

CELEBRATING THE  
GOOD NEWS OF CHRISTMAS

Joy  
to the  
World

LEADER GUIDE

LIFEWAY WOMEN  
*With Music by* ELLIE HOLCOMB

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# LEADER GUIDE

**Welcome!** Before you read any further, we want to say how thankful we are for you, the leader. Thank you for your willingness to dive into Scripture, brew the coffee, place the chairs, and set aside the time regularly to meet with other women.

*Joy to the World* is an Advent Bible study from Lifeway Women and a team of writers. The study includes short devotional videos to add to your group's worship experience. Our goal is for this leader guide to help you feel equipped to facilitate and guide your Bible study group gatherings in a way that fosters deep conversation and prayer for you and the women you're leading.

We want to encourage you to use this study however it works best for you and your group. If you want to follow this leader guide to the letter, do that! If you want to do your own thing, feel free! We want you to have all the tools you might need, but we are certain God has ordained your time with your specific group in your specific setting.

We are grateful for you and praying for you as you lead this study.

*Lifeway Women*



# Weekly Group Meeting

## SUGGESTED SCHEDULE

**4–5 GROUP MEETINGS • MEETING LENGTH: 1.5 HOURS**

**WEEK ONE**—Introduction: Distribute Bible study books, get to know one another, and watch the Week One video.

**WEEK TWO**—Watch the Week Two video and discuss the Week Two personal Bible study.

**WEEK THREE**—Watch the Week Three video and discuss the Week Three personal Bible study.

**WEEK FOUR**—Watch the Week Four video and discuss the Week Four personal Bible study.

**OPTIONAL CLOSING WEEK**—Throw a Christmas party and reflect on what you've learned throughout this study. (No video for this week.)





## HOW TO STRUCTURE YOUR GROUP TIME

Each group session contains the following elements. We've included a suggested amount of time based on a 1.5-hour group meeting. Adjust as you need to for the time you have together!

**GATHER (10 MINUTES)** This is a time to greet and welcome everyone and to get them talking. In the first session, you're provided with some general icebreaker questions. In the subsequent sessions, you'll notice a list of questions to help participants review the previous week's personal study. Feel free to adapt, skip, or add questions based on the needs of your group.

**WATCH (15 MINUTES)** Designed to foster a time of Advent-themed worship for individuals and groups, each video features a classic Christmas hymn performed by Ellie Holcomb and a brief devotional talk on the week's theme from one of the writers. Printable versions of the song lyrics are available for free download at [lifeway.com/joytotheworld](http://lifeway.com/joytotheworld) if your group wants to follow along.

Videos can be streamed using the access code in the back of your Bible study book. If your group members are watching the videos on their own, rather than together during your gathering, you'll want to select additional questions from the days of personal study and lengthen your prayer time.

**DISCUSS (30 MINUTES)** You'll find a suggestion of questions for each week in this Leader Guide. Pick and choose the ones you want to discuss with your group. These questions are designed to help you facilitate conversation around the week's Bible study and personal reflection. As you go through your own study during the week, put a star by any questions or statements you might want to discuss with your group.

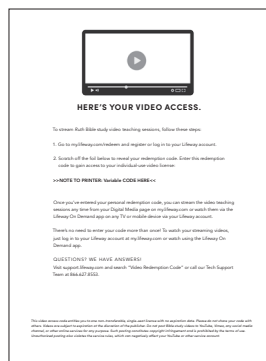
**PRAY (10 MINUTES)** Prayer ideas and prompts that relate to the theme of the session have been provided, and you can use this however you wish to enhance or close the session. Depending on your group, you may want to spend more time in prayer and less in the activity time or change it up from week to week.

**MAKE (25 MINUTES)** If your group is up for a little adventure, save time at the end of each meeting to participate in one of the included activities. This can be a great time to laugh together, strengthen your group bond, and process what you're learning.

## HERE ARE A FEW TIPS TO HELP YOU LEAD.

**HOW TO WATCH YOUR VIDEOS.** The videos for this study are available for streaming through the digital access code on the last page of your Bible study book. Look for the cardstock page labeled “**Here’s Your Video Access**” and follow the two steps that prompt you to enter your unique redemption code to gain your video streaming access.

