

Strategic Dads

Advent Week 3



DEC 15-25

The Hero of Christmas

On this Tuesday night, PDS is celebrating one of our favorite holiday traditions—singing part of Handel’s “Messiah.” Handel quotes a famous prophecy in Isaiah that tells us who Jesus is:

For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,
and his name shall be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

This week, we’re looking at that passage and a few other promised names for Jesus to learn more about the hero behind Christmas and why he’s worth celebrating. Along the way, we’ll see how we live out PDS’ 7 Virtues as we imitate Jesus and respond to who he is.

DEC
15

Jesus is the Immanuel (and our True Friend)

Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 1:18-25

Immanuel means “God with us,” and that’s the best news in the world. When God first created the world, he would walk and talk with Adam and Eve every evening—until the day when they rebelled against God and rejected him. Humanity’s relationship with God was broken.

But praise God! God didn’t give up on us. He had his own plan for bringing people back into relationship with himself. For hundreds of years, he led his people faithfully, even when they did not follow him faithfully. He spoke to them through judges, priests, and prophets. Some people—like Abraham and David—listened to God and loved him. But a lot of people still didn’t really hear or love God.

So Jesus came even closer to us. He became a human, being born right into a community of sinful people. On the cross, he took the punishment for our sins. If we trust in Jesus for forgiveness, God sees us just as perfect and sinless as Jesus is, and he adopts us as his own children. We aren’t just part of God’s people—we belong to his family.



That's why this promise is such good news. Jesus walked among the people of Israel, and he provided a way for all of us to be with God. He is near to us—he is our truest friend.

- What does it mean to be a friend to someone?
- How does it make you feel to remember that Jesus is your True Friend?

Challenge: The good news is that God is already giving us a way to be with him! Invite Jesus into all of your life including your toughest moments and your daily joys. Jesus (God with you) is your True Friend! Talk to God about your day—tell him about the good parts and the bad parts.

DEC
16

Jesus is a Son Given to Us (and the most Humble Hero)

Isaiah 9:2-7

Today, we're focusing on one line: "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given."

Jesus loves you so much that he came to earth as a baby—helpless and messy and completely dependent on others. Sometimes we focus so much on God's might that we forget his gentleness. Jesus knew what it's like to be a child, and he invited little children to come and talk to him. He even said that grown-ups should approach him like children, with simple faith and trust.

Jesus showed incredible humility when he was born as a human baby. He is the ultimate example of a humble hero. He did what was best for us, not what was best for him. And Jesus invites us to follow his example and live as a humble hero: "For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you" (John 13:15).

But Jesus doesn't just give us his example—he gives us forgiveness when we mess up, and he gives us his love and his help every step of the way, on the good days and the bad days. He isn't a far-away ruler—he came down to earth to save us, and we can come to him with anything, even little things. He wants to hear from you.

- Have you ever held a baby? What does it feel like to hold a baby? Can you imagine God becoming so little and fragile?
- What are some things Jesus did that show his humility?
- What is one way you could follow Jesus' example this week?

Challenge: Shine a spotlight on something good somebody else did today. (For example, you could compliment a teammate or a classmate, or you could tell your parents about something good your sibling did today.)

DEC
17

Jesus is our Wonderful Counselor (and our ultimate Pace Setter)

Isaiah 9:6, Proverbs 2:1-15

Wisdom isn't the same thing as brainpower.

You could be the smartest person in the world. You could be a doctor, an astrophysicist, or a professor, but you'd still need wisdom. Wisdom is more than just knowing what your options are—it is knowing which path you should take.

Thankfully, we're not left on our own to get wisdom. We have Jesus as our "Wonderful Counselor." He has all the wisdom in the world, and he's generous with it. We just need to listen to him, because "from his mouth come knowledge and understanding."



John 1:1-2 tells us that, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.” God’s wisdom became a person in Jesus. So what do these verses in Proverbs teach us about God’s wisdom?

It’s “pleasant to your soul.”

It’s practical. It shows you how to live—like how to make decisions, how to talk, and what people you should spend time with.

It’s protective. It keeps you from going down some paths that would lead you into traps of temptation and hurt you.

When we think about all the benefits of wisdom, it’s clear why Proverbs 2 says it’s so important to get wisdom. Proverbs 2 tells us to yell for wisdom in the streets and hunt for wisdom like it’s treasure. But we don’t have to. We have a Wonderful Counselor, and we can go to him for all the wisdom we need.

