

**Faith Bible Study Guide**  
**For the Week of January 25, 2026**  
**Third Sunday after Epiphany Sunday**  
**“When The Light Finds You”**



**Be still [2 Minutes]:** As you hear these Centering Words, let us greet each other, greet the Holy Spirit, and begin with 1 minute of silence, breathing in the breath of God and allow the group to open themselves to the Holy Spirit today:

**CENTERING WORDS/ WORDS TO PONDER:**

*Today and every day, Jesus says, “Come, Follow me.” Today and everyday, let us answer, “You, Lord Jesus, are the one we seek.”*

**OPENING PRAYER:** Inviting God, help us to hear Jesus calling us and help us to follow him. In Christ, your kingdom draws near to us, whether we are seeking it or not. When we are caught up in our anguish, you shine a great light in our darkness. When we face days full of trouble, you shelter us. When we are at odds with others, quarreling and breaking apart into factions, you save us with the unity won by Christ through the cross and his resurrection. Whether we face danger or are at ease in our routines – the kingdom of heaven draws near and Jesus says: *“Now is the time to follow me.”* You hear us, God, when we cry out to you. May we hear you this day when you cry out to us. Amen.

**Be present: [Being mindful of others and sharing time]**

1. Take a deep breath. How is it with your soul?

2. If your week had a weather forecast, what would it be—and why?
3. Where have you noticed light recently—however small, delayed, or fleeting?
4. Are you in a season of casting nets, mending nets, or leaving nets behind?

### **Be the Word: Scripture Lesson: Matthew 4:12-23, Isaiah 9:1-4**

#### **Matthew 4:12-23**

**12** Now when Jesus heard that John was arrested, he went to Galilee. **13** He left Nazareth and settled in Capernaum, which lies alongside the sea in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali. **14** This fulfilled what Isaiah the prophet said:

**15** *Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali,*

*alongside the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles,*

**16** *the people who lived in the dark have seen a great light,*

*and a light has come upon those who lived in the region and in shadow of*

*death.*<sup>[a]</sup> **17** From that time Jesus began to announce, “Change your hearts and lives! Here comes the kingdom of heaven!”

**18** As Jesus walked alongside the Galilee Sea, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew, throwing fishing nets into the sea, because they were fishermen. **19** “Come, follow me,” he said, “and I’ll show you how to fish for people.” **20** Right away, they left their nets and followed him. **21** Continuing on, he saw another set of brothers, James the son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with Zebedee their father repairing their nets. Jesus called them and **22** immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him. **23** Jesus traveled throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues. He announced the good news of the kingdom and healed every disease and sickness among the people. Nonetheless, those who were in distress won’t be exhausted. At an earlier time, God cursed the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but later he glorified the way of the sea, the far side of the Jordan, and the Galilee of the nations.<sup>[b]</sup>

**2** <sup>[c]</sup> The people walking in darkness have seen a great light.

On those living in a pitch-dark land, light has dawned.

**3** You have made the nation great;

you have increased its joy.

They rejoiced before you as with joy at the harvest,

as those who divide plunder rejoice.

**4** As on the day of Midian, you’ve shattered the yoke that burdened

them, the staff on their shoulders,

and the rod of their oppressor.

#### **Isaiah 9:1-4**

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them, the staff on their shoulders,  
and the rod of their oppressor.

L: The word of God for all People.

**P: Thanks be to God.**

### **Be rooted: [Bible Study]**

#### *Grounding ourselves in Scripture*

### **Isaiah 9:1–4 — Light in the Midst of Darkness**

Isaiah speaks to a people who know trauma intimately. Zebulun and Naphtali were northern territories that had experienced invasion, displacement, and cultural erasure under Assyrian rule. These lands were not only militarily defeated; they were socially stigmatized—viewed as compromised, mixed, and spiritually suspect.

Isaiah does not deny this history. Instead, he names it and then reframes it. The prophet proclaims that **the very places once shamed will be the first places glorified**. God's movement begins not at the center of religious or political power, but at the margins where loss has already reshaped life.

The grammar matters: *"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light."* The people are still walking. Darkness is not resolved before God acts. Divine intervention does not require closure or healing first.

