

**SCRIPTURE AND  
KEY SERMON NOTES:**

*"Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel, which means 'God is with us.'"*  
Matthew 1:23 NLT

*Blessed are those whose strength is in you, whose hearts are set on pilgrimage. As they pass through the Valley of Baka, they make it a place of springs; the autumn rains also cover it with pools. They go from strength to strength, till each appears before God in Zion.*  
Psalm 84:5-7 NIV

*Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.* Psalm 139:7-10 NIV

**Key Point**

We may enjoy God on the mountaintops, but we get to know Him intimately in the valleys.

**START PRAYING:**

God, what an incredible honor that You spend time with us. You sent Your Son to be with us. You are with us at work, home, and in between. You are with us in the valley. Help us to fix our hearts and minds on You. We pray this by the powerful name of Jesus. Amen.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

**START TALKING:**

What parts of this message do you feel like you really needed to hear?

On a scale of 1 to 10, how much do you think and live like God is always with you? Explain.

**START THINKING:**

What does it mean for God to be with us?

God is with you. How can you draw near to Him during this season?

**Follow-up:** "What obstacles might be keeping you from drawing near to Him, and how can you overcome them?"

Read Psalm 84:5-7 together. What does this passage teach us about finding strength in God during difficult times?

Read Matthew 1:23 as a group. Have fun seeing who can memorize it on the spot.

**Follow-up:** Try to memorize and define the doctrine of the Incarnation.

**START SHARING:**

In this message we talked about how we get to know God in the valleys. What have you learned about God in a valley?

When was the last time you slowed down and pursued God's presence in a moment? What happened? How could you do this more often?

Talk about a difficult area in your life where you especially need to keep your mind fixed on God. How will you do it?

What you think about matters. What is some thinking you want to change?

How difficult is it for you to say, "I don't have what it takes?" or "I'm not enough?" and how does this message change your perspective on that?

**Follow-up:** What areas of your life do you try to be, or claim to, "be independent?"

Pastor Jeff said, If you're in a valley, "dig a ditch," so He can \_\_\_\_\_. What are you going to do in your life (if you're in a valley) to invite Him there with you - to be your strength and to work in the valley? (How are you going to "dig a ditch?")

What could God be doing with you while you're in the valley now? Have fun brainstorming positive outcomes that could be forming from this season.

In his weightlifting analogy, Pastor Jeff motioned how sometimes it is easy to see God's strength helping you through and sometimes it is difficult to tell the difference. Why do you think it can be difficult to recognize God's help or strength in certain situations?

**Follow-up:** "What are some practical ways we can train ourselves to notice His presence and strength, even when it's not immediately obvious?"

**START DOING:**

If you don't already spend a set time with God daily, try it this week. If you do, try adding a portion of quietly waiting on God's presence.