- Can you think of one part of your life where you could really use some wisdom? Maybe a hard decision or a big question about what’s right?
- What’s one thing you can do to seek wisdom from your Wonderful Counselor this week?

Challenge: Think of a decision or a question you have, and look up 3 verses about that topic. It might help to use a concordance at the back of your Bible, a Bible app on your phone, or a website like BibleGateway.com

DEC
18

Jesus is our Mighty God (which is why we can be Bold Adventurers)

Isaiah 9:6, Psalm 97

Have you seen wax melt? When you first light a candle, it looks like nothing is happening. But slowly, the center of the candle, right under the flame, darkens. It gets softer and softer. Then, an edge of the candle caves in, and the wax spills over, as slippery as oil.

Psalm 97:5 says, “The mountains melt like wax before the LORD.” Try to picture that in your mind—it’s hard to imagine. That picture shows us how powerful God is. Sometimes we forget that the same God who loves us, who hears our prayers, and who knows everything about us also rules over the whole world.

When we remember that, we should feel awe—that feeling of wonder, respect, and fear. But we should also feel safe. If that mighty God is our Savior Jesus, nothing can happen unless he allows it. Colossians 1 tells us that by Jesus, “all things were created, in heaven and on earth” and “in him all things hold together.”

Even if Jesus calls us to face something scary or difficult, we know that he is right there with us and that he rules over the universe. That’s the secret behind real courage, the kind of courage the bold adventurers live with as they follow God.

- Are you facing anything this week that scares you? Or are there difficult things God is asking you to do?
- How can you remind yourself that you have a mighty God on your side?

Challenge: Take a notecard and write down a verse about God’s power. Put it somewhere where you’ll see it when it’s hard to be brave (like in your backpack or by your bed).



DEC
19

Jesus is our Everlasting Father (which gives us the strength to be Noble Knights)

Isaiah 9:6, 1 John 3:1-3

If you believe in Jesus, God adopts you as his child.

It is good news—but sometimes we forget just how good it is. So let’s slow down for a minute to think about what it means to have God as your Father.

“The world and its fullness” belong to your heavenly Father (Psalm 50:12). Your heavenly Father “knows what you need before you ask him” (Matthew 6:8) and knows how to “give good things to those who ask him” (Matthew 7:11). And he holds you so tightly that “no one is able to snatch [you] out of the Father’s hand” (John 10:29).

And God is not just our Father—he’s our everlasting Father. Young children depend on their parents for almost everything. But as they grow up, they learn to take care of themselves. Eventually, when their parents get older, they’ll be the ones taking care of their parents. But you never outgrow having God as your Father. No matter how old you are, God will always be your Father, and he’ll always take care of you.

That gives you the strength to become a Noble Knight. If we try to serve and protect our communities all on our own strength, we’ll run out of strength. But when we go to our heavenly Father for help, he’ll wrap us in his love and give us the strength to love others.

- How is God similar to your human dad? How is he different?
- How does it make you feel to remember that God is your everlasting Father?

Challenge: Practice being a Noble Knight by doing something for your siblings or parents without being asked.

DEC
20

Jesus is the Prince of Peace (and our example of a Servant Leader)

Isaiah 9:6, Psalm 46

Throughout history, many young princes have been known for stirring up wars. Excited by the power of their armies and too proud to accept the slightest insult, they would go off to battle recklessly—and hundreds of soldiers might die as a result.

But Jesus is different. He’s not some pompous prince; he is the Lord of Hosts. You might remember from last week that “the Lord of Hosts” describes how God commands armies of angels. But Jesus doesn’t use this power to show off. He is the “Prince of peace,” who uses his strength to bring peace between God and people.

Jesus gives this peace to those who follow him. When he told his disciples that he was going to return to heaven, he told them, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.” (John 14:27)

There are two important lessons for us here:

First, we can be comforted. If “the God of Jacob is our fortress,” what can break through those walls? If “the Lord of Hosts is with us,” we are really, truly safe.



Second, we can learn what it means to be a servant leader. Jesus is our Prince of peace, using a position of leadership to serve us and do what's best for us, even when it took a huge sacrifice from him.

- Can you think of any places where you are a leader? (For example, you might lead by the example you set at school, the way you act on your sports team, or the way you treat your younger siblings)
- In those places, how could you serve the people you lead in a way that gives them peace? If you are not a leader currently, what way can you serve people and set an example?