When Isaiah speaks of breaking the yoke, the bar across shoulders, and the rod of the oppressor, he evokes systems of domination—economic, political, and psychological. This is not only personal comfort; it is communal liberation. Biblical light confronts structures that keep people bent low.

**Key insight:** God's light does not erase history—it redeems it. What was wounded becomes the site of God's glory.

*Brueggemann, Walter. The Prophetic Imagination. Fortress Press. (For understanding prophetic hope, trauma, and God's disruptive light.)*

*Brueggemann, Walter. Isaiah 1–39. Westminster John Knox Press. (Historical and theological context for Isaiah 9.)*

### **Matthew 4:12–23 — Jesus Begins in the Shadows**

Matthew is intentional about timing and geography. Jesus begins his public ministry *after* John the Baptist is arrested—an act of state violence meant to silence a prophetic voice. The gospel does not gloss over this trauma. It places Jesus' call squarely in its

aftermath.

Rather than seeking safety or legitimacy in Jerusalem, Jesus goes to Galilee—occupied territory, heavily taxed, and closely monitored by imperial power. Galilee was a place where people lived with daily reminders of who controlled their land, labor, and bodies. Matthew names this as the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy: light does not avoid contested ground.

Jesus’ first proclamation—“*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near*”—is often misheard as moral correction. In its original sense, repent (*metanoia*) means a change of mind, a reorientation of one’s whole life toward a new reality. The kingdom does not arrive after repentance; repentance is the response to God already drawing near.

When Jesus calls the fishermen, he interrupts ordinary labor shaped by imperial economics. Fishing in Galilee was tightly controlled; nets, boats, and catches were often taxed. Leaving nets behind is not romantic—it is risky. James and John are described as mending nets, an image of repair, continuity, and inherited livelihood. Jesus calls them mid-repair, not after completion.

**Key insight:** Jesus does not call the prepared; he calls the present. Discipleship begins in disruption, not certainty.

Carter, Warren. *Matthew and the Margins: A Sociopolitical and Religious Reading*. Orbis Books. (Galilee, empire, and Matthew’s political theology.)

Keener, Craig S. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*. InterVarsity Press. (Historical background on Galilee, fishing economies, and Roman occupation.)

Wright, N. T. *Matthew for Everyone, Part 1*. SPCK. (Accessible commentary on Matthew 1–15.)

González, Justo L. *Santa Biblia: The Bible Through Hispanic Eyes*. Abingdon Press. (Reading Scripture from the margins.)

The New Oxford Annotated Bible, NRSV. Oxford University Press. (Primary biblical text and scholarly notes.)

## Discussion:

1. What stands out to you in Isaiah’s description of light and darkness?
2. Why do you think Matthew emphasizes where and when Jesus begins his ministry?
3. How does understanding “repent” as *turning* (not shaming) change how you hear Jesus’ call?
4. Where do you see God choosing presence over power in these texts?
5. Why do you think Matthew makes it clear that Jesus begins his ministry after John’s arrest?
6. What does it mean for Jesus to choose Galilee instead of Jerusalem as his starting place?
7. James and John are called while mending nets. Where in your life are things still being repaired?

## *Living the Scripture in real time*

These Scriptures remind us that faith is not polished—it is lived. God’s light meets us in grief, injustice, transition, and unfinished stories.

## Reflection & Application:

1. Where in your life do you feel like you are still “walking in darkness,” not yet finished or resolved?
2. What might it look like to turn—even slightly—toward the light in that place?
3. Are there “nets” you are being invited to loosen your grip on (fear, apathy, comfort, silence)?
4. Who around you is living in a Galilee place—overlooked, vulnerable, or hurting—and how might you show up with love?

Listen to “Lift Up Your Head” by Esabalu:

<https://youtu.be/Diplx-VPmE?si=BQ2APfRDuGPfFt-Q>

## Be transformed: [Faith in Action Challenge]:

### Love in Action (Choose One)

- Practice **presence** this week: sit with someone’s grief or story without trying to fix it.
- Practice **attention**: notice where injustice or vulnerability is visible in your community.
- Practice **turning**: take one faithful next step—however small—toward compassion, courage, or service.

