

A decorative border of watercolor illustrations surrounds the central text. It features various flowers including peonies in shades of pink, red, and white, along with green leaves, dark berries, and orange-toned sprigs.

Emmanuel

ORIGINAL ART AND TEXT BY
RUTH CHOU SIMONS



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*To the ones who believe it's possible
to know God with us all year long...
long after the twinkle lights are tucked away.*

*You are my people.
This one's for you and yours.*







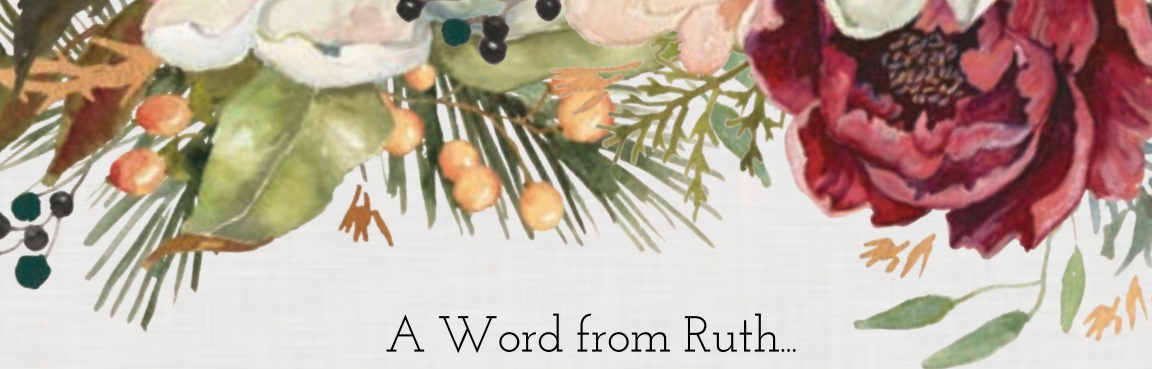
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A Word from Ruth...

Friend,

I pray you've picked up this book because you long for something richer and more satisfying than good food, dear friends, and fulfilled wish lists this Christmas season. My hope is that, like me, you want to discover something in the Advent season that will outlast the month of December. What if we allow the truths of "God with us" to shape everything we do all year long? What if we let the Christmas story fill our hearts so that it changes the way we celebrate the season and live the rest of the year? Maybe the weariness we feel during this time every year is a result of expectations that lean too much on the things of the season and not enough on Christ. We must prepare Him room.

My hope is this book will meet you (and your family and friends) right where you are. I pray its pages will draw you in with beauty and truth, and that its message will remind you that we were created to know much more than the bustle, or even the magic, of Christmas. We were made to know Christ.

Ruth





A Note About the Book Title

In your own experiences connected with Christmas, you may have noticed *Emmanuel* spelled two different ways—Emmanuel and Immanuel. Why is that so?

As you may know, the Old Testament Scriptures were written in Hebrew, and the New Testament in Greek. When the Bible is translated into English, the original Scripture texts go through a process called transliteration, which is how it's possible to end up with the two different spellings.

Immanuel is the transliteration of the Old Testament Hebrew terms *Immanu* (“with us”) and *El* (“God”).

Emmanuel comes from the transliteration of the New Testament Greek name *Emmanouel*, which also means “God with us.”

Some Bible translations use both spellings, and others only use *Immanuel*.

Both are correct, and both celebrate the wonder of God coming to dwell among us in human flesh—God with us, a glorious truth that proclaims how greatly God loves us.



The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High..."

And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God..." And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word."

Luke 1:30-38



WEEK ONE

*Our
Posture*





From right where you are—don't move: Pay attention to your posture in this moment, from the top of your head to the tips of your toes. Take note of how you are sitting, standing, or how your neck and shoulders feel. What is your current posture? Are you leaning over your kitchen counter? Reclined at the dinner table? Lying down? Tense? Feeling rushed or relaxed? Whether we realize it or not, we operate out of the posture of our hearts, and most often, that posture reveals itself in subtle and not-so-subtle ways in our physical posture as well.

If you look around any coffee shop, you'll notice many of the peppermint-mocha-drinking customers hunched over their laptops or looking down at their cell phones. Even in a laid-back environment like a coffee shop, people are busy and hustling. We spend the majority of our days poring over the devices of our busy lives, and sometimes we catch ourselves bowing our hearts before the flashing images across our screens as well. And we wonder

why we are so worn out and tense. Posture matters. But whether we sit up properly or use an ergonomic chair, the posture—or the position and bent—of our hearts matters even more.

POSTURE DETERMINES OUR APPROACH
AND TRAJECTORY ON ANY JOURNEY.




When given God’s plan for her role in the incarnation of Christ, Mary said, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” Her heart posture readied her for a plan she didn’t even fully understand; she simply trusted God, and that trust made room for all His plans to unfold in and through her.

Posture determines our approach and trajectory on any journey. It’s the unseen rudder that directs the way we welcome any circumstance...and any season.

And so, as we begin this Advent journey, we begin with our posture, because how we enter this season affects how we will receive this season. Let’s realign ourselves with the true hope of Christmas, and reposition ourselves with a heart posture that is ready to receive all that is intended for us in this Advent season.






