



2021

Advent

Reflection

Guide



DIGGING DEEPER – WONDERFUL COUNSELOR

- ✓ **PRAYER** God, we acknowledge that you are already here. May our hearts be open to your presence and direction. Amen.
- ✓ **BIG IDEA** Isaiah revealed the identity of the coming Messiah using a variety of names and titles to describe the indescribable. A good counselor is empathetic and offers sound advice. Jesus knows our struggle and offers us his Spirit for comfort and guidance.
- ✓ **SCRIPTURE** Isaiah 9:6; John 4:1-26
- ✓ **DISCUSS**
- Jesus offers us a safe place to honestly share our struggles. In times of prayer, do you find it easy or difficult to be brutally honest with God?
 - Read John 4:1-26 aloud. Jesus revealed in this passage that he already knew everything about the woman. Rather than condemning her, what does he offer her in verses 10-14? If you revealed in prayer the things you are most ashamed of, is your assumption or fear that somehow God's love for you might change?
 - In addition to the Spirit of God providing counsel and comfort, God brings other people (sometimes friends, sometimes professionals) alongside us to share wisdom and to help give us perspective. Describe a time when someone else was instrumental in helping you move through a rough time in your life.
 - What do you think we must we do to benefit from good counsel? What is required of us?
 - What do you think is the church's role in providing guidance to those who are hurting? Is there someone you know of who might need support or encouragement from you?
- ✓ **Pray** Lord Jesus, we thank you that you have been where we are. It is a comfort to us that you understand our struggles and that you offer us love and grace in the midst of them. Remind us to seek you during this time of Advent and to be open to the ways you intervene through others. Help us to remain open and willing to be a source of encouragement to others as well. Amen.



MON 11/29

- ✓ SCRIPTURE
- ✓ THOUGHT

Hebrews 4:15-16

What a comfort! "This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most." [NLT] The holiday season can be fun, but doesn't erase our struggles. Jesus is compassionate and full of grace for us no matter what difficulties we face.

- ✓ PRAYER

Jesus, I am so grateful that I can boldly come to you and share my burdens knowing you will always offer me compassion and grace. Amen.

NOTES: _____

TUES 11/30

- ✓ SCRIPTURE
- ✓ THOUGHT

Romans 8:1

No fear. "So now there isn't any condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." [CEB] We need not be afraid to come honestly before God with our problems. Like with any counselor, honesty is necessary in order to acknowledge the problem and move forward toward healing. Because of Christ, we have freedom from fear of condemnation!

- ✓ PRAYER

Gracious God, the freedom to be honest is a gift. Help me to remain transparent with you in my prayer times so that I can feel relief from the weight that I carry. Amen.

NOTES: _____

WED 12/1

- ✓ SCRIPTURE
- ✓ THOUGHT

Psalms 94:19

Remember! "When doubts filled my mind, your comfort gave me renewed hope and cheer." [NLT] One way to find comfort is to remember God's faithfulness during past struggles. As we celebrate the coming of Christ, it is a great time to pause, remember, and celebrate God's faithfulness to us in the past.

- ✓ PRAYER

Faithful God, you have helped me so many times in my life and I give you thanks. Strengthen my faith so I can stay hopeful when I face difficult problems. Amen.

NOTES: _____



THURS 12/2

- ✓ SCRIPTURE
- ✓ THOUGHT

John 14:26

We have a guide. "But when the Father sends the Advocate as my representative—that is, the Holy Spirit—he will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I have told you." [NLT] Jesus told the disciples that he would guide them by his Spirit. The Spirit guides us in times of prayer and scripture reading and also works through others to offer wisdom.

- ✓ PRAYER

God, I thank you for the ways you come alongside me to lead me on the right path. I don't want to miss out on your guidance during the busyness of the holiday season. Help me to make time to listen and be open to receiving your wisdom. Amen.

