



## NG Study Guide: Is. 9:6 “Unto Us a Child is Born” Christmas 12.24.17

### Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. **Leader note:** Please review the brief instructions for leaders at the bottom.

### The Study

**Thesis:** Christmas should be the most wonderful time of the year. It can be a special time for family, traditions, and giving and receiving of gifts. Most of us have at least a few gifts that we’d like to receive, and most of us realize that none of those gifts are likely to bring real satisfaction. Yet, is there a gift that is so amazing that you could discover true contentment that would not depend on your circumstances? Why is Christmas truly so wonderful? What is the gift that brings true contentment? How can you receive that gift? The prophet Isaiah, helps us to discover the answers with these familiar words:

**“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” [Is.9:6].**

Let’s consider the Birth of Jesus and discover contentment in Christ together ...

### Why is Jesus the greatest gift ever?

“Unto us a Child is born, unto us a *Son is given* ...” Not only to the Jews, but to all of humanity [Jn. 3:16], and this gift is available to you. The gift comes in a humble package, a Child born in a manger. God’s gift did not appear as a full-grown man in a royal setting, nor an angel shining the radiant glory of God, but a human Child. The incarnation is the glorious truth that God became flesh and dwelt among us [Is. 7:14, Jn.1:14]. God moved into the neighborhood so you could better relate to Him and He could better relate to you. The idea that the government will be upon His shoulder sounds so strange when you imagine a baby’s tiny shoulders. Yet, all authority in heaven and on earth would be exercised by that Child [Matt. 28:18]. He is the One who ultimately will reign as King of kings and Lord of lords [Rev. 19:16]. And He is unlike any other Sovereign. His rule will be pure without corruption,

perfect in that He truly knows what is best, and sacrificial in that He comes to serve us not to be served by us, and to give His life for us so that we can live [Mk. 10:44-45].

We are told that His name will be called many things. From a Jewish perspective, a name reveals aspects of a person's character, nature, who he is and what he does or will do. Here, we focus on five aspects of Christ's nature:

**Wonderful:** He will be called "Wonderful" in the sense that He is awesome and beyond our ability to fully comprehend, or fully describe. Any words that used to describe Him diminish all that He truly is. Only a truly awesome and wonderful God can truly satisfy.

**Counselor:** He will be called "Counselor" because He is uniquely able to guide our lives since He is the wisdom of God personified [Jn. 1:14, 14:6]. We need a true compass to guide our lives, because we tend to look for contentment in all the wrong places.

**Mighty God:** He will be called "Mighty God" revealing that this Child is not only human but is in fact Almighty God with unlimited power [Rev.1:8]. How comforting it is to know that our God is greater than our problems.

**Everlasting Father:** He shall be called "Everlasting Father" because He is eternal, existed before our universe and before time came into being. He is the author of all eternity. The fact that I know that I will spend eternity with Him brings contentment even in difficult seasons of this life.

**Prince of Peace:** And He is the "Prince of Peace" because He is the One who creates and preserves peace between God and man. The Hebrew word that we translate as "peace" is *shalom*. Shalom relates to contentment or wholeness, and is more than the absence of conflict. This Child brings contentment because He is "Immanuel" that is God with us [Is. 7:14, Matt. 1:22-23], and "Jesus" because He will save His people from their sins [Matt. 1:21].

You can experience contentment because you can make peace with God and experience the peace of God, and that is the greatest gift ever!

### **How can you receive God's gift?**

**"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name" [Jn. 1:12].**

All people are God's offspring, but only followers of Jesus have the unique identity as children of God. Your contentment flows from understanding and experiencing your identity as God's child. To believe is not merely mental assent, but *receive* and *believe* are verbs, and the action required is to yield your will to God's authority. When you do that, God has promised to forgive you of your sin that separates you and God; and to give you His Holy Spirit so that you can experience spiritual life with God. Contentment flows from choosing to follow Jesus and continuing to grow in Him.

**What's your next step?** For all of us the key to contentment is to make Jesus the priority.

**Receive:** Today you can receive the gift of Jesus and His salvation. Pray and let God know that you want to receive and follow Jesus.

**Remember:** The more you reflect upon God's gift of Jesus, learn of Him and from Him the more content you will be.

**Return:** Some of you have inevitably drifted, and your level of contentment has diminished. Today, Jesus invites you to return to Him.

We encourage each of you to find a healthy Bible-teaching home church if you haven't already, and become involved with others who are seeking to grow in Christ. For as you grow in Christ, you will grow in contentment.

**Study Guide Qs**

***Q1. What are some of your favorite Christmas traditions?***

***Q2. How have you discovered contentment in Christ that is different than any other source of contentment?***

***Q3. How would you explain to someone what it means to follow Jesus?***

***Q4. How can you express gratitude to God for the gift of Jesus?***

**“Digging Deeper” (optional or alternative study)**

**1. Read Luke 2 about the birth and early days of Jesus’ life. What did you find particularly interesting, puzzling and noteworthy?**

**2. Luke 2:52 summarizes Jesus’ adolescent years by observing that He increased in wisdom (mind realm), and stature (body realm), and favor with God (spiritual realm), and man (relational realm). Consider each realm in your life, and contemplate how you’ve grown and how you would like to grow this coming year.**

**Love your neighbor *outside* the group better:**

1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors where they live, work, study, or play this past week?
2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor outside the group?
3. Here is a neighboring idea(s) for us to consider for the week(s) ahead:

**This week's idea is from Darcie Nardi:**

**Pray and ask God to help you to encourage your neighbors knowing that the Christmas and New Year's holidays can be difficult for many.**

**Love your neighbor *inside* the group better:**

1. Are there some needs in our group that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor within the group?
2. What might we do about that need to help?

**Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:**

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don't force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

**Leader Notes:**

- 1. Seek to involve as many group participants as possible.** A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.
- 2. Feel free to pre-select the discussion questions that you want to focus on** in case there isn't enough time to answer them all.
- 3. The "Digging Deeper" section provides some optional or alternative study and discussion activities.** As a group leader, you can choose to focus on the "Digging Deeper" section, include part of that section in your group meeting, or not use it at all. Try to give the group sufficient notice so they can be prepared for the meeting.
- 4. Every time you meet consider asking:**
  - a. What about this passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing?** If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don't hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.