I wait for the LORD, my soul waits,
and in his word I hope;
my soul waits for the Lord
more than watchmen for the morning,
more than watchmen for the morning.

○ Israel, hope in the LORD!
For with the LORD there is steadfast love,
and with him is plentiful redemption.
And he will redeem Israel
from all his iniquities.

Psalm 130:5-8



OUR POSTURE

Day 1

From Expectations to Expectant

We've all been there: A long-awaited family vacation, a special event, an important milestone birthday...a highly anticipated celebration. And then, out of the blue, something totally unexpected happens and ruins everything (at least from our human perspective). Can you think of the last time a special occasion or holiday season let you down? Our human expectations are prone to disappointment. We get our hearts wrapped around things we think we need or circumstances we desire, and when those things (or expectations) don't satisfy as we hope, we're left deflated and sometimes even jaded, numb, or unengaged.

Many of us lack the eager anticipation we once knew in our youth when it comes to Christmastime. Ask yourself: Does the first sign of Christmas decor stir your heart up with giddiness, or does the mere sight of pre-lit Christmas trees and gift wrap cause you anxiety? The ambience set by merchandisers is meant to ignite our excitement and preparation for a festive season, but for so many of us, the joyous expectancy of a fun-filled holiday is overshadowed by unrealistic expectations and impossible standards. We replace expectancy with expectations.

Christmas is the celebration of the birth of Christ, but the Israelites, who anticipated the promise of a Messiah, waited hundreds of years for this promise to be fulfilled. Along the way, God revealed His purposes and plans little by little, and sometimes the people waited eagerly, and other times, impatiently. Do you remember when the Israelites crafted a golden calf because they grew impatient and took matters into their own hands?

How one waits affects how he or she follows God's lead, or doesn't. Did you know your heart posture, which can be hidden, affects so much that is evident in your everyday life?

The stories we tell ourselves about any season—especially the Christmas season—shape how we feel and act in response. If you expect Christmas-time to make you feel good about your family relationships, you will be disappointed. If you expect your spouse to read your mind about what makes a holiday season special, you will be disappointed. If you expect gifts from others to make you feel loved and remembered, you will be disappointed. You see, what we believe we are waiting for in this season affects our posture, and that, in turn, determines the difference between whether we are overjoyed or overwhelmed.

The Psalms are such beautiful reflections of the psalmist's heart posture in various seasons and circumstances. In Psalm 130, we see the psalmist sing a song of hope—from a place of distress and need, he declares what is true about God's forgiveness, faithfulness, and steadfast love. The psalmist acknowledges that he has an audience with God because God graciously forgives (verse 3). He knows he's been given more than he deserves, and he now waits for his loving God to faithfully provide again. He doesn't question whether God hears his need. Rather, he is expectant, knowing that God keeps His promises. It's this very confidence and expectancy in a good and



Expectant

I WAIT FOR THE LORD,
MY SOUL WAITS...



He is faithful

faithful God that led Corrie ten Boom to anticipate the same of her heavenly Father:

When Jesus takes your hand, He keeps you tight. When Jesus keeps you tight, He leads you through your whole life. When Jesus leads you through your whole life, He brings you safely home.¹

Christmas is a homecoming—one where the broken of humanity are given access to the home they were meant for in Christ. Our only means of coming home to Jesus is to welcome and prepare Him room right where we are.

WHEN WE TURN FROM EXPECTATIONS TO BEING
EXPECTANT, WE WILL NEVER BE DISAPPOINTED
BECAUSE GOD NEVER DISAPPOINTS.



Expectations leave us weary and discontent, believing we deserve more or better. They always leave us unfulfilled and doubtful about whether God is for our good. But expectancy is anticipation mingled with joy. It's believing God is who He says He is while waiting patiently for His good to be revealed, however He chooses to reveal it. Expectancy remembers what is already more than one deserves; expectation demands more. When we come to the Christmas season with an expectant posture, we're led in hope—like the wise men led by the star. Expectancy sets our sights on God's promises rather than the empty pursuit of all that cannot truly satisfy in this season. When we turn from expectations to being expectant, we will never be disappointed because God never disappoints. What He promises, He will do.

PONDER

Are you more consumed with expectations in this season, or with anticipation for how God has fulfilled—and will continue to fulfill—His promises?

PRAISE

Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus

PRAY

Dear Father, we praise You for all You have done and have yet to do. Help us to long for You alone rather than the expectations and desires that do not satisfy. Realign our hearts according to Your Word, that we might have a heart posture ready to receive Your provisions. And when we're tempted to bend toward our earthly desires and ways of thinking, teach us to recount Your faithfulness and remember that You are God. While we wait for Your purpose to be revealed, while we look to Your Word, soften our hearts to trust in You instead of ourselves. Amen.







WHEN JESUS TAKES YOUR HAND, HE
KEEPS YOU TIGHT. WHEN JESUS KEEPS
YOU TIGHT, HE LEADS YOU THROUGH
YOUR WHOLE LIFE. WHEN JESUS
LEADS YOU THROUGH YOUR WHOLE
LIFE, HE BRINGS YOU SAFELY HOME.

CORRIE TEN BOOM



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