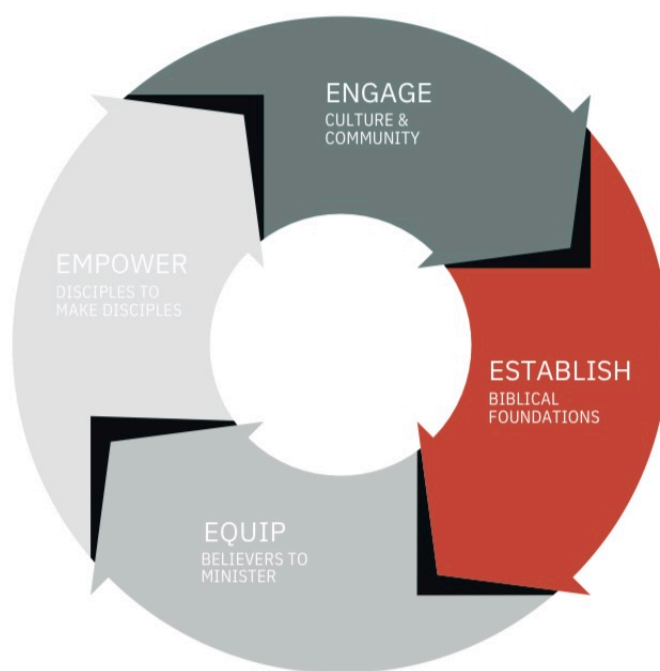


The mission of Rise Up Church is to raise disciples, empower families, and revitalize neighborhoods by the transformational power of the gospel. At Rise Up Church, our discipleship rhythm shapes how we live and expressed in four key movements that we call the 4E's. It is all about following Jesus and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

**Main Scripture:** John 8:12-30

**Key Verse:** "Again Jesus spoke to them saying, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'" (John 8:12)

### Opening Prayer (2-3 minutes)

Ask someone to open in prayer, inviting the Holy Spirit to reveal areas of darkness and resistance in each person's life.

### Ice Breaker Question (5-10 minutes)

Have you ever been suddenly awakened by bright lights? What was your reaction? How does this relate to spiritual awakening?

### Sermon Summary

Jesus declares Himself as "I AM"—the light of the world. This sermon explores three movements:

1. **The Light Revealed** - Jesus shows who He is and exposes our need for Him
2. **The Light Resisted** - How we push back against Jesus despite knowing the truth
3. **The Light Received** - What happens when we truly follow Jesus into life

### Key Takeaways

1. **Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah** who fulfills God's promise to send light into darkness
2. **We can be religious yet spiritually blind** - knowing all the right answers while resisting Jesus
3. **We normalize sin and darkness** until it becomes comfortable and acceptable
4. **Resisting Jesus means accepting death and darkness** - there is no neutral ground
5. **Following Jesus doesn't mean an easy life** - it means direction, not perfection

## Discussion Questions

### Understanding the Light (15-20 minutes)

1. **What does it mean that Jesus is "the light of the world"?** How does this connect to Old Testament prophecies and the Feast of Tabernacles?
2. **The sermon mentioned that the Pharisees were deeply religious but spiritually blind.** How is this possible? What's the difference between religious knowledge and truly knowing Jesus?
3. **Jesus says "I AM" multiple times in this passage.** Why is this significant? What is He claiming about Himself?

### Recognizing Resistance (20-25 minutes)

4. **The pastor said, "We normalize sin" in various areas.** Which examples from the sermon hit home for you? (lust, anger, gossip, greed, compromise, unholy living, etc.)
5. **What does it look like to "resist Jesus" in everyday life?** Share an example from your own experience (if comfortable).
6. **The sermon compared resisting God's warnings to ignoring a check engine light.** Where might God's "dashboard lights" be flashing in your life right now?
7. **"We've normalized living a lifestyle that looks so like the culture outside that no one can tell you are a believer."** How have you seen this play out in your own life or in the church?
8. **The pastor mentioned that God sometimes allows us to feel "a little bit of weight of your consequences."** Have you experienced this? How did it bring you back to God?