NOTES: _____

FRI 12/3

- ✓ SCRIPTURE
- ✓ THOUGHT

Psalm 118:5

God is our helper. "When hard pressed, I cried to the LORD; he brought me into a spacious place." [NIV] Have you felt hard-pressed lately? Sometimes, Christmas is a time of struggle or pain. The psalmist knew that God would listen to his cries for help. We can be sure that God is faithful to hear our cries and help us move along in our journey.

- ✓ PRAYER

Say this breath prayer several times today. As you inhale, say, "Faithful God," and as you exhale, say, "Be my helper." Amen.

NOTES: _____

SAT 12/4

- ✓ SCRIPTURE
- ✓ THOUGHT

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

Pay it forward. "May the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ be blessed! He is the compassionate Father and God of all comfort. He's the one who comforts us in all our trouble so that we can comfort other people who are in every kind of trouble. We offer the same comfort that we ourselves received from God." [CEB] God often uses people to comfort other people! Out of gratitude for the help God gives you, who might you offer comfort to today?

- ✓ PRAYER

God, I am so grateful for your love and compassion. Let your comfort flow through me this holiday season. Amen.

NOTES: _____

DIGGING DEEPER – MIGHTY GOD

- ✓ **PRAYER** God, we acknowledge that you are already here. May our hearts be open to your presence and direction. Amen.
- ✓ **BIG IDEA** Jesus entered the world in the most humble of ways. Humble yet mighty, working through ordinary people to do extraordinary things. Our awareness of and participation with how God is at work in the world is a mighty force that can change lives.
- ✓ **SCRIPTURE** Isaiah 9:6; Philippians 2:4-13
- ✓ **DISCUSS**
 - What image comes to mind when you hear the term "Mighty God" used as a name for Jesus? Do you tend to think of Jesus more as fully human or fully God?
 - The way we understand scripture, as well as our own life experiences, influences our view of God's power and how it is used. Do you typically think of God as using power independently to accomplish things, or do you think God uses humans as a conduit of his power to accomplish things?
 - Read Philippians 2:4-13 aloud. What stands out to you? In verse 4 we are encouraged to look out for the interests of others. In what practical ways are you on the lookout for opportunities to be used by God to help someone else? Do you ever find that your attention is turned inward more than it is turned outward?
 - Jesus is described in this passage as both God and human and also "elevated to the highest place of honor." In the final verse we read, "For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him." [NLT] How does this influence the way you think about how God works in the world?
- ✓ **Pray** **Mighty God, help us open our eyes each day during this special time of year and look for what you are doing in the world. We want to participate in the powerful things that you want to accomplish! Thank you for giving us the strength to make a difference. Amen.**

MON 12/6

- ✓ SCRIPTURE
- ✓ THOUGHT

Psalm 27:1

Our God is mighty! "The LORD is my light and my salvation. Should I fear anyone? The LORD is a fortress protecting my life. Should I be frightened of anything?" [CEB] We serve a God full of power. With God's spirit of power residing in us, we can be confident and never be afraid to step out and do God's work. The holidays are filled with opportunities to help others! God, give me courage in all situations to do your work. Thank you for your constant presence in my life, empowering me and comforting me. Amen.

- ✓ PRAYER

NOTES: _____

TUES 12/7

- ✓ SCRIPTURE
- ✓ THOUGHT

Romans 1:20

Creation reveals God's power. "Ever since the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities—God's eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, because they are understood through the things God has made. So humans are without excuse." [CEB] Get outside today for a moment and give thanks for the wonders of creation. Creation paints the picture for us of a mighty God. Even your Christmas tree can be a reminder to thank God for beauty in the world!

- ✓ PRAYER

Lord of all creation, thank you for the beauty all around me. Help me to be reminded of your power every time I see the wonderful things in the world. Amen.

