

Instructions:

Group leaders, take some time before your gathering to look over these questions. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you as you pick 3-5 questions to discuss that pertain to your group's unique style and needs.



Series: What is God like?

While much about who God is and how God works remains a mystery, we can know what God is like through the revelations of God that have been given to us: the images and names of God revealed in scripture, the tradition and experience of the Church, and at Christmastime through the greatest revelation of all, the birth of Jesus Christ.

"For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell..." Col 1:19

Join us this Advent as we reflect on four of the many names given to the Messiah (Wonderful Counselor, Almighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace) and discover how the gift of Jesus fulfilled the long-awaited expectations of the people and the plan of God to bring hope, joy, peace, and love to all creation.

Message description:

There are sections of Isaiah that are often read this time of year in anxious anticipation of the birth of Jesus. And yet, Isaiah 9 wasn't written with the Messiah in mind. It is thought to be a birth announcement for a new crown prince; a hymn of thanksgiving to God for all that could come to pass under his new leadership. Does that mean Isaiah 9 can't speak to us at Christmastime? Does it mean these royal titles don't still apply to Jesus? Absolutely not! In fact, Jesus fulfills these royal titles and expectations in ways no human leader ever could. Starting with Wonderful Counselor, Jesus is our wise counsel, the King of kings and Lord of lords whose reign will be fully recognized in the days to come.

Key Scriptures

Colossians 1:15-20

Isaiah 9:6-7

Check out these additional resources with your group, family, or on your own:

- > Advent Countdown to Christmas with Names for Jesus- <https://revolutionky.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Advent-Countdown-to-Christmas.pdf>
- > Advent Wreath to color at home- <https://revolutionky.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Advent-Wreath.pdf>
- > Advent Prayer Walk- <https://revolutionky.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Advent-Prayer-walk.pdf>
- > Advent Devotional, *Unwrapping the Names of Jesus*- <https://www.amazon.com/Unwrapping-Names-Jesus-Advent-Devotional/dp/0802416721>

Questions Related to This Week's Message:

1. In his oratorio, *Messiah*, George Frideric Handel famously placed a comma between "Wonderful" and "Counselor," seeming to separate them in his list of names for the Messiah. What difference does this make? How do you hear the royal title for Jesus differently?
2. Were you surprised to learn that this oracle was written with a human king in mind, as a summary of the people's hope and expectations for a new king? Does that change how you hear it? Do you think it is still relevant as a celebration of our Messiah at Christmas today?
3. When you hear the word "counselor" in reference to God or Jesus, what do you think of? Or what attributes do you connect with God as "counselor"?

Going Deeper:

Read Luke 1:46-56 (vv 26-56 to get the full story) and Luke 4:16-21.

These are two crucial passages early in the gospel of Luke that set the tone for Jesus' whole ministry and focus: the Magnificat (the song of Mary) and the reading of the scroll of Isaiah in Jesus' hometown synagogue. Although this is a different section of Isaiah than what was addressed on Sunday, it shows how Jesus came to fulfill the law and prophets and to announce his reign now.

- After reading both passages of scripture, what words or phrases stand out to you? How would you describe Jesus' ministry based on Luke 1-4?
- How does Jesus fulfill the plan of God as announced to Mary, to scatter the proud, bring down the mighty from their thrones, and fill the hungry?
- What does it mean to set the captives free and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor (Luke 4:18)? What sort of figure can proclaim such things?

In his devotional, "Names for the Messiah," Walter Brueggemann says, "Isaiah predicted a new regime of peace and well-being that would displace the older order of violence and extortion... Jesus articulated a world under alternate governance that did not conform to old patterns of abuse and exploitation" [as in the Roman empire and others that came before it].

- Describe what you imagine this alternate world looks like today?
- Jesus introduces an upside-down kingdom that is unlike anything the powers of the world have ever seen. How is this still good news today?
- How does this conversation impact your understanding of Jesus as "Wonderful Counselor"?
- What gives you hope right now?