### Receiving the Light (20-25 minutes)

9. **What does it mean practically to "follow Jesus"?** How is this different from just believing facts about Jesus?
10. **The sermon states: "Following Jesus means you will not walk in the darkness... darkness is no longer your home."** What freedom does this promise offer you personally?

11. **"Following Jesus doesn't mean perfection. It means direction."** How does this truth encourage you? How might it change your approach to following Jesus?
12. **Jesus says we must believe "I AM" or we will die in our sins (v. 24).** Why is Jesus the only way? How would you explain this to someone who believes there are multiple paths to God?

### Personal Reflection (10 minutes)

Take a few minutes of silence for each person to consider:

- **Where am I currently resisting Jesus in my life?**
- **What sin have I normalized that needs to be brought into the light?**
- **Am I truly following Jesus, or just culturally Christian?**
- **What specific step is Jesus calling me to take this week?**

### Practical Applications

Choose 1-2 applications to focus on this week:

#### Individual Actions:

1. **Confession Inventory:** Write down areas where you've been resisting Jesus. Confess them to God and, if appropriate, to a trusted believer (James 5:16).
2. **Dashboard Check:** Identify one "warning light" God has been flashing in your life. What concrete step will you take to address it this week?
3. **Normalize Assessment:** List sins you've normalized. Pick one and create a specific plan to surrender it to Jesus (accountability partner, removing temptation, replacing with godly habit).
4. **Follow Jesus Exercise:** Each day this week, ask: "Jesus, what does following you look like today in this situation?" Journal your responses.
5. **Cultural Christian Audit:** Honestly evaluate: Would people know you're a Christian by your lifestyle? What needs to change?

## Group Actions:

1. **Accountability Partners:** Pair up and commit to checking in this week about areas of resistance you're surrendering to Jesus.
2. **Prayer Triplets:** Form groups of three to pray specifically for each other's "darkness" areas and for courage to fully follow Jesus.

## Closing Application Questions

1. **What is one specific thing God spoke to you about today?**
2. **What will you do differently this week because of what you learned?**
3. **How can this group pray for you and hold you accountable?**

## Memory Verse for the Week

"Again Jesus spoke to them saying, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'" - John 8:12

## Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

- Pray for each person by name, asking God to:
  - Reveal areas of darkness and resistance
  - Give courage to follow Jesus fully
  - Break the power of normalized sin
  - Fill each person with the light and life of Jesus
- Close with thanksgiving for Jesus, the light of the world who offers us life.

## Leader Notes

- **Be vulnerable first:** Share your own areas of resistance to create a safe space for honesty
- **Avoid judgment:** Remember, we're all walking in some darkness; extend grace
- **Encourage specificity:** Push beyond vague answers to concrete applications
- **Follow up:** Check in with group members during the week about their commitments
- **Celebrate repentance:** Make space for people to share breakthroughs and victories

## 5-Day Devotional: Walking in the Light

### Day 1: The Light Has Come

**Reading:** John 8:12; Isaiah 9:2

**Devotional:** Jesus declares, "I am the light of the world." This isn't mere metaphor—it's reality. For centuries, God's people waited in darkness for the promised Messiah. That wait ended when Jesus spoke these words at the Feast of Tabernacles, standing among 74-foot pillars of light meant to remind Israel of God's faithfulness.

The darkness in our lives isn't just ignorance; it's separation from the Source of life itself. Jesus doesn't offer tips for better living—He offers Himself. When we've been in darkness long enough, we adjust to it, normalize it, even defend it. But light exposes what darkness conceals.

Today, ask yourself: What areas of my life have I adjusted to living in spiritual darkness? Where have I normalized what God calls sin? The Light has come. Will you let Him illuminate what you've been hiding?