NOTES: _____

WED 12/8

- ✓ SCRIPTURE
- ✓ THOUGHT

Ephesians 1:19-20

Same power! "I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe in him. This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms." [NLT] Paul's prayer was that we understand the power available to us when the love of Jesus is our guide. We have the capability to do far more than we think when it comes to showing that love to others.

- ✓ PRAYER

Mighty God, I want to be a participant with you as you work in the world. Show me the possibilities and how I can be a light this holiday season. Amen.

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THURS 12/9

- ✓ SCRIPTURE
- ✓ THOUGHT

2 Corinthians 2:14

God works through us. "But thank God, who is always leading us around through Christ as if we were in a parade. He releases the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere through us." [CEB] God's power can be seen in the things that we do to spread the knowledge of him to others. How can you be a sweet "fragrance" of the love of God for someone else today?

- ✓ PRAYER

God, I want to be someone who represents you well. I am grateful for the ways you have shown me your loving kindness. Use my actions to inform others of your love. Amen.

NOTES: _____

FRI 12/10

- ✓ SCRIPTURE
- ✓ THOUGHT

2 Corinthians 13:4

Connect with God. "Although he was crucified in weakness, he now lives by the power of God. We, too, are weak, just as Christ was, but when we deal with you we will be alive with him and will have God's power." [NLT] When we "deal with God," we deal with resurrection power! Think of what seems like an impossible situation and talk to God about it today with this in mind. Our connection with God is key to making it through times when we feel weak. Make time during the hustle and bustle to connect!

- ✓ PRAYER

God, I need your help. In this situation I do not know what to do. Strengthen me and help me remember that you are my source, and you work in ways I may not understand. Amen.

NOTES: _____

SAT 12/11

- ✓ SCRIPTURE
- ✓ THOUGHT

1 Chronicles 29:11

Everything belongs to God. "Yours, LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, LORD, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all." [NIV] Everything is God's and for God's glory, and you are no exception. You get to be a part of God's work in the world. How can you give the gift of your time or expertise to someone else this Christmas?

- ✓ PRAYER

God, open my heart and mind to new ways to be used to share your love. I want to offer my abilities fully for your glory. Amen.

NOTES: _____

DIGGING DEEPER – EVERLASTING FATHER

- ✓ **PRAYER** God, we acknowledge that you are already here. May our hearts be open to your presence and direction. Amen.
- ✓ **BIG IDEA** During the Christmas season we are reminded by the prophet Isaiah of one of the most personal of the names of Jesus--Everlasting Father. What does that mean to us based on what scripture says? Jesus is full of compassion, cares about us, and will never leave.
- ✓ **SCRIPTURE** Isaiah 9:6; Matthew 11:28-30
- ✓ **DISCUSS**
- It is natural for us to use our own experiences to make sense of who God is. Bring to mind your own father or parental figure and write down some characteristics that describe that person. Now take a moment to think of the way you view your relationship with God. How are the two different or similar?
 - Read Isaiah 9:6 aloud. Jesus is called "Everlasting Father." The Merriam-Webster definition for *everlasting* is "lasting or enduring through all time." How does that characteristic of Jesus make you feel? What thoughts come to mind when you consider that part of who he is?
 - Do you struggle to see God as compassionate? Why or why not?
 - Matthew 11:28-30 says: Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light." [NLT] Jesus was offering the listeners an invitation to several things. Discuss the characteristics that are stated or implied about the nature of Jesus.
- ✓ **Pray** Lord Jesus, I am so thankful that you are a loving father who cares about my life. Remind me during this busy season, that you are always by my side no matter what I am facing. Help me to daily accept your invitation to rest in your arms. Amen.

MON 12/13

- ✓ SCRIPTURE John 14:7
- ✓ THOUGHT We can know the Father. "If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him." [NIV] When we read about the life of Jesus, we can get a picture of what our Everlasting Father is really like. Thank God today that we can know God because of the example we have in the life of Christ. Emmanuel, God with us!
- ✓ PRAYER Everlasting Father, thank you so much for the picture of love that I can see in the life of Christ. Help me spend time daily to understand more deeply what that means for my life. Amen.

