

How to Use Sermon Resources

- **READ AHEAD TOGETHER** - MCG's should use the Devotional at the end of this resource as a reading plan for the week leading up to your meeting.
- **SIT UNDER THE WORD** - This resource is filled with scripture references. Read them aloud, together before you answer any questions.
- **APPLY TRUTH** - The goal is deep discussion and application, not necessarily to complete this resource. Don't squash a good discussion. If you get into something important along the way that's fine.

Small Group Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer [2 mins]

Use the Overview [5 mins]

- Cover any key points for people who missed parts or all of the sermon

Scripture Deep Dive [30-40 mins]

- Opening Question
- Read the scripture for each question then ask the question. Some have multiple scriptures.

Close in Prayer

- In this extended prayer time, ask others to pray as they feel led, pray in a circle, pray over one another, pray to your left, or pray for someone specific. Whatever seems best.

Split Time (if applicable)

- Men with men, women with women
- Share in a circle. "What's one thing you want to celebrate? What do you need prayer and accountability for?"
- After everyone shares, pray in a circle for the person to your left/right.

SERMON OVERVIEW

"Wonderful Counselor" Isaiah 9:6, 7:2-15

Sermon Summary: This sermon explores the first of Jesus' names from Isaiah 9:6 - "Wonderful Counselor" - during the Christmas season. Pastor Matt examines the historical context of Isaiah's prophecy to King Ahaz during a time of national crisis, explaining how this prophecy had both an immediate fulfillment and an ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ. The message emphasizes that Jesus is not merely a good counselor, but a "wonderful" one whose wisdom is perfect, who understands our struggles personally, and who is always available.

Key Points:

- God's sign to Ahaz was a baby, communicating that God is with us, in control, and will act to save His people
- "Wonderful" means awe-inspiring, beyond imagination - not just better than expected but incomparable
- Jesus as counselor understands our situations because He experienced temptation, poverty, family strife, betrayal, and hunger
- God's counsel is available to those who ask (James 1:5)
- Three hindrances to receiving godly counsel: rebellion (autonomy, self-sufficiency, self-focus), foolishness (trusting our own wisdom), and incapability (trying to live in our own strength)
- A counselor is only wonderful if we follow the counsel given

Scripture References:

- Isaiah 9:6
- Isaiah 7:2-15
- Exodus 15:11-12

Stories:

- Teaching a ninth-grade class where a student shared about family strife preventing Thanksgiving gathering
- Hypothetical illustration of a counselor with comfortable chairs whom you visit but never follow their advice
- Hypothetical scenario of a doctor misdiagnosing cancer and putting a patient through unnecessary chemotherapy
- Examples of life misdiagnoses: thinking you need a new spouse instead of working on yourself, pursuing material success for validation, or lowering standards in relationships out of loneliness

Scripture Deep Dive

Opening Question

How does the concept of names and their meanings play a role in shaping your understanding of a person or a character, both in modern times and biblically? Consider how names affect perceptions and expectations.

Discussion Questions

Understanding the Context of Isaiah 9:6

1. **Isaiah 7:10-14** – What is the significance of the sign of Immanuel in the context of King Ahaz's fear? How does this prophecy provide both immediate and future hope?
2. **1 Kings 22:1-4** – Reflect on the relationship between the northern and southern kingdoms described here. How might this historical context affect how we interpret the hope offered in Isaiah 9:6?

Exploring the Meaning of "Wonderful Counselor"

3. **Exodus 15:11** – In what ways does the depiction of God as performing "wonders" enhance your understanding of Jesus as a "Wonderful Counselor"? How could this shape your perception of divine wisdom?
4. **James 1:5** – Given this verse, how do you interpret the role of God as a counselor who provides wisdom? Discuss how this connects to the idea of Jesus as our counselor who is both wonderful and authoritative.

Personal Application: Embracing the Wonderful Counselor

5. **Hebrews 4:15-16** – How does knowing that Jesus sympathizes with our weaknesses influence your willingness to be honest with Him? What impact does this honesty have on your spiritual life?
6. **John 14:6** – According to this verse, how does following the counsel of Jesus as the way, truth, and life require action on your part? Discuss the implications of this in living out your faith daily.

5 Day Devotional

Day 1 Reading: Isaiah 9:6, Matthew 1:21-23

Devotional: Isaiah 9:6 prophesies the coming of a child with profound names and roles, offering hope to a divided and troubled nation. This prophecy not only spoke to the immediate worries of Israel but also pointed to the ultimate hope in Jesus Christ, Emmanuel—God with us. As we reflect on God's plan to send His Son, consider how this hope is relevant in your life today.

Reflection & Prayer: Pray for an open heart to understand and embrace the hope that comes through Jesus, the child born to us. How does acknowledging Jesus as God with us influence your daily experiences and challenges?

Day 2 Reading: Isaiah 7:10-14, John 14:27

Devotional: When King Ahaz was fearful of impending threats, God offered a sign of assurance through the promise of Immanuel. This passage reminds us that God is involved in our struggles and He offers peace amidst chaos. Jesus, the fulfillment of this prophecy, assures us of His presence and peace, which surpasses all understanding.

Reflection & Prayer: Reflect on a current fear or challenge you face. How can you invite God's peace into this situation, leaning on His promises rather than your fears?

Day 3 Reading: Exodus 15:11, Colossians 1:16-17

Devotional Message: God's wonders, as described in the song of Moses, proclaim His unmatched power and holiness. Understanding God as a worker of wonders helps us appreciate the depth of calling Jesus a "Wonderful Counselor." It speaks to His authority and capability to counsel us in ways beyond human understanding.

Reflection & Prayer: Take a moment to thank God for the wonders He has performed in your life. How can recognizing His past works encourage you to trust His counsel today?

Day 4 Reading: Hebrews 4:15-16, Proverbs 3:5-6

Devotional: Jesus is not only our Wonderful Counselor but also a High Priest who understands our weaknesses. His empathy encourages us to approach Him confidently for grace and mercy in times of need. Trusting in His guidance directs our paths and invites His wisdom into our decisions.

Reflection & Prayer: In prayer, boldly bring your struggles and uncertainties before God, asking Him to guide you. How have you experienced His empathy and support in your times of weakness?

Day 5 Reading: John 14:6, James 1:5

Devotional Message: Jesus declares Himself as the way, the truth, and the life, emphasizing the necessity of following His counsel. Recognizing Him as our Wonderful Counselor involves active obedience to His teachings. As seekers of wisdom, we are invited to ask and rely on God's generous provision of insight and direction.

Reflection & Prayer: Spend time reflecting on areas of your life where you may have resisted Jesus' counsel. Pray for the courage and wisdom to follow His way, seeking His truth in all things. How can you more wholly submit to His guidance in your life today?