

Session 2: Wonderful Counselor

SESSION GOALS

Every session has a point—what each participant should walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

Main Idea: Jesus is our Wonderful Counselor, eager to guide us from darkness into his light.

Head Change: To know no problem is too big for Jesus to handle and no sin too bad that he will stop loving us.

Heart Change: To feel confident in approaching Jesus for counsel and guidance.

Life Change: To tell Jesus our fears, sorrows, and sins so that we might be healed.

OPEN

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.

VIEW

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in J.D. Greear's teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how J.D. answers the following questions.

What is the deeper Hebrew meaning of Wonderful Counselor?

What three questions must we answer if we want to be helped by Jesus, our Wonderful Counselor?

Watch Session 2: *Wonderful Counselor* (10 minutes).

REVIEW

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 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 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?**

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. The first is: 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. **What reassurance does it give you that you can neither stump nor scare away Jesus?**

The second question J.D. asked was, “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?**

The final question J.D. asked us was, “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?**

BIBLE EXPLORATION

It may be intimidating to approach God with your problems. What if he ignores you? What if he rejects you? What if you only receive judgement instead of mercy? These questions may seem reasonable, but they stem from thinking that God is like an angry boss, not a Wonderful Counselor. When we approach God with our problems, our sins, and our hopes, he sympathizes with our weaknesses and is eager to help us.

Read Hebrews 4:12–16.

Verses 12–13 teach us about God’s omniscience. God knows everything, including our motivations. **What worries you about God knowing everything about you?**

For some of us, Jesus is the last person we want to talk to after we sin. He knows everything, even our selfish motivations for doing good. But when we approach God’s throne, we don’t find disappointment or judgment. Verses 14–16 show us a very different picture of Jesus than we might expect. **What do we receive when we approach the throne of God? What stands out to you about the character of Jesus in verses 14–16?**

Jesus came as a person, just like us. He knows what it means to be tempted, to struggle, and to suffer. As a result, he sympathizes with, or suffers alongside, us and extends mercy and grace whenever we need it. **What does it mean to you that Jesus sympathizes with your weaknesses and pains?**

Jesus is not waiting on his throne to smite us. He invites us to his throne so that he can give us grace. He knows what you are going through and is eager to meet your needs. He is our God and our Wonderful Counselor. **In what ways does Jesus’s empathy change the way you think about approaching him?**

What can you bring to Jesus this week? Where in your life do you need grace and mercy from the throne of Christ?

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.

DEEPER WALK

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?”

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

Memorize: 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.”

An additional Christmas resource from J.D. Greear you may find helpful is his book Searching for Christmas.