Each video is intended to be viewed at the start of a week of personal study. We strongly recommend you use the videos as a part of this study, but you can still discover truth from Scripture and grow in your walk with God by simply doing the print portion if your setting doesn’t allow for video.



**GET THE WORD OUT.** Be sure to advertise the study early and utilize all methods for spreading the message. Post it on your church’s website, send emails to potential attendees, and promote it on all forms of social media. It’s best to start advertising the study four to six weeks before it begins. The study is four weeks long, which means you will meet four or five times. Visit [lifeway.com/joytotheworld](http://lifeway.com/joytotheworld) for free promotional materials to help get the word out about your study.

**SCHEDULE.** Be sure to make everyone aware of the schedule ahead of time and start promptly each week to honor everyone’s time. In your group time, you will watch the teaching video together and discuss what you’re learning. You’ll also be encouraged to spend a good bit of time in prayer.

**STAY IN TOUCH.** Prepare a sign-up sheet with space for names, email addresses, and phone numbers. You may also include information like birthdays, social media handles, and favorite candy so that you can foster community among group members.

**GET COZY.** Make an effort to create a comfortable environment for group meetings. Arrange chairs in a circle to encourage conversation. If your group is large, you may want to watch the teaching video together and then split into smaller groups for the discussion time. If you choose to do so, enlist discussion leaders for each group to keep the conversation moving and focused.

**CHILDCARE.** Be sure to check with participants to see if childcare is needed and organize leaders and space for the children in advance.

**BIBLE STUDY BOOKS.** Each participant will need a Bible study book. Make sure you leave plenty of time for all the books to be ordered and received between announcing and starting your Bible study. Consider offering a scholarship or buy-one-give-one option for those who cannot afford a study book on their own.

**EARLY PREP.** We encourage you to read through the entire leader guide before the first session and evaluate how this will work best for your group. Highlight specific questions from the leader guide you want to make sure you cover during your group time. We recommend watching the teaching video sessions prior to your meeting, taking note of anything you may want to highlight from the teaching. And be sure you stay on top of your own personal study between each meeting! We've left room in the leader guide for you to write down additional talking points and questions you want to pull in from the personal study.

**PERSONAL STUDY.** Between each meeting, there are five days of personal study to complete in the Bible study book, along with weekly activities to add to the Christmas cheer and a family devotional guide to help women include their families in what they're studying.

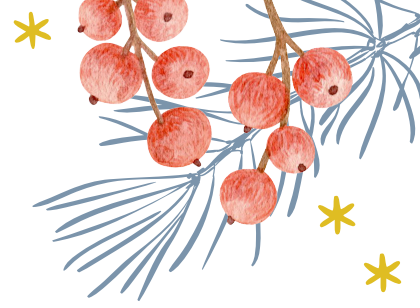
**PRAYER.** Most importantly, be sure to pray for the women who attend the study. And pray for yourself as you prepare to lead. Ask God to draw the women closer to Him as they celebrate the good news and great joy of Jesus's birth.

**EVALUATE.** At the end of each group session, ask yourself: *What went well? What could be improved? Did you see women's lives transformed? Did your group grow closer to Christ and to one another?* Also, do a final evaluation at the close of the study.

**CONNECT.** Find ways to interact and stay engaged with each member of your group throughout the study. Make use of social media, email, text messages, and handwritten notes to encourage them. Continue these connections even after the study ends.

Next, we've provided a discussion guide for each session. Remember these are simply suggestions for how to use your time together. We want to empower you as you lead to do what is best for your group!

## DISCUSSION GUIDE



# Week One

## THE LORD IS COME

### GATHER

Welcome women to the first week of *Joy to the World*. Provide name tags and distribute Bible study books if participants don't have them yet. Encourage discussion with these questions and talking points:

Invite each woman to introduce herself and share basic get-to-know-you information.

Icebreaker Question: Growing up, what was your favorite holiday and why?

Why do you want to be a part of this study and this group? What do you hope to gain from this focused time in God's Word during the Christmas season?