## Prayers & Concerns / Announcements:



*We lift up prayers for all of God's  
Creation. Lord Hear our Prayers.*

#### continued prayers for Healing and Wholeness

Rev. Alan Mark	Emi Hino	Kian Tehrani	Priscilla Kandel
Alice Kaijya	Ernie Santiago	Kiki Hashimoto	Raquel M. Martinez
Alvena Tokuwara	Faith Tanaka	Kim Foster	Rev. Mike Hiranuma
Amy Higo	Florence Nakakura	Kraig Nakano	Ron Hamaguchi
Anthony Anderson, Sr.	Frank Sato	Rev. Kim Montenegro	Rick Katsuki
Apolosi Lokotui	Fred Oshiro	Kelsey DeGracia	Ruth Hirata
Audrey Gato	Geri Shiraki	Kenny Medeiros	Ruth Taira
Austin Moeda	Glenn and Millie	Kyle Ichikawa	Sandra Minjarez-
Barbara Tamura	Shimizu	Larry Takumi	Grange
Betty Kabata	Grace Tachihara	Layne Nakasone	Sandy Uyeuten
Bill Morris	Grant Hanada	Linda Jung	Scarlett Bone
Brian Okumura	Harriel Tateyama	Liz Harner	Stan Miyasato
Cami Bruns	Haru Yasunaga	Lucas Yniguez	Steph Matsunaga
Chic Miyake	Hisako Shohara	Marion Antoku	Sue Hamada
Christine Keim	Ingrid Peterson	Mae Nakakihara	Sue Hasegawa
Claretta Foster	Irene Munesato	Mary Jung	Susan DeGracia
Dan Segawa	Jack Honda	Mary & Bob Kelly	Susan Mizuki
Danny Tokudami	Jayne Watanabe	(siblings)	Susan Slade
Dan Yamashita	Jehiel Vinluan	Mary Marchand	Takai Finau
Deron Takishi	Jerry Osaka	Mary Tamura	Theresa Apicella
Diane & Destiny	Joanne Sato	Mary Tamura [Tutsui]	Tom Fukuhara
Ueda-Banda	Jordan Sasaki	Maxine Bulcher	Tommy Sakaguchi
Dr. DoAnn Tsunao	Joye Barker	Mutsuko Nishi	Tselyi Mantooth
Kaneko	Juliet Koyanagi	Nancy Matsushima	Victoria DelaTorre
Dr. Nguyen	Kaitlyn Sabedra	Noah Miyagawa-Sue	Walker Wilkerson
Elaine Yoshida	Karllyn Fernandez	Oscar Phillip Bland Jr.	Wayne Shimizu
Eleanor Ngai	Kay Saxton	Pam Fink	Whitney Nakayama
	Kenny Medeiros	Patty Kobayashi	Winnie Osaki

**for All Our Saints**  
The Sato family on the passing of Terry Sato (neighbors of Pearl and Mel Iizuka, friends of Iseris and Sasaki families (1/1/26).

The Kwan-Magsayo family, on the passing of Kelly's grandma, Grace Magsayo.

The Kinoshita family on the passing of Thomas Kinoshita. Celebration of Life: January 31, 2026, 11am.

Keith Tokuwara and family on the passing of Keith's aunt, Helen Nozaki (1/6/26). Celebration of Life: March 7, 2026, 2pm.

Rev. John Miyahara and the Ishihara family, on the passing of John's cousin, Tim Ishihara (12/13/25).

**for All Our Saints**  
Baby Adeline "Andie" Jane Yamamoto born to parents, Jasmine and Matthew Yamamoto, on January 2, 2026. Proud Great-Grandma is Jane Kiyohara, whom Andie is also named after!

