DAY 9

ISAIAH 7:14

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

One of the most enjoyable, and challenging, tasks for expectant parents is that of choosing the name of their new baby. Many parents spend countless hours pouring through books of baby names searching for just the right name. They may go through many dozens of choices before choosing one. How much easier if we could enjoy the benefit of a thousands-of-years-old prophecy to relieve us of the decision!

God's wonderful plan of salvation was to be found in the birth of a miraculous child. If we were in any doubt as to this, the very words "the virgin will conceive" reminds us. God intervenes in human history in the most wonderful and unexpected of ways. The birth of any child is a miracle; the birth of Jesus, to a young virgin in the otherwise unremarkable place of Bethlehem, draws our attention to how God works wonders and miracles as He loves the world back to Himself.

The wonder does not stop with the incredible nature of the birth but continues as the prophet reveals the name of the child to be born: Immanuel, God with us. Names matter a great deal in Scripture as they tell us something about the person. Here we find a beautiful truth revealed: The God of creation who spoke all things into existence is a God who wants to be with His people. In the birth of

Jesus, God makes His dwelling place amongst us and, as Eugene Peterson says, "moves into the neighborhood."

What an incredible thing this is: Our God cares about us so much that He comes to live amongst us, becoming fully human as He works His rescue and restoration plan into completion. Immanuel, God with us, reminds us that we have a God who is involved in every aspect of our lives, a God who cares for us, a God who is compassionate towards us and passionate about us.

What a wonderful name it is, and what a wonderful truth that it reveals.

REFLECT

Do you feel like you are close to or distant from God these days? Why is that? How might the four tenets of Advent Conspiracy help you to find a closer connection to God in your life this Advent?

PRAY

Jesus, we thank you for the truth that you are Immanuel, that you care for us and seek to be known by us. As I journey through Advent, help me to open myself up to you and be drawn deeper into your life-giving presence. Through my life and actions, may others be made more aware of you. I pray that this season would be full of worship as we rejoice in the time when you came to make your dwelling place with us. Amen.