Challenge: Look for a way to help somebody that will comfort them and give them peace like helping a sibling find something lost or like shovelling snow off your neighbor's driveway.

DEC
21

Jesus is Lord of All (and we get to be his Faithful Followers)

Isaiah 9:7, 1 Chronicles 29:10-13

God is so big and so good that he's more than we can completely understand. While he created our human brains with powerful reason and imagination, our brains are still limited. We can't completely fit our limitless God inside our limited brains. He's not a puzzle we can solve or a picture where we can see all the edges.

To look at God, it's helpful to focus on specific parts of who he is. It's like looking at an incredible gem, one that's so big and bright that you can't see all its beauty at once. Instead, you turn the gem over and look at each angle and edge—each “facet”—and every perspective shows you new things that amaze you.

Here are some facets of God that David is talking about:

God is “forever and ever” (1 Chronicles 29:10). He doesn't change. He is just as powerful and good today as he was when he first created the world, and he will be the same when you are 100 years old.

“Both riches and honor come from” God (1 Chronicles 29:11). Think about the richest or the most famous people you've heard of—every good thing that they have ultimately belongs to God.

“The kingdom” belongs to God, and he is “exalted as head above all” (1 Chronicles 29:11). God rules above every government and every earthly leader. All power comes from him.

That's just two verses. God is so amazing—and the most amazing part is that he loves us! Isn't it wonderful that we get to follow a God who is so good and so powerful?

- What is one thing about God amazes you? It can be something we talked about in today's devotion, or something else that's true about God.
- How does talking about God make you feel?

Challenge: Turn on some songs about how amazing God is—good Christmas carols count!

Here are two suggestions:

- “How Great Is Our God (World Edition)” by Chris Tomlin (<https://youtu.be/vg5qDljEw7Q>)
- “Joy to the World” by Casting Crowns (<https://youtu.be/zrOlXLeWJQ4>)



DEC
22

Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ

John 1:35-42, John 4:25-26

Have you ever wondered where the word “Christian” comes from? It makes sense that it comes from Christ—but where does “Christ” come from?

“Christ” isn’t just a name—it’s a title. It’s the Greek translation of the Hebrew word “Messiah,” which means “Anointed One.” In Jesus’ day, any Jew would know that “Messiah” meant the Savior that God had promised to send, the one they were waiting for.

Some people say that Jesus was only a good teacher or a good example. But the Bible is clear that Jesus is the Christ.

In Luke 2:11, the angels told the shepherds that “Christ the Lord” had finally arrived. And in John 1, the first disciples also say that Jesus is the Christ. We don’t know exactly what Andrew heard when he went to see Jesus, but it was enough that he found his brother Peter and told him, “We have found the Messiah.” He knew that God had finally sent the Savior they had been waiting for.

But the best witness is Jesus himself. He himself confirmed that he is the Messiah, the one God sent to save his people. But God didn’t just send Jesus to save the people of Israel—he sent Jesus to save all God’s children from their sins.

That’s why we’re called Christians—a Christian is someone who believes in Jesus as the Christ. Because Jesus is the Christ, we trust him as our Savior and follow him as our Lord.

If Jesus were just a good example, we’d still need to make ourselves right with God somehow—and on our own, that’s impossible! But because God sent Jesus to save us, we don’t have to earn our way to God. He’s already forgiven us, and he helps us to follow him.

- Why does it matter that Jesus is the Christ?
- When Jesus called his disciples, he asked them to follow him. For the disciples, that means leaving their jobs and following him around Israel as he taught and healed people. What do you think it means for you to follow Jesus?

Challenge: Thank God for sending Jesus as the Christ and spend some time today resting and enjoying time with your family.

DEC
23

Jesus Defines Glory—Real Glory

John 1:14

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

- How does Jesus, in becoming a human, show us what glory looks like?
- How does Jesus, in becoming a human, show us what grace looks like?
- How does Jesus, in becoming a human, show us what truth looks like?

DEC
24

Celebrating Christmas Together

Matthew 1:18-2:12

- Why did Jesus come to earth?
- Why do you think he came to earth as a baby instead of as a grown-up?



DEC
25

Celebrating Christmas Together

Luke 2:1-21

- How did people react to Jesus being born?
- How does it make you feel to know Jesus was born to rescue you?