

31 INCARNATION OF CHRIST



Receive

Colossians 1:15-20

“For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.” (Colossians 1:16-17, NIV)



Reflect

Do I have a wrong or incomplete perception of who God is?

Am I trying to define God in a way that's comfortable for me?

How can I grow to appreciate the bigness of God without manipulating Him into something else?

Sometimes in our efforts to grow in our relationship with God, we end up diminishing Him. We try to contain God, to define Him in such a way that our limited human perceptions can understand Him. Yet when we try to squeeze God into a limited human definition, we miss the very essence of God as the Creator, Overseer and Sustainer of all things seen and unseen in Heaven and here on Earth. God is big, yes. God is, in some ways, incomprehensible. But rather than overwhelm us or distance us from Him, that knowledge should inspire awe and reverence for God as the One who holds all things together, now and forever.



Respond

Ask for Change: *Lord, I don't want to box You in to a definition that's comfortable for me. Help me approach You with awe and reverence and know that it's okay not to understand all Your ways.*

Consider What's Real: In Revelation 1:8, God declares, “I'm A to Z. I'm The God Who Is, The God Who Was, and The God About to Arrive” (*The Message*). In many ways, our linear minds cannot comprehend a Being who is concurrently now, in the past and in the future. It doesn't make sense; it doesn't compute. But that's the very essence of God: He traverses all eternity; nothing, absolutely nothing, is possible without God. We're not supposed to “get” that entirely, because we're not God.

Additional Verses to Consider: Psalm 90:1-4, Revelation 1:8

32 GOD IN THE FLESH



Receive

Hebrews 1:1-4

“The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.” (Hebrews 1:3, NIV)



Reflect

*How will my walk with Jesus be different as I labor to get unstuck and to begin growing again?
How can I better understand Jesus as both fully human and fully divine?
How does the fact that Jesus is God Himself make me feel?*

Because Jesus came to us in human form, we might forget that He is also very much divine. We look at Jesus—dressed as a man, using the same language as man, expressing the same emotions as man—and we lose sight of the fact that He is so much more than a man. Jesus isn’t an angel or a prophet; He isn’t merely God’s spokesperson, like Isaiah, Jeremiah or Ezekiel or the angels Michael or Gabriel. Jesus is God Himself —*the exact representation of His being*. He is the full revelation of God, and we have no clearer view of God than through Jesus Christ.



Respond

Ask for Change: *Lord, thank you for making the ultimate sacrifice in giving me Your Son Jesus to speak Your word to me.*

Consider What’s Real: In Hebrews 1:1-4 we hear that God took communication with us to the ultimate level when He gave us His son, Jesus. In Old Testament times, God spoke to His people through the prophets. But with Jesus, He speaks directly to us. There is no better connection to God than through Jesus Christ Himself.

Additional Verses to Consider: Matthew 1:20-23, Philippians 2:5-8

33 CHRIST IS OUR FOUNDATION



Receive

Revelation 1:4-8

“To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.”
(Revelation 1:5-6)



Reflect

*Am I ready to let Jesus Christ be the foundation in my life?
Have I ever truly understood the magnitude of Jesus' love and sacrifice for me?
How can I honor God in my everyday life with the glory that He deserves?*

We often get desensitized to the magnitude of Jesus' message. We've heard it so many times—some of us for our entire lives—we lose sight of what an incredible gift God gives us in His son, Jesus Christ. These two short verses, with their succinct emphasis on love, sacrifice, and service, encapsulate the essence of Jesus Christ: He loves us unconditionally, has freed us from sin forever, and has made us in His image to serve God. Think about the magnitude of that promise for a moment and let it sink into your heart, soul, and mind. No wonder John shouts, “To him be glory and power for ever and ever!” How can we not?



Respond

Ask for Change: *Lord, please help me never lose sight of Your awesome power. I don't ever want to take You for granted.*

Consider What's Real: One of the best ways to honor God and to remember Him through daily living is to thank Him. “Let thankfulness temper all your thoughts,” writes Sarah Young in her daily devotional, *Jesus Calling*. “A thankful mindset keeps you in touch” with Jesus. Open your eyes to the gifts that are present in every aspect of your life, and give God the glory in your thanks.

Additional Verses to Consider: Hebrews 10:19-22, Psalm 100:4

34 FIGHTING SIN



Receive

Romans 7:7-25

“I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing.” (Romans 7:18-19, NIV)



Reflect

*With Christ's help, what struggle must I confront?
Do I feel hopeless that I will never “win” the struggle against sin?
Do I really believe that I am freed from sin through Jesus?*

It's true: We will never be free from sin. Each one of us will struggle with sin for the rest of our lives, and none of us is worse off, or better off, than the other. Not only are we flawed and broken, even when we know what the right choice is in our hearts, we still persist in our sinful nature. “When I want to do good, evil is right there with me,” writes a frustrated Paul in Romans 7. “What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?” There is only one answer to Paul's plaintive question. Paul knew it, and we need to know it, too: We are never free from sin ... except in Christ. Say it today and every day when you feel sin's power beginning to overwhelm you: “Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (Romans 7:25).



Respond

Ask for Change: *Lord, thank you for saving me from my day-in and day-out persistent sin. Only through You am I truly free.*

Consider What's Real: God gives us the Holy Spirit as a Guide and Counselor, and if we learn to listen to this Presence in our lives, we will learn to make better, God-guided decisions. But how do we hear these whispers of guidance from God? It begins in prayer. Starting today, ask God for His guidance. Ask the Holy Spirit to lead you through the day; ask to hear His voice in your everyday life.

Additional Verses to Consider: Romans 3:22-24, Romans 8:1-6

35 A WAY OUT OF THE DARKNESS



Receive

1 Corinthians 10:1-13

“No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.” (1 Corinthians 10:13, NIV)



Reflect

*What new steps will I begin taking in order to enable success against the struggles I've faced repeatedly?
Do I feel like I am tempted beyond what I can bear?
What tools has God given me to help me withstand temptation?*

The truth is, we can't escape temptation and we can't escape sin. We live in a broken, fallen world, filled with depravity, violence and the pressure to conform to sinful behavior. Paul reassures that we are not alone in this. The ancient Israelites fell prey to the temptation of idolatry, and every temptation we face today. So even when we feel alone in our sin, in reality what we are experiencing is “common to man.” The good news is that although temptation is ever-present, God gives us a weapon that will help us withstand it and a way out of the darkness. His Word is the weapon; His Son is the way out.



Respond

Ask for Change: *Lord, I'm tired of battling temptation and sin on my own, wanting to do right, but falling prey to evil again and again. Please show me the way out.*

Consider What's Real: Sometimes God speaks to us through the people around us. Do you have someone—a pastor, a friend, a trusted family member—in whom you could confide honestly about your temptations? Don't be ashamed of your flaws. Know that you are not alone; that every temptation is common to man. Trust that the first step to halting the cycle of temptation may be finding someone who will listen without judgment, offer reassurance, and hold you accountable.

Additional Verses to Consider: Hebrews 2:18, Hebrews 4:15-16