted. We may think we are being encouraging because we show up with a smile in our faces, greet people warmly, and shake hands. But Christian encouragement goes deeper than that. To encourage another, we need to draw others into our lives and be drawn into theirs.

In 1 Thessalonians, Paul shows, through his own example, that encouraging others means being willing to share not only your life but their lives as well. It is a ministry of care for others. Paul describes his relationship with the Thessalonian believers in terms of humility and acting as a mother and father to them (2:1-12). He did all this to build them up. He did not desire to only take from them (although he allowed them to serve him) but he spent his time and energy giving of himself to them.

The principle is this: give to others. Don't be a taker all the time. People who constantly take without giving drain people and the church of time and energy to properly serve, build up, and encourage. Focus on encouraging others.

1. What do you learn from Paul's example in 1 Thessalonians about encouragement?
2. In what ways did Paul give of himself to them?
3. How are Paul's images of being like a nursing mother and a father with his children among them good descriptions of the work he did?
4. Who can you encourage more?
5. How can you do this?

Notes