



# THE WAY Sermon Study Guide

## Week 7: The Way in Celebration

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Christmas is often wrapped in imagery of brightness and cheer—with twinkling lights, familiar carols, joyful gatherings, and cute nativity plays. Yet, the Christmas story does not happen in a calm, safe or glowing world. It happens in a time of darkness. And the recent acts of violence at Bondi, remind us that the darkness is still present today.

So why celebrate? Why sing and laugh and look for joy this Christmas season? Because Jesus came into our dark world—the Light which shines in the darkness “and the darkness has not overcome it.” Wherever Jesus is, there is true light and enduring joy. This is the heart of Christmas.

### Read Isaiah 60:1-3

Isaiah spoke to a people who knew darkness intimately. They were displaced, living in exile, grieving the loss of land, identity, and security. His words did not deny their reality, instead, he named it honestly. Yet embedded in the darkness was a promise: light was coming.

Jesus is the light. Born into a time marked by oppression, violence and uncertainty, His presence brings hope into the darkest places. Our world still feels fragile and shadowed, and many carry grief in one hand and hope in the other. That's okay. We do not have to rush past sorrow to reach joy. We can bring our sorrow to the Light who will not be overcome.

1. Where, specifically, do you feel the “thick darkness” right now, and how can you ask Jesus to meet you there with His light?



2. How does it help to acknowledge the darkness and bring it before a loving and sovereign God, rather than pretending it isn't there? What does it mean for you personally that darkness does not get the final word?

## Read Matthew 2:1-12 and Luke 1:39-45

Not everyone recognized the Light. Herod guarded his power, and religious leaders who could map the prophecies would not move their feet to follow them. But Elizabeth rejoiced, an unborn baby leaped, shepherds hurried, and outsiders from afar followed a sign they scarcely understood.

Seeing the Light still requires humility, attentiveness, and the courage to act when God nudges. Faith often begins with movement, not mastery. So, take the next faithful step, however ordinary, and you will find joy meeting you on the way.

1. Why do you think some people recognised Jesus while others missed him?
2. Can you relate to following God without fully understanding where He is leading? How does this challenge the idea that faith requires certainty?

## Read John 1:1-5 and John 8:12

Happiness can come from many good things: watching a nativity play, opening gifts, sharing meals, or enjoying festive traditions. Yet happiness is often mixed with stress, complexity, strained relationships, and the pressure of consumerism. It rises and falls with circumstances.

Joy goes deeper. It is not erased by difficulty. It is anchored in relationship—knowing you are loved, forgiven and not alone. Followers of Jesus still experience loss, anxiety and uncertainty. The difference is not the absence of darkness, but the presence of light within it. Wherever Jesus is, there is light. And where there is light, there is joy—joy that endures.

1. How would you describe the difference between happiness and joy?
2. Which part of your daily rhythm most crowds out awareness of Jesus' presence, and how could you turn that exact moment into a simple act of turning toward His light?



## Read Matthew 5:14-16, John 14:16-17 and Ephesians 5:8-10

Jesus promised a helper, the Holy Spirit, so His light would live within His people. When someone turns towards Christ, it is like a light switching on. Our call is to carry that light into dark places—being careful not to hide it, drift from it, or forget its source.

Christmas serves as a reminder that this is only part of the story. We are waiting with great anticipation for the day when Jesus will return and end darkness for good. Until then, we will let our lives shine before others, that they may see the Light and give glory to God.

1. In what ways can you carry the light of Jesus into the everyday places and relationships of your life?
2. What can make it difficult to live openly as people of light? And how can this group support one another in following Jesus faithfully?

### Optional Activity

Christmas reminds us that light does not wait for darkness to disappear. It enters it. And wherever Jesus is, light and joy follow.

Light a candle and allow a moment of silence, reflecting on areas of darkness that need God's light.

### Suggested Closing Prayer

Jesus, you are the light of the world. Thank you for stepping into darkness and offering us life, hope and deep joy. Help us to keep following you, even when the way is unclear. Fill us with your light through your Spirit, and send us out to shine in the places you have called us. May we live as people of joy, love, and faithfulness. Amen.