

**COMMUNITY GROUP STUDY GUIDE****Advent***Wonderful Counselor***OVERVIEW**

Advent, which is derived from the Latin word “adventus,” means coming. For the Christian Church, Advent is the season marked by waiting and preparing for the celebration of Jesus’ birth in history (his first coming) and the anticipation of Christ’s triumphant return (his second coming). This is the time of year set aside to think about the coming of God’s Son to earth. As we look back and celebrate the birth of Jesus in a humble stable in Bethlehem, we also look forward, anticipating the second coming of Christ as the fulfillment of all that was promised by his first coming.

**APPLY // JONAH 4**

1. Read Jonah 3-4.
2. Contrast Jonah’s anger with God’s compassion.
3. When is Jonah angry in this passage? When is he happy? Based on this, what determines how Jonah feels?
4. Discuss ways we are like Jonah letting our personal preferences/circumstances dictate our feelings about God/others.
5. In what ways are you like Jonah – being quick to receive God’s grace but reluctant for God to be gracious to others?
6. How does the message of the book of Jonah encourage us to have God’s heart for the nations?
7. Pray for the ways Restoration Church seeks to bring the gospel to our neighbors and the nations:
  - a. Every member evangelism with friends, family, co-worker, classmates, neighbors
  - b. Sublime Gracia (Columbia Heights Spanish-speaking church plant)
  - c. Campus Outreach (outreach at American University)
  - d. FCA (Fellowship of Christian Athletes)
  - e. Friendship Terrace
  - f. NIQ

**STUDY // ADVENT**

Study the passage of Scripture aiming to faithfully interpret and apply what you observe. Remember we study God’s word not just to increase our knowledge, but to increase our trust in and treasuring of Jesus Christ.

1. Discuss the following questions:
  - a. When most people think about Christmas what do you think comes to mind for them?
  - b. What Christmas memories do you have from your past?
  - c. Are there certain traditions that help you remember the truth of the Christmas season?

2. What does Advent mean? How does this season help us look back and look forward?
3. What are some ways you/your family/roommates can pause this busy Christmas season to reflect on Christ's first coming and anticipate his second coming?
4. Read Isaiah 9:6-7.
  - a. *These verses come as a promise from God to his people in the face of oppression from King Ahaz and the Assyrians.*
5. What is the main idea of these verses?
  - a. *God promises a miraculous child who will rule forever from the throne of David. In the face of human failure, the "zeal of the LORD of hosts" alone will accomplish this (9:7).*
6. What do you notice about the "government" of this promised Ruler?
7. What is the significance of the "throne of David"? (cf. 2 Samuel 7:12-13; Luke 1:31-33)
8. How do these verses help us think about the meaning Christmas, the first Advent/coming of Jesus? How do they help us anticipate his second Advent/coming?
9. This year's Advent sermon series will focus on the four names for Christ listed in verse 6:
  - i. Wonderful Counselor
  - ii. Mighty God
  - iii. Everlasting Father
  - iv. Prince of Peace
10. Briefly discuss each of these names/titles (see notes below) and how Christ fulfills them.

**CG Leaders:** *This coming Sunday's text is Matthew 13:31-33. This text is one example of how Jesus provides "wonderful counsel" showing the Kingdom of Heaven is not what we might expect.*

### Wonderful Counselor

1. "Government shall be upon His shoulders...Wonderful Counselor"
  - a. **Wonderful:** Something unusual and beyond the capability of humanity, often mysterious or difficult things. The Bible only uses the word "wonderful" (pele') only for God, never associated with humanity.
  - b. **Counselor:** A counselor is one who is able to make wise plans; he provides counseling into the unusual things that are beyond the capability of humanity to perceive on their own.
2. Read Matthew 13:31-33.
  - a. **In this parable Jesus is providing "wonderful counsel" about the Kingdom of Heaven – that is, he is showing how the Kingdom of Heaven is unusual and beyond the capacity of mere human reasoning.**
3. Jesus says these parables are about the Kingdom of Heaven. What is the Kingdom of Heaven?
  - a. **In essence, we could say the Kingdom of Heaven is another way of speaking of the "government" of Christ Jesus. It's the place of his rule and reign; the way things should be and one day will be.**
4. What is the point of these parables? What do they teach us about the Kingdom of Heaven?
  - a. **Mustard Seed: Kingdom doesn't begin with pomp, but small, somewhat hidden and insignificant; Leaven: hidden from the world, rises/comes at the appropriate time.**
5. How do we see the truth of these parables evidenced in the life, ministry, and death of Jesus? In the church today?
  - a. **Savior born as a baby; Jesus chooses 12 rag tag disciples; last shall be first; Jesus dies on a cross which looks like a loss; the church starts with 120 people huddled in a room; etc.**
6. How do these parables tie back to the promised Messiah of Isaiah 9:6 – "the government shall be upon his shoulders...Wonderful Counselor"?
  - a. **The "government" that will be on the shoulders of this child will be one that begins small and is hidden by the eyes of the world**