#### those in Community Living & Homecare

Chic Miyake  
Doris Kato  
Emma Horuchi  
Faith Tanaka  
Rev. Harry Fujimoto  
Irene & Tak Ryono  
Jane Kiyohara  
Marion Antoku  
Mary Jung  
Noblie Shickari  
Ruth Hirata  
Sets Asano  
Sue Hasegawa

#### for our Worldwide Community

for the leadership  
of our Country and  
our Churches

for the immigrants:  
migrants, refugees,  
asylees

for our siblings in  
Christ who struggle  
and in need of  
God's care

for those who live in  
through wars,  
unrest, and violence

for those suffering  
and rebuilding after  
national disasters  
and man-made  
catastrophes

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### **Celebrations:**

- Baby Adeline “Andie” Jane Yamamoto, proud parents, Jasmine and Matthew Yamamoto; great-granddaughter of Jane Kiyohara (1/2/26)
- Ryden Richard Wilkerson, proud grandparents, Teresa Sato and Rick Wilkerson (1/14/26)
- New Members! We welcome Risa Vargas and Stephanie Matsunaga!
- Retirement for Rev. Keith & Viki Inouye

### **Birthdays:**

Scarlett Bone (1/21–Sweet 16)

### **For healing and recovery**

- This week asking for prayers for:  
FEEL BETTER SOON!
  - Sandy Uyeunten
  - Donna Iki
  - Kenny Medeiros
  - Pam Fink
  - Diane Ueda-Banda
  - Victoria DelaTorre
  - Dan Yamashita
  - Takai Finau
  - Kraig Nakano \*\*
  - Alvena Fukuhara & Tom
  - Mae Nakakihara
  - Mary Tamuras (Kevin Tsutsui’s g’ma on hospice)
  - Jennie Shitakubo
  - Douglas and Corinne Higa (Lynne Vinluan’s parents)
  - Apolosi Lokotui
  - Jehiel Vinluan
  - Dan Yamashita
  - Activists/Demonstrators in MN: Renee Good and most recently Alex Jeffrey Pretti (in senseless killings) and the 100 clergy who stood together and were detained
- Always: Rev. Alan, Harriet, Victoria, Larry, Audrey, the Shimizus, Winnie, Tseyli, Walker, Nancy, Mary, Ruth, Faith, Irene, Tak, Winnie, Nobie...many who are homebound and those unable to be with us... and so many other that we all that we miss their presence next to us in the sanctuary and our groups.
  - Frank Sato
  - Mary & Bob Kiely (siblings of Ann Kiely)
  - Audrey Goto recovery
  - Alice Kajiya
  - Larry Takumi
  - Harriet Tateyama
  - Tseyli Mantooth
  - Kim Foster & Claretta Foster
  - Walker Wilkerson
  - Kiki Hashimoto (Sue Kunisaki -friend)
  - Rev’s friends: Stan Miyasato, Darin Arntson, (Norma, Ashley)
  - Susan Slade’s friend, Sherrie
  - Raquel Martinez (Julie’s goddaughter)
  - Mrs. Davis (friend of Kim Foster); lifting

up her caregiving daughter and

granddaughter

### **Traveling Mercies**

- Nargis Basu - Traveling to India for 3 months

### **World Concerns:**

- All who struggle, suffer, experience pain and grief...
- US government; restoration of benefits, medical, food stamps, social security...
- War-torn countries, Natural disasters...
- Immigrants, Refugees, Asylees losing rights and protections...
- Health Care system
- The homeless and impoverished
- The people of Venezuela and Nigeria
- Leadership (including clergy)

### **Absent from the Body, Present with the Lord**

- Kelly Kwan & Peg Tadakuma on the passing of Kelly's grandma, Grace Megsayo
- Family of Terry Sato (passed 1/1/26) (Neighbor Iizuka's, Friends of Jason and Iseri's)
- Helen Nozaki (aunt of Keith Tokuhara) - Celebration of Life, March 7, 2026, 2pm
- Thomas Kinoshita (community) - Celebration of Life, January 31, 2026, 11am
- Rev. John Miyahara and the Ishihara family on the passing of Dorothy's son (100yo), Tim Ishihara (12/13/25)
- Fred Matsuyama
- Kraig Nakano

### **And Know that He is God: Closing Prayer & Blessing**

Go now, beloved, and walk in the light that meets you in the midst of your darkness. May the God of hope guide your steps, steady your hearts, and call you to follow with courage, even when the way is uncertain. And may the peace of Christ, which surpasses all understanding, go with you today and always. Amen.