The title of this study is *Joy to the World*. Share things you find joyful about this time of year and about the Christmas story.

**WATCH** Play the teaching video for Week One. Encourage participants to take notes or jot down questions on the Week One "Watch" page (p. 14).

**DISCUSS** the video teaching using the following questions and prompts as a guide. Remind your group they can take notes on page 15.

What stood out to you from the video?

In the video, Janice said, "Joy should be the overwhelming feeling of the Christmas season as we set aside time to reflect on the birth of Jesus, our Lord and King. But that's not always the case, is it?" What are some reasons people struggle to feel or express joy during this time of year?



Invite a group member to read John 1:1–14. Then discuss why it is such good news that Jesus, the Word of God, “became flesh and dwelt among us” (v. 14).

How would you describe this good news to someone who is not familiar with Christianity? How would you describe it to a child?

At the close of the video, Janice raised the question, “What will you set aside so that [Jesus] has the space He needs to bring light—to bring Himself—into every corner of your life?” Discuss some things you all need to set aside to make more room for Jesus.

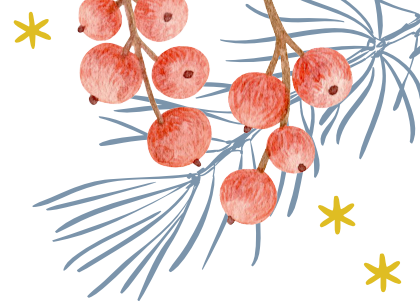
**PRAY** Take prayer requests from the group, and encourage group members to note the requests of others on the “Discuss” page of their Bible study book (p. 15).

**MAKE** Advent house Scripture cards! Prior to your group meeting, gather the supplies and take care of any necessary prep work. You might also ask different group members to bring certain supplies. A supply list and directions can be found on pages 40–42 of your Bible study book.

**REMINDE** your group to read and complete the “Week One: The Lord Is Come” personal Bible study (pp. 12–37) before your next group meeting.

Share about the weekly structure and the five days of personal study to complete in each week. Encourage women to do what they can. If they are unable to finish all five days of the personal study, they can still learn and contribute to the group time each week. Brainstorm specific times when they might try to complete their personal study each day.

Set the commitment and time expectations you have for your group, and take the opportunity now to cover any important housekeeping notes.



# Week Two

## THE SAVIOR REIGNS

**GATHER** Welcome participants back to the study. Use the following questions to connect with one another and review the personal study from Week One.

**Icebreaker Question:** What is your favorite gift you've ever given to someone and why?

Ask participants to share which day of study they found most interesting and which one had the most impact on them.

Have two volunteers read through Luke 1:46-55 and 1 Samuel 2:1-10. Then discuss responses to the following questions from page 28 of the Bible study book: *Summarize what these two songs teach you about the Lord. What do they teach you about a right posture before Him?*

**LEADER:** Pick a couple of questions from the personal Bible study days you want to discuss with your group, and discuss those now.

**WATCH** Play the teaching video for Week Two. Encourage participants to take notes or jot down questions on the Week Two "Watch" page (p. 46).

**DISCUSS** the video teaching using the following questions and prompts as a guide. Remind your group they can take notes on page 47.

What stood out to you from the video?

Alecia began with the story of naming her daughter. Share about the significance of names in your family—either your own name, what it was like naming your children, or stories you know from your parents or grandparents.

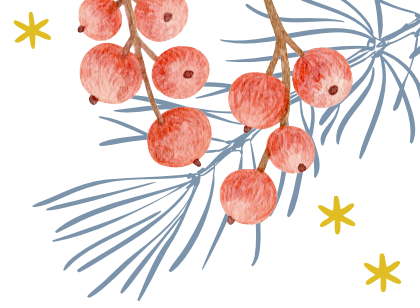
Read Matthew 1:20–23. In these verses we learn two names for the Christ child. Discuss what both of these names—Jesus and Immanuel—reveal about God’s purpose for sending His Son. (We’ll look into this further during the personal study this week!)

Close your time of discussion by encouraging a few group members to share their responses to this question from page 24 of the Bible study book: *Have you ever been waiting on God to change a situation that only He could change? Maybe even now?*

**PRAY** Take prayer requests from the group, and encourage group members to note the requests of others on the “Discuss” page of their Bible study book (p. 47).

