

you are hanging onto that goes against God's wisdom? If we turn away from that thing and back to God, what will God's response be (v 7)?

According to verses 8 and 9 God's thoughts and His ways are far beyond our own. This may be one reason we find it difficult to accept God's counsel. But His ways are immeasurably greater than ours, and more than worthy of our efforts to gain them.

WRAP-UP

As the promised Messiah, Jesus came as our wonderful counselor. But we aren't always ready to accept the wise counsel of God. We would rather have quick answer and a challenge-free, prosperous life which the world promises but can't deliver. Jesus invites us to listen to Him and receive the finest of food, but we insist on spending our time energy and emotions on things that do us no good. The best offer you will ever have, is free of charge and currently available. Don't miss the opportunity to take advantage of this great gift and benefit from the wisdom of the Wonderful Counselor.

Memory Verse

For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. - Isaiah 9:6 NLT

PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: _____

Pray for your group members' needs: (see back for more space)

Challenge- Read Isaiah 9:1-7. As you read through this prophesy consider not only how Jesus was its fulfillment to Israel, also reflect and/or journal on how all of the promises (bringing light to darkness, breaking off slavery, lifting burdens, etc.) apply in your life.

"Wonderful Counselor"

Watching and Waiting - Week #1

INTRODUCTION

It's almost Christmas! Do you remember your anticipation as a child waiting for the big day? As adults many of us have lost that excitement and instead are weighted down by the demands of the season. But as Christians we have every reason to feel excited about Christmas and what it really means for us. As we start our new sermon series, we will find that the struggles we face while "Watching and Waiting" for Jesus are not at all new.

Ice Breaker (Optional—8 min)

Is there anything wonderful in your life that you had to wait a long time for? Was it worth the wait?

STUDY QUESTIONS (45 MIN)

1. What it takes to Watch and Wait

A child is born to us!
A son is given to us!
And he will be our ruler.
He will be called, "Wonderful Counselor,"
"Mighty God," "Eternal Father,"
"Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9:6)

Isaiah's promise of a Messiah is filled with good news. He is a gift to us, and among His many titles is the Wonderful Counselor. The root of the term wonderful counselor is *pele'*; beyond understanding, too wonderful for words, and *ya`ats*; to advise; to consult, to guide. Knowing this we should all embrace God's gift of wonderful counsel. But we observe throughout the history of Israel that most of their rulers, not unlike us, were not willing to trust God with their lives and decisions.

Why do you think it is easier to trust the wisdom of the world rather than the wisdom of God?

One aspect of trusting God requires us to wait for His direction. Most of us are geared toward quick fixes. In other words, we want it now. To wait on God challenges us to face uncertainty and relinquish control.

Most of us have faced circumstances that called for extraordinary wisdom. Think about a time you failed to seek God and instead made a poor decision.

How do you think it would have been different if you had waited on God to make that decision?

What decisions would you say you are currently facing that call for extraordinary wisdom? Are you willing to wait on God for an answer?

2. The Government upon His Shoulders

Considering the circumstances of Israel, the promise of a God-led government might have been the most eagerly anticipated part of the prophesy. They had plenty of kings that made some very bad decisions. As a result, Israel suffered under oppression and attack.

What would you say you would enjoy, and what would bother you about living in a monarchy ruled by a wise king?

Our response to God's guidance reveals a lot about how we view God.

Psalm 119:129-133 NLT - 129 ...Your laws are wonderful. No wonder I obey them! 130 The teaching of your word gives light, so even the simple can understand. 131 I pant with expectation, longing for your commands. 132 Come and show me your mercy, as you do for all who love your name. 133 Guide my steps by your word, so I will not be overcome by evil.

In Psalm 119 the writer expresses his views of God, His law and what motivates it.

How would you say he views God and God's laws? How would a negative view of God influence how His laws are received?

If we see God's commands as oppressive or humiliating, we fail to correctly understand the nature of God and why he has given us his law.

3. Jesus' Guidance Looks Different

Sometimes, in fact often, Jesus' counsel looks like foolishness to the world.

What are some of the things Jesus counsels us to do that are the opposite of what the world says?

God's invitation to us is life-giving. To the world it seems too good to be true.

Isaiah 55:1-3 NLT - 1 "Is anyone thirsty? Come and drink--even if you have no money! Come, take your choice of wine or milk--it's all free! 2 Why spend your money on food that does not give you strength? Why pay for food that does you no good? Listen to me, and you will eat what is good. You will enjoy the finest food. 3 "Come to me with your ears wide open. Listen, and you will find life. I will make an everlasting covenant with you. I will give you all the unfailing love I promised to David.

In this passage from Isaiah, God contrasts what He offers us with what the world offers.

God says there is no cost to what he offers us, but He asks, "Why spend money on what doesn't give strength and does you no good?" This is not about physical food.

Can you think of something we spend our time, our energy, and our emotions on that is not doing us any good? What is that "finest food" from God (v.2)? What does God tell us to do in order to "eat what is good" (v. 2-3)? What does God promise to do on our behalf (v.3)?

4. An Offer Too Good to Miss

Isaiah 55:6-9 NLT - 6 Seek the LORD while you can find him. Call on him now while he is near. 7 Let the wicked change their ways and banish the very thought of doing wrong. Let them turn to the LORD that he may have mercy on them. Yes, turn to our God, for he will forgive generously. 8 "My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts," says the LORD. "And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. 9 For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.

Isaiah 55:6 implies there will come a time when God will not be near, and we won't be able to find Him.

Did you make any purchases during Black Friday or Cyber Monday because you knew the offer of a good deal had a time limit? This verse should evoke that same sense of urgency in us. Is there anything you feel