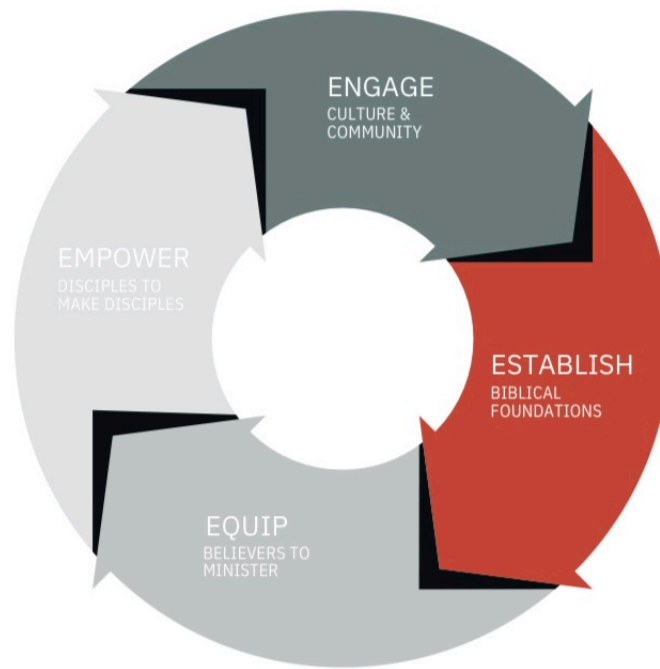


The mission of Rise Up Church is to raise disciples, empower families, and revitalize neighborhoods by the transformational power of the gospel. At Rise Up Church, our discipleship rhythm shapes how we live and expressed in four key movements that we call the 4E's. It is all about following Jesus and helping others do the same.



The purpose of our Koinonia Gatherings is to establish people in biblical foundations by building Christ-centered connections. We believe the Scriptures teaches that life change happens best in community, as we grow together in God's Word and are led by the Holy Spirit.

Below, you'll find a sermon-based guide from the most recent sermon to help lead a Rise Up Church Koinonia Gathering, along with a five day devotional designed to help you apply the sermon throughout the week.

Koinonia Gathering Guide: "Rebuke the Enemy"

Scripture Focus: John 11:1-16

Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

Begin by asking God to open hearts and minds to understand His timing and trust His love, even in seasons of waiting.

Ice Breaker (10 minutes)

Share a time when you had to wait for something important (a job, medical results, a relationship, etc.). How did the waiting make you feel? What was the outcome?

Key Takeaways from the Sermon

Main Point:

What appears to be Jesus' delay is not the absence of Jesus' love. It is the preparation to reveal God's glory and the deepening of the disciples' faith.

Three Core Truths:

- 1. God's delay is not the absence of His love** (verses 3-6)
- 2. The delay is preparation for God's glory** (verses 4, 7-10)
- 3. The delay deepens disciples' faith** (verses 14-16)

Discussion Questions

Section 1: Understanding God's Love in the Delay (20 minutes)

Read John 11:3-6

1. Mary and Martha simply said, "Lord, the one you love is sick." They didn't demand Jesus come immediately. What does this tell us about their relationship with Jesus?

2. Verse 6 says, "So when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was." How does this challenge our understanding of how God responds to our prayers?
3. The sermon stated: "We must always filter the delay through the lens of God's love." What does this mean practically? How can we do this when we're hurting?
4. Can you share a time when you questioned God's love because of His timing? Looking back, can you see His love in that situation now?

Section 2: Preparation for Greater Glory (15 minutes)

Read John 11:4, 14-15

5. Jesus said this illness was "for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it." What's the difference between healing someone from a distance versus raising them from the dead?
6. The sermon mentioned Joseph's 13-year delay between his dream and his destiny. What might God be preparing in you during your current season of waiting?
7. Romans 8:18 says, "The sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us." How does this perspective change how we view our current struggles?
8. The pastor asked: "Are we causing our own delay by tapping out of the preparation?" Discuss this honestly as a group. Where might we be resisting God's preparation process?

Section 3: Deepening Faith Through the Delay (15 minutes)

Read John 11:14-16

9. Thomas said, "Let us also go that we may die with him." This is usually remembered as "Doubting Thomas," but here he shows radical faith. What does this teach us about following Jesus even when we don't understand?
10. Jesus said He was glad "for your sake" that He wasn't there. How does knowing that God's delays are "for our sake" change our perspective on unanswered prayers?

11. The sermon stated: "God is always working for your benefit and for His glory."
Where in your life do you struggle to believe this right now?

Practical Application (15 minutes)

Personal Reflection:

Take 3-5 minutes of silence for each person to consider:

- Where in my life do I believe God is absent and not working?
- What is one area where I need to trust God's timing instead of demanding my own?
- How can I worship God in the delay, like Mary who anointed Jesus' feet?

Group Sharing:

1. Share one area where you're waiting on God right now. How can the group pray for you to trust His love in the delay?
2. **Accountability Challenge:** This week, when you're tempted to believe God has delayed or is absent:
 - Stop and declare: "God's delay is not the absence of His love"
 - Write down one way you see God working, even if it's small
 - Share it with someone in the group

Prayer Partners:

Break into groups of 2-3 and pray specifically for:

- Trust in God's perfect timing
- Eyes to see God's preparation in current circumstances
- Faith to follow Jesus even when we don't understand
- Those who don't know Jesus to accept Him today (like spiritually dead Lazarus)

Memory Verse for the Week

Romans 8:18 - "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us."