**MAKE** a batch of quick dinner rolls! Assign someone from the group the job of prepping the dough in advance (through step #12). Bake them at the start of your group meeting, and then enjoy these delicious rolls while you talk. The recipe is found on pages 73–74.

**REMIND** your group to read and complete the “Week Two: The Savior Reigns” personal Bible study (pp. 44–69) before your next group meeting.



## Week Three

### NO MORE LET SINS AND SORROWS GROW

**GATHER** Welcome participants back to the study. Use the following questions to connect with one another and review the personal study from Week Two.

Share a favorite Christmas tradition you had growing up, or one of your favorites you have now.

Ask participants to share which day of study they found most interesting and which one had the most impact on them.

Read Luke 2:15-20 aloud, then share responses to the following question from page 56 of the Bible study book: *What is one way you can model the shepherds' response to Jesus in your own life?*

**LEADER:** Pick a couple of questions from the personal Bible study days you want to discuss with your group, and discuss those now.

During this week's personal Bible study, you were challenged to write a prayer or song of thanksgiving for the hope and joy that is found in Jesus (p. 60). Ask a group member or two to share their songs. (**LEADER:** Be prepared to share your own if no one else is ready to do so!)

**WATCH** Play the teaching video for Week Three. Encourage participants to take notes or jot down questions on the Week Three “Watch” page (p. 78).

**DISCUSS** the video teaching using the following questions and prompts as a guide. Remind your group they can take notes on page 79.

What stood out to you from the video?

In this video, Ashley described the tension present in the Christmas story, which is the same tension we feel every day—the joy of Jesus and the sorrow of our broken world that needed a Savior. What encouraged you from Ashley’s teaching and from the verses she read as you wrestle with this tension?

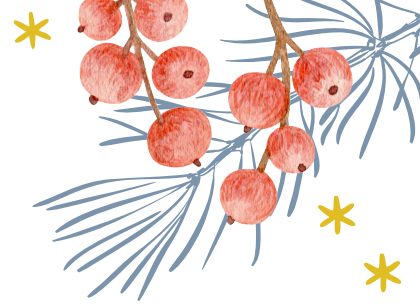
What does the reality of sin and sorrow remind you about ourselves?  
What does it teach you about God?

Invite a group member to read Revelation 22:1-5 aloud. How do you feel as you listen to this hopeful promise? What can you do to keep the hope of this future at the forefront of your mind this week?

**PRAY** Take prayer requests from the group, and encourage group members to note the requests of others on the “Discuss” page of their Bible study book (p. 79).

**MAKE** In advance of your group meeting, print out the word searches available for free download on [lifeway.com/joytotheworld](http://lifeway.com/joytotheworld). Spend time listening to Christmas music, eating a special treat, and working on your word searches together. If you don’t have access to a printer, just complete the word search in the book (p. 104)!

**REMIND** your group to read and complete the “Week Three: No More Let Sins and Sorrows Grow” personal Bible study (pp. 76-99) before your next group meeting.



# Week Four

## WONDERS OF HIS LOVE

**GATHER** Welcome participants back to the study. Use the following questions to connect with one another and review the personal study from Week Three.

What is your favorite Christmas hymn or carol and why? On the flip side, what is your *least* favorite Christmas song?

Ask participants to share which day of study they found most interesting and which one had the most impact on them.

Read John 16:16–24 aloud to your group. Then discuss responses to the following prompts from Day Four (p. 95): *List all the emotions Jesus mentioned in these verses. In your own words, summarize the hope Jesus gives His disciples with these words.*

**LEADER:** Pick a couple of questions from the personal Bible study days you want to discuss with your group, and discuss those now.

**WATCH** Play the teaching video for Week Four. Encourage participants to take notes or jot down questions on the Week Four “Watch” page (p. 108).

**DISCUSS** the video teaching and personal Bible study, using the following questions and prompts as a guide. Remind your group they can take notes on page 109.

What stood out to you from the video?

