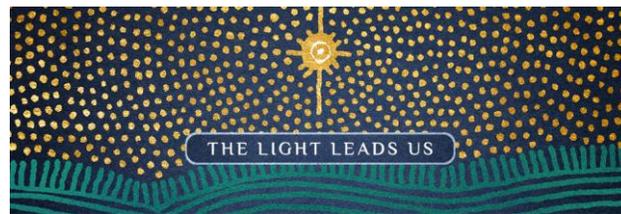


# Weekly Message Study Guide

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Date \_\_\_\_\_ Speaker \_\_\_\_\_

## FROM LONELINESS TO LOVE | **The Light Leads Us** | Week 2 | Dec 6

Luke 1:26-31; Matthew 2:9-11; Hebrews 13:5; Matthew 28:20;

**CONTEXT** | This year we enter into “Advent”, the annual season of waiting for the arrival of Jesus through this series called *The Light Will Lead Us*. *The Light Will Lead Us* is meant to remind us of...

- Those radiant angels who appeared to Mary and then to Joseph and then to the shepherds, to lead them into becoming bearers of the light of the world (Mat 5:14).
- That famous Christmas star that led the wise men across a vast distance to give their very best to Jesus, as you and I are still moved to do.
- The call of hope you can have in the face of any form of darkness you may be facing these days.
- Today we I reflect with on one particular place where the light of Christmas is especially needed to lead us afresh that in the practice of PRESENCE.
  - When you hear the “practice of presence.” What stirs in you, what comes to mind? How would you define that here at the start?
  - Of the other reminders of what the light will lead us will remind us of which one most resonates with you? Why?
  - Presence is given and received. Is that what you’re waiting for? The presence of Christ in a new way or giving our presence to others in a better way? Ponder that for a moment before you begin. Ask yourself “What am I waiting for?”

**Read Luke 1:26-31** | Consider the verses from Mary’s point of view. We don’t know a lot about the betrothal or the relationship. We don’t have any emotional clues here. But as Mary in this passage:

- What “presence” does Mary receive?
- Was she waiting on that presence? Was it expected?
- What message(s) / gift(s) does she receive from the “presence”?

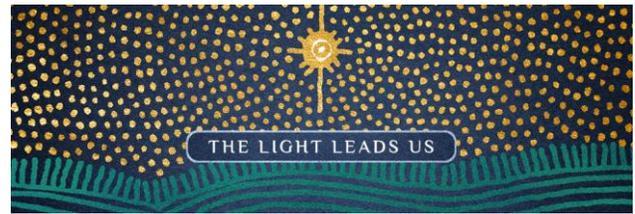
**Finding Light In the Darkness** | Might this century be described by historians as the scourge of loneliness. In the midst of record high levels of communication we feel more alone than ever. The feeling of being connected—of truly being welcomed, known and loved by others is eluding us.

- What does it feel like to have someone “present” to you? How would you characterize and describe it?
- As a group write a list of behaviors and the resulting feelings that you experience when someone is present to you.

**Read Matthew 2:9-11** | This story of this prominent group journeying a great distance is a remarkable story of waiting—of advent. Why else would anyone be prepared to pick-up and go after a star if they were not waiting

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and expecting something to happen. The Wise Men brought gifts but more importantly they showed up—they worshipped—they brought and gave their presence.

- Do you look forward to and value the presence of others as a gift to you? How can you honor and enjoy that more?
- As you consider this season, do you think about your presence as a gift? How can you be more intentional with that?
- If we really took seriously waiting on God’s presence in this season, how would it change what we do?

**The Gift of Presence** | Consider these ways to offer the gift of “presence.”

- Who do you know who is alone that might need the gift of your presence?
- Who might you greet with a “Greetings, you who are highly favored,” type of hello?
- How might you add to that carefully thought out and wrapped gift a gift of presence—the message of you are welcomed, known and loved.
- As you engage your presence with others, notice them and respond to them; just like you notice the way they open your other gifts. Give them a special presence aimed directly at them. Pray now for the awareness and courage to do that well.

**The Ultimate Presence** | Hallmark reminds us “When you care enough to send the very best.” Isn’t that what God has done for us through Jesus? God sent to us the ultimate gift. “The ultimate glory and truth of Christmas is that God came himself to be present with us.”

- God encourages us to hope and depend on his presence. Read Hebrews 13:5. How do you respond to that?
- In Matthew 28:20 he declares His faithfulness. How can you be more faithful to bring your loving presence to others in these days of Advent?

**PRACTICE OF THE WEEK** | Challenge yourself this week to bring an unexpected smile or greeting to a stranger once per day. Say thank to a check-out clerk, the barista, the person who gave you your curb-side pick up —calling them by name - be present to them by truly acknowledging their presence. Secondly, challenge yourself to find one opportunity each day in the world of those you are close to; make a warm and complimentary greeting or encouragement. Thank them by name especially warmly. Be PRESENT!