Closing Reflection (5 minutes)

The pastor's final questions:

- Where in your life do you believe God is absent and not working?
- Will you trust Him in the delay?
- Will you give your life to Him now?

Take a moment for anyone who wants to make a commitment to trust Jesus—either for the first time or in a new area of surrender.

Homework Before Next Meeting

- Journal daily: "How did I see God's love today, even in delays or difficulties?"
- Read John 11:17-44 (the rest of the story) to prepare for potential continuation
- Reach out to your accountability partner mid-week to share how you're trusting God's timing

Leader Tip: Be sensitive to those genuinely struggling with God's timing in painful situations (illness, job loss, broken relationships). Create space for honest lament while pointing back to God's faithful character and love.

5-Day Devotional: Trusting God in the Delay

Day 1: God's Love Never Leaves

Reading: John 11:1-6

Devotional: When Mary and Martha sent word to Jesus about Lazarus, they didn't demand His presence. They simply said, "Lord, the one you love is sick." Notice the profound trust in this statement. They anchored their request not in their own worthiness, but in God's love.

The most striking verse follows: "Because he loved them, he stayed two days longer." This defies our human logic. We equate love with immediate action, but God's love operates differently. His delay is not rejection or indifference. It is purposeful preparation.

Today, identify one area where you feel God is delaying. Instead of questioning His love, declare it. Say aloud: "Lord, the one You love is waiting." Trust that His love is actively working in the waiting, not absent from it. His timing perfects what your urgency would only partially accomplish.

Day 2: Filtering Circumstances Through God's Character

Reading: Romans 8:28-39

Devotional: We naturally filter God's love through our circumstances. When life is good, God loves us. When trials come, we question His presence. But Scripture calls us to reverse this lens: filter your circumstances through the unchanging truth of God's love.

Romans 8:38-39 declares that nothing can separate you from God's love. Not death, not life, not present troubles, not future fears. Nothing. This means your current hardship is not evidence of God's absence but an opportunity to experience His sustaining presence differently.

The enemy whispers that God is withholding from you, just as he did in the Garden. But God's nature is to give, not withhold. He gave His Son. He gives His Spirit. He gives abundant life.

Today, write down your biggest struggle. Now write over it: "Nothing can separate me from God's love." Let this truth become louder than your circumstances.

Day 3: Preparation Disguised as Delay

Reading: James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 1:6-7

Devotional: Joseph dreamed of ruling, but God's plan was for him to become a rescuer. Between the dream and the destiny were thirteen years of slavery, betrayal, and imprisonment. What looked like delay was actually divine preparation. Character was being forged for the calling.

James tells us to "count it all joy" when facing trials because testing produces perseverance, maturity, and completeness. This is not toxic positivity; it is kingdom perspective. God is not punishing you in the waiting. He is preparing you for something your current character cannot yet sustain.

Jesus could have healed Lazarus from a distance, but He waited to demonstrate resurrection power. What if your delay is because God wants to show you something greater than you asked for? What if healing is good, but resurrection is His plan?

Reflect today: What might God be preparing in you during this season? Surrender your timeline and ask Him to complete His work.

Day 4: Faith That Follows into Uncertainty

Reading: Hebrews 11:1-16

Devotional: Thomas said, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." While he is remembered as "doubting Thomas," here he demonstrates remarkable faith: the willingness to follow Jesus even when death seems certain. This is the faith Jesus desires to cultivate in us.

True faith is not the absence of questions or fear. It is choosing to follow Jesus despite them. Hebrews 11 celebrates people who acted in faith without seeing the full picture. Abraham left home not knowing where he was going. Moses chose affliction with God's people over temporary pleasure.

Faith deepens not in the absence of trials but in the midst of them. When you choose to worship while waiting, to trust when you do not understand, to follow when the path looks dangerous, your faith becomes unshakeable.

Today, identify one area where God is calling you to follow Him despite uncertainty. Take one step of obedience, even if you cannot see the outcome. This is how faith grows.

Day 5: From Death to Life

Reading: John 11:17-44; Ephesians 2:1-10

Devotional: Lazarus represents all of us before Christ: spiritually dead, bound in grave clothes, trapped in darkness. But Jesus speaks one word—"Lazarus, come out!"—and death surrenders to Life Himself. This is the gospel. This is your story if you have accepted Christ.

Perhaps you are living between verses 5 and 6 today, wondering if God still loves you, if He will act, if He even sees your situation. The answer is an resounding yes. The same Jesus who wept at Lazarus's tomb weeps with you. The same Jesus who called Lazarus from death calls you from whatever entombs you: addiction, despair, shame, fear.

Salvation is not something to delay. Today is the day of salvation. If you have never surrendered your life to Jesus, He stands at the entrance of your tomb calling your name. Will you come out? Will you let Him unwrap the grave clothes and give you new life?

If you are already His, where do you need resurrection power today? Invite Him into that dead place. He specializes in bringing life from death.