Heidi Lee shared the story of her cancer diagnosis and the agony of waiting for answers and healing during that season. What are some ways you've seen the enemy try to steal your hope, kill your joy, or destroy your faith during challenging seasons? Are you in one of those seasons now?

Invite a group member to read Matthew 2:1-12, the theme passage for this week. What do you learn about your own walk with Jesus from the example of the wise men?

Heidi closed the video by reminding us of this truth: "In this season of waiting between Jesus's first and second Advents . . . the Light of the world has tasked us with reflecting His light to others—not to hide our light or keep it to ourselves." Who needs to see your joy for Jesus this week? How can you use these days leading up to Christmas as an opportunity to do just that?

**PRAY** Take prayer requests from the group, and encourage group members to note the requests of others on the "Discuss" page of their Bible study book (p. 109).

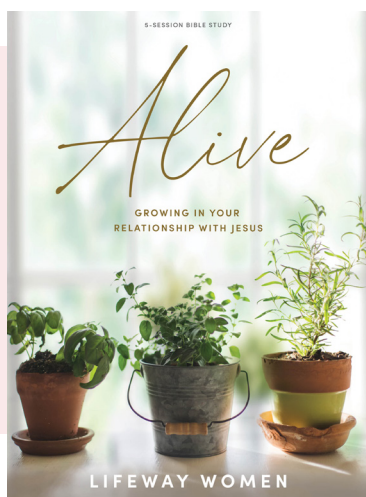
**MAKE** painted ornaments! Supplies and instructions are included on pages 133–134. Not only are these ornaments so fun to make together, but they also make great gifts.

**REMIND** your group to read and complete the "Week Four: Wonders of His Love" personal Bible study (pp. 106–129) on their own this week.

If this is your last group meeting, add in a few minutes to reflect on what God is teaching you this Advent season and what the love and support of this group means to you.

## FINISHING WELL

**NEXT STEPS** Even after the study concludes, follow up and challenge women to stay involved through another Bible study, church opportunity, or anything that will continue their spiritual growth and friendships. Provide several options of ministry opportunities the members can participate in individually or as a group to apply what they have learned through this study.



### What's Next?

If you enjoyed this study, check out *Alive* by Lifeway Women.

[lifeway.com/alive](https://www.lifeway.com/alive)



## INTRODUCING BIBLE STUDIES with VIDEO ACCESS INCLUDED!

As trends in media consumption change from DVDs to streaming video, Lifeway made the decision to invest in technology that would allow for Bible studies to be accessed through mobile devices and smart TVs in addition to our website.

The concept of a Bible study book with video access allows us to use the technology to give all participants easier access to teaching videos. This will alleviate a concern we have heard from many group leaders of members who stop coming to their group after they miss a week of study.

### How will customers access the videos that come with their Bible study book with video access?

There is a unique access code printed in each Bible study book. They will access their video content at [my.lifeway.com](http://my.lifeway.com) or through the Lifeway On Demand app.

### How long will they have access to the videos that come with their Bible study book?

There is no expiration date on the video access that comes with their Bible study book. They'll be able to access it as long as it is available through our Lifeway On Demand video apps.

### What are the benefits of video access being included in each Bible study book?

- This provides more flexibility for group meeting time. Groups now have the option to have group members watch video sessions outside of group meetings to allow more time for discussion.
- If a group member misses a weekly group meeting due to sickness or travel, they will be able to access the video content on their own and continue in their study.
- Group members can re-watch video sessions that were particularly impactful on their own time.
- This simplifies what a group leader needs to facilitate Bible study. You'll now get everything you need with just the Bible study book.
- Our goal is to provide an affordable option for both individuals and churches who are looking for Bible study options.

### **What do churches and individuals need to lead a group?**

Each group member will need a Bible study book, which will include video access. There is also a DVD option for groups who want a non-streaming viewing option. In addition, select studies provide a Video Streaming – Group option for groups who choose not to use the Bible study books. For the best experience, we recommend each group member have a Bible study book.

### **When do group leaders need a DVD Set?**

Because the Bible study book includes video streaming access, the purchase of the DVD set is optional (not essential) for group leaders. This option is for groups who may not have reliable streaming internet access.