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TUES 12/14

- ✓ SCRIPTURE Luke 6:36
- ✓ THOUGHT Our Father is merciful. "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful." [NIV] Sometimes, we tend to fear that God is disappointed with us because we are keenly aware of all of our shortcomings. Jesus tells us the truth about our merciful God, however; and we are told to extend that same mercy we are given to others! Who might need some mercy from you today?
- ✓ PRAYER Merciful Father, I am so grateful for your acceptance and grace. I need it every day. Give me the compassion to gift others with that mercy, knowing that we all fail at times. Amen.

NOTES: _____

WED 12/15

- ✓ SCRIPTURE Psalm 90:2
- ✓ THOUGHT From beginning to end! "Before the mountains were born, before you gave birth to the earth and the world, from beginning to end, you are God." [NLT] At Christmastime, we celebrate God with us. In the coming of Christ, we are offered the gift of the presence of God with us from the beginning to the end. We are never without the love of Christ!
- ✓ PRAYER Loving God, I give you praise today for the miracle of your presence on Earth in human form. Thank you for the love of Jesus that is a constant in my crazy world. Amen.

NOTES: _____



THURS 12/16

- ✓ SCRIPTURE
- ✓ THOUGHT

Isaiah 40:28

Our Everlasting Father doesn't grow weary. "Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom." [NIV] We can for sure grow weary with all of the extra activities during this time of year. Make time to breathe and connect with God today.

- ✓ PRAYER

Loving God, give me fresh energy to enjoy this special time of celebrating Jesus. In the middle of all the action, I want to lean on you and remember your greatness. Amen.

NOTES: _____

FRI 12/17

- ✓ SCRIPTURE
- ✓ THOUGHT

Hebrews 1:3

The Messiah expresses who God is. "The Son radiates God's own glory and expresses the very character of God, and he sustains everything by the mighty power of his command. When he had cleansed us from our sins, he sat down in the place of honor at the right hand of the majestic God in heaven." [NLT] Jesus is our sustainer and has freed us from the guilt of our shortcomings. We can't truly celebrate Christmas without acknowledging the grace we have received because of Christ.

- ✓ PRAYER

God, thank you for showing your love and grace through Jesus. That expression of love helps me understand your nature and makes me want to know you more deeply. Amen.

NOTES: _____

SAT 12/18

- ✓ SCRIPTURE
- ✓ THOUGHT

Psalms 103:13

We serve a compassionate God. "Like a parent feels compassion for their children—that's how the Lord feels compassion for those who honor him." [CEB] Compassion like a parent has for a child...that is our God! Our Everlasting Father is honored when we live with the light of Christ prominent in our lives. God's concern for us can become our concern for others. Find a tangible way this Christmas to show compassion to someone in need.

- ✓ PRAYER

Gracious God, soften my heart so that I can share in your compassion. Guide me in ways that I can be attentive to the needs of others. Amen.

NOTES: _____

DIGGING DEEPER – PRINCE OF PEACE

- ✓ **PRAYER** God, we acknowledge that you are already here. May our hearts be open to your presence and direction. Amen.
- ✓ **BIG IDEA** For us to experience the "peace of Christ", we must live under the guidance of the Peace Expert! Following the ways of Jesus can bring more peace to our lives and to the lives of those around us.
- ✓ **SCRIPTURE** Isaiah 9:6; Luke 2:10-14; Galatians 5:22-26
- ✓ **DISCUSS**
 - Where is the "peace" at Christmas? Sometimes our holiday gatherings with family can bring about a slightly different feeling! Reflect and journal or share with someone about how holidays have felt for you in the past. How have relationship dynamics either helped or hindered the way you have experienced peace?
 - Luke 2:10-14 says: ...but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger." Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying, "Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased." [NLT] This is a commonly heard passage at this time of year. Why do you think that the concept of peace is tied to pleasing God?
 - Following the ways of Jesus brings about certain characteristics in our lives that have a direct impact on our well-being. Read Galatians 5:22-26 aloud. Discuss or journal about which of these qualities you feel contribute to experiencing peace in your life and which you feel like you need to cultivate more.
 - Back to the holiday gatherings. As you spend time with family and friends, how could you potentially shine the light of Christ in the role of peace-maker? Consider ways you could preempt disruptions of peace.
- ✓ **Pray** **Prince of Peace, I want to be a person who pleases you. Reveal to me the things I could change that would lead to a more peaceful life. Help me commit to be a peace-maker for the people around me. Amen.**