**Reflection:** Identify one area where you've "adjusted" to spiritual darkness and confess it to God today.

### Day 2: The Danger of Religious Blindness

**Reading:** John 8:13-20; Matthew 23:23-28

**Devotional:** The Pharisees knew Scripture by heart yet called Jesus a liar. They were deeply religious, well-studied, and spiritually dead. This reveals the most frightening truth about darkness: you can have all the right information and still be completely blind.

Religious activity doesn't equal relationship with Jesus. Church attendance, Bible knowledge, and moral behavior can become lampshades covering our true condition. We can know the right words, fit into church culture, and still resist the very One we claim to follow.

The Pharisees didn't need more information—they needed surrender. They didn't lack doctrine—they lacked submission to the Person their doctrine described. Jesus resists our resistance with His Word, shining light on areas we'd rather keep hidden. The dashboard lights are flashing, warning us of danger, but we've learned to ignore them.

**Reflection:** Are you pursuing information about Jesus or transformation by Jesus? What's the difference in your life?

### **Day 3: The Cost of Resistance**

**Reading:** John 8:21-30; Romans 1:18-25

**Devotional:** "Unless you believe that I am he, you will die in your sins." These aren't scare tactics—they're reality. Resisting Jesus isn't neutral; it's choosing death over life, darkness over light. When we normalize sin—lust, anger, gossip, greed, bitterness—we're not just making mistakes; we're rejecting the only Source of life.

The terrifying truth is that God may eventually give us over to our resistance. Three times in Romans 1, Paul writes, "God gave them over." When God stops resisting our foolishness and allows us to feel even a fraction of the weight of our sin, we crumble. His resistance to our rebellion is actually His love.

Every consequence we face, every difficulty that drives us back to Him, is mercy. He allows us to get "mollywhopped" by our resistance to bring us home. The question isn't whether we'll face consequences—it's whether we'll respond to His loving correction before the weight becomes unbearable.

**Reflection:** What sin have you normalized? What would it look like to call it what God calls it today?

### **Day 4: Following Jesus Into Life**

**Reading:** John 8:12 (again); Psalm 119:105

**Devotional:** "Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." Following Jesus doesn't mean life becomes easy—it means darkness is no longer your home. When you follow Jesus, you may still be tempted, pressed, struck down, but you won't be crushed or destroyed. Darkness no longer has the final say.

To follow someone, you must become unstuck. When Jesus says "follow me," He's commanding the chains to break, the shackles to release. You cannot follow while remaining bound. Following Jesus means walking in truth instead of lies, in freedom instead of bondage, in life instead of death.

Following Jesus means direction, not perfection. Like driving at night with headlights, you can't see the entire road, but you can see what's directly in front of you—and that's enough, because Jesus is in front of you, lighting the way. You may swerve, but He provides guardrails. You may stumble, but He catches you.

**Reflection:** What does it practically mean for you to "follow Jesus" today in your current circumstances?

## **Day 5: Responding to the Light**

**Reading:** John 8:28-30; 2 Corinthians 4:6

**Devotional:** "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he." Jesus pointed to His death and resurrection as the ultimate proof of His identity. The Son of Man has already been lifted up. We don't need more evidence, more miracles, more doctrine. We need to stop resisting.

The dashboard light is flashing. Jesus has illuminated areas of resistance in your life—not to shame you, but to free you. You can respond now through repentance, or you can wait for circumstances to shake you back to Him. The choice is yours, but the invitation is clear: come out of darkness into His marvelous light.

Some have never truly received Jesus—you've resisted because you actually prefer your sin. But your sin is leading you to death. Others have received Jesus but resist Him in specific areas. Both need the same response: surrender. Follow Him wherever He leads, whatever He asks, however He directs.

**Reflection:** How will you respond to the light of Jesus today? Where is He calling you to stop resisting and start following?

**Closing Prayer:** Lord Jesus, You are the Light of the world. Forgive me for the areas where I've resisted You, normalized darkness, and chosen my way over Yours. Break the chains that keep me stuck. Give me courage to follow You fully, even when the path is difficult. I choose life. I choose light. I choose You. Amen.