



The Advent of Peace

December 10-16, 2023

MAIN POINT

Jesus is our Wonderful Counselor, eager to guide us from darkness into his light, with His everlasting peace.

INTRODUCTION

Are you more likely to ask for too much advice or to never ask for advice at all? Why?

Some of us are eager to ask for advice but often feel paralyzed at the prospect of making a decision. We want to confirm the decisions we are about to make are smart and can struggle with decision anxiety. Some of us rarely ask for advice, thinking that it reveals some kind of weakness.

When we look at Jesus, we find a Wonderful Counselor who is eager to guide us. But we must turn to him in honesty and be willing to act on whatever guidance he gives us. Following His true guidance will ultimately prepare our lives to have more hope and peace.

Watch Session 2: Wonderful Counselor (10 minutes).

DISCUSSION

Christmas can be a very difficult season for many people. It can highlight the loss of a loved one, reawaken old family arguments, and make us painfully aware of our loneliness. But even in that darkness, we can have hope and peace because Jesus is our Wonderful Counselor.

What, if anything, makes Christmas difficult for you?

What do you do to cope with the difficulty?

In Isaiah 9:6, God calls Jesus our Wonderful Counselor. In Hebrew, Wonderful Counselor roughly translates to “a guide whose goodness goes beyond words.”

In what situations in your life do you want help from a good guide?

What kind of help are you looking for?

J.D. taught us that while God cares about our immediate problems and is ready to help us for our good and his glory, he is more concerned with taking care of the root of all of our problems: our separation from him. Think about the way you pray. Sometimes, we only pray when we need temporary, situational help from God.

What situations cause you to pray?

What would it look like for you to pray for God's nearness and His peace in your current circumstances?

It is easy to think of a counselor as someone who simply listens to and sympathizes with our problems. But, as J.D. taught us, Jesus is much more than a sympathizer—he is an authoritative guide. Jesus not only hears and sympathizes with you but is also able to guide and rescue you.

In what ways might your prayers change knowing that Jesus can hear and sympathize with you? That he can guide and rescue you? That leaning on him gives you a peace that passes all understanding?

J.D. pointed out that all of Jesus's miracles were meant to fix problems. These weren't small problems either—he fed hundreds of hungry people, healed incurable diseases and conditions, and silenced a storm that threatened to kill his disciples. There is no problem too big for Jesus.

What problems in your life seem too big to be fixed?

How have you prayed about these problems?

J.D. asked three questions we need to answer before approaching our Wonderful Counselor:

1) Are you ready to be honest with him, even about the painful and secret parts of your life? What worries you about talking about, or even praying about, your secret sins or problems?

There is no problem Jesus cannot deal with. He has authority over all of your problems. On top of that, there is no sin too dark, no secret so bad, that he will turn you away or stop loving you. He wants to step into your problems. He wants your heart and in return, he wants to offer his forgiveness, hope and peace.

2) "Do you want to be healed?" Many of us want to be healed but may not want to change. What parts of your life are off-limits to change? What would you do if God asked you to change those parts of your life?

3) "Are you ready to do what Jesus says?" Jesus is our guide, and he will lead us by his Word and his Spirit. Do you trust him enough to let him call the shots? What does it look like for you to trust and do what Jesus says?

Jesus has more to give us than we often imagine, but we must give up doing things our way.

Now that you have thought more deeply about Jesus as our Wonderful Counselor, in what ways might your relationship with him grow?

LAST WORD

Jesus wants us to come to him with our problems, our joys, our questions, and our hopes. He is both willing and able to help and heal us. But we have to come to him in full honesty, be willing to change, and be ready to do what he says. In him, we have a guide better than words can describe.

Loosen your grip on your secrets, your fears, your determination to follow your own counsel, and allow Jesus to guide you. When you hand over your life to Jesus, light will dawn in your darkness, hope will arise and peace will flow within your heart.

LIVE IT OUT

READ: Read John 5:1-15. Examine the way Jesus treats the paralyzed man. Think about your problems and ask yourself, “Do I want to be made well? Do I want a daily peace or am I used to living in the rut of fear and anxiety?”

PRAY: Pour your heart out to God. Tell him what scares, bothers, and concerns you. Confess your sins to him. Ask him for his unsurmountable peace. Then take time to read his Word and listen for his guidance.

MEMORIZE: Hebrews 4:15-16, “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses. Instead, we have one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet he never sinned. So let us keep on coming boldly to the throne of grace, so that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”