MON 12/20

- ✓ SCRIPTURE Psalm 29:11
- ✓ THOUGHT The Lord is our source of peace. "Let the LORD give strength to his people! Let the LORD bless his people with peace!" [CEB] Peace is something we all crave. What are some ways this week that you could get alone with God and soak it up? Though it may prove difficult this time of year, finding moments of solitude can result in a resurgence of strength and peace.
- ✓ PRAYER Loving God, I am sorry if I have neglected to prioritize quiet solitude with you. Help me listen for your still, quiet, voice as I seek to spend time in your presence. Amen.

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TUES 12/21

- ✓ SCRIPTURE Isaiah 26:3
- ✓ THOUGHT Trust leads to peace! "You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you!" [NLT] What are your thoughts fixed on today? Last minute shopping, preparations for holiday meals, stress surrounding travel plans? When we fix our eyes on Jesus--his power and goodness--we can experience trust that leads us to a peaceful place.
- ✓ PRAYER Prince of Peace, I need to refocus on who you are and the things that truly matter. Thank you for your perfect ways; I know I can count on you. Amen.

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WED 12/22

- ✓ SCRIPTURE Romans 5:1
- ✓ THOUGHT Our faith in Jesus leads to peace. "Therefore, since we have been made righteous through his faithfulness, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." [CEB] Emmanuel, God with us, has made us righteous in the sight of God. Our failures of the past, present, and future have been erased. What better gift to receive?
- ✓ PRAYER Lord Jesus, I give my praise and thanks that you have made me clean and blameless by your grace. When I begin to feel shame or doubt, remind me of the peace you offer. Amen.

NOTES: _____

THURS 12/23

- ✓ SCRIPTURE John 14:27
- ✓ THOUGHT Do not fear. "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." [NIV] Just as the angel of the Lord instructed the shepherds in the field, "Do not be afraid," Jesus doesn't want our hearts to be troubled. Spend some quiet time searching for what might be troubling you today.
- ✓ PRAYER Repeat this breath prayer several times. As you inhale, say, "Prince of Peace," and as you exhale, say, "Remove my fear." Amen.

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FRI 12/24

- ✓ SCRIPTURE Matthew 5:9
- ✓ THOUGHT Peace matters to Jesus. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." [NIV] Jesus taught this truth. On this special day, take a moment to think of specific things you can do that might bring peace to a situation or relationship that you are involved with. The birth of Christ brought peace to the world, and we are called to both experience that peace and be conduits of that peace for others.
- ✓ PRAYER Lord Jesus, your gospel is peace. I want my life to emanate the good news that you came to share. Give me the strength and control that it takes to set my own desires aside for the sake of peace. Amen.

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SAT 12/25

- ✓ SCRIPTURE John 1:14
- ✓ THOUGHT Jesus is born! "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." [NIV] On this Christmas day, contemplate the incredible gift of Jesus' glory coming to earth. What does that glory look like in your life? What would you like it to look like? Jesus was full of grace and truth and is our model for how to live in peace. Rejoice today for all Christ has done in your life!
- ✓ PRAYER Christ Jesus, you have made my life better, and I thank you for saving me. Empower me to be a person who is full of grace and truth who radiates love to the world you love so much. Amen.

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