- b. **He is Wonderful Counselor** because, as a Government leader He is bringing in a Kingdom that, in the eyes of the world is small, but grows large...is hidden in plain view by the world, but will rise in the fullness of time and be exposed
- c. **All of Jesus' counsel is wonderful** because he is leading us in the way of this Kingdom – the Kingdom that begins small, but grows large; the kingdom that is hidden in plain view of the world, just like God in the flesh of a baby, etc.

### From the ESV Study Bible

[Isa. 9:6](#) to us. A gift of divine grace to sinners. a child ... a son. This is the invincible figure striding across the world stage, taking gracious command, according to [vv. 4–5](#)(cf. [Ps. 2:7–9](#); [Luke 1:32](#)). Isaiah presents the events as if it were the time of the child's arrival, with an expectation of what he will achieve ([Isa. 9:7](#)). **Wonderful Counselor**. A "counselor" is one who is able to make wise plans (cf. [11:2](#)). He is a ruler whose wisdom is beyond merely human capabilities, unlike intelligent but foolish Ahaz (cf. [28:29](#)). **Mighty God**. A title of the Lord himself ([10:20–21](#); [Deut. 10:17](#); [Neh. 9:32](#); [Jer. 32:18](#)). **Everlasting Father**. A "father" here is a benevolent protector (cf. [Isa. 22:21](#); [Job 29:16](#)), which is the task of the ideal king and is also the way God himself cares for his people (cf. [Isa. 63:16](#); [64:8](#); [Ps. 103:13](#)). (That is, this is not using the Trinitarian title "Father" for the Messiah; rather, it is portraying him as a king.) **Prince of Peace**. He is the ruler whose reign will bring about peace because the nations will rely on his just decisions in their disputes (cf. [Isa. 2:4](#); [11:6–9](#); [42:4](#); [49:7](#); [52:15](#)).

[Matt. 13:31–32](#) The remarkable contrast between the small beginnings of the mustard seed and its final, large mustard plant had earned it proverbial status in Judaism (cf. [17:20](#)). It was the smallest of all agricultural seeds in Palestine. becomes a tree. The mustard "tree" grows to a height of 8 to 12 feet (2.4 to 3.7 m). Israel was not prepared for an insignificant beginning to the kingdom of God, so this image would have shocked the listeners. (See also note on [Luke 13:19](#).)

[Matt. 13:33](#) Jesus uses the metaphor of leaven, which usually has a negative connotation in Scripture (cf. [16:6](#); [1 Cor. 5:6–7](#)), to symbolize the positive, hidden permeation of the kingdom of heaven in this world. The kingdom is indeed active though not fully visible to the world, because it begins with an inner transformation of the heart. Three measures was probably about 50 pounds (39 liters) and would have produced enough bread to feed a hundred people.

- General Bible study questions:
  - What does this passage teach me about the character of God?
  - What does this passage teach me about myself and my need for God?
  - How does this passage teach me that God has met my needs in the person and work of Jesus Christ?
  - How should I respond with my affections and my actions?

## ACCOUNTABILITY

Relationships developed and deepened during accountability provide regular encouragement, and when necessary admonition, to spur each other on to delight in the supremacy of Jesus Christ. Ask one another heart-probing, clarifying questions, and help each other apply the gospel to your lives.

**QUESTION:** Share ways you have been encouraged by God's grace to you or others.