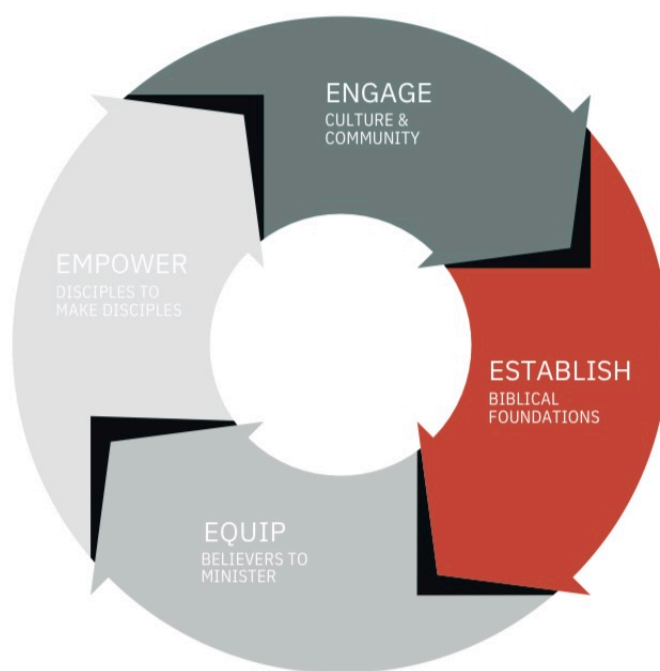


The mission of Rise Up Church is to raise disciples, empower families, and revitalize neighborhoods by the transformational power of the gospel. At Rise Up Church, our discipleship rhythm shapes how we live and expressed in four key movements that we call the 4E's. It is all about following Jesus and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

Small Group Guide: "When His Words Are Hard"

Scripture: John 6:60-71

Opening Prayer

Begin by asking God to soften hearts and open minds to His Word, even when it challenges us.

Ice Breaker (5-10 minutes)

Share about a time when you received really good news or a blessing. How did that make you feel? Now share about a time when you received difficult news or correction. How did you respond differently?

Key Scripture

John 6:67-68 - "So Jesus said to the twelve, 'Do you want to go away as well?' Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.'"

Main Takeaway

True disciples of Jesus cling to Him when His blessings are easy to receive AND remain with Him when His words are hard to accept.

Discussion Questions

Section 1: Easy to Receive (15 minutes)

1. **When have you found it easiest to follow Jesus?** Think about times when prayers were answered or blessings were abundant.
2. **What does it look like to be an "observation saint" or "ditch saint"?** Have you ever caught yourself following Jesus only when it's beneficial? Share honestly.
3. **The crowd wanted to make Jesus king when He fed them, but left when His teaching got hard. What does this reveal about their understanding of what a "king" actually does?**

Section 2: Hard to Accept (20 minutes)

4. **What are some "hard teachings" of Jesus that challenge you personally?** The sermon mentioned:
 - Loving enemies
 - Forgiving those who hurt you
 - Sexual purity
 - Integrity when no one's watching
 - Using your tongue for love instead of wrath
5. Which of these (or others) do you find most difficult?
6. **The sermon defined "grumbling" as forgetting what Jesus has done, overlooking what He's doing, and turning away from what He will do. What are you currently grumbling about?** How is this affecting your relationship with Jesus?
7. **Read the progression: Hard teaching → Grumbling → Unbelief → Turning back. Where do you see yourself in this progression on any issue?**

Section 3: Remaining Faithful (20 minutes)

7. **Peter asked, "Lord, to whom shall we go?" What other things, people, or places do we turn to instead of Jesus when His words are hard?** What has your experience been when you've turned to these alternatives?
8. **The sermon emphasized that eternal life starts RIGHT NOW, not just when we die. How does this change your perspective on following Jesus through difficult teachings?**
9. **Jesus chose Judas even knowing he would betray Him. How does God's love for us "in our condition" give you hope?** How should this affect how we love others?
10. **The sermon asked: "If Jesus never does anything else for you, if He never answers another prayer, is He still worth your submission?" How would you honestly answer this question?**

Key Takeaways

- ✓ It's easy to follow Jesus for His blessings, but true discipleship means remaining when His words challenge us.
- ✓ Grumbling is the whisper of unbelief and the first step toward walking away from Jesus.
- ✓ Eternal life is not found in a place but in the person of Jesus—and it starts right now.
- ✓ Jesus loves us unconditionally, even when we resist, grumble, or betray Him.
- ✓ We don't have to understand everything; we just have to trust Jesus through it all.

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge (Choose 1-2):

1. Identify Your Grumble

- Write down one area where you've been grumbling against God's Word or direction
- Each day this week, thank God for three specific blessings instead of grumbling
- Ask God to help you submit this area to Him

2. The "Whom Else?" Exercise

- When facing a hard teaching or difficult situation, ask yourself: "Whom else shall I go to?"
- List alternatives you've tried in the past and honestly evaluate their results
- Recommit to trusting Jesus as your only source of eternal life

3. Confession and Recommitment

- Confess to a trusted friend or this group one area where you've been an "observation saint"
- Ask them to pray for you and hold you accountable
- Daily declare: "Even when I don't understand, I will remain faithful to Jesus"

4. Study Jesus' Hard Teachings

- Pick one "hard teaching" of Jesus that challenges you
- Study what Scripture says about it (not just what culture says)
- Journal about why Jesus might ask this of you and what freedom it could bring

5. Gratitude Reset

- Create a "Remember What Jesus Has Done" list
- When you're tempted to grumble, read this list
- Add to it daily

Reflection Questions for Personal Time

- Am I following Jesus for what He gives me or for who He is?
- What would change in my life if I truly believed Jesus' words are "spirit and life"?
- Where am I like the crowd (physically present but ready to leave)?
- Where am I like Judas (physically present but inwardly far away)?
- Where am I like Peter (committed to stay even when it's hard)?

Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

Pray together:

- For courage to remain faithful when Jesus' words are hard
- For freedom from grumbling and complaining
- For hearts that say "Whom else shall we go to?"
- For those in the group struggling with specific hard teachings
- For a deeper understanding that eternal life starts now

For Next Week

Come prepared to share:

1. One way you resisted grumbling this week
2. One "hard teaching" you chose to embrace
3. One evidence that eternal life is active in your life right now

Leader Notes

- Create a safe space for honest confession about struggling with Jesus' teachings
- Avoid judgment; remember we've all been in the grumbling crowd
- Emphasize God's unconditional love even as we challenge each other to grow
- If someone shares about walking away from faith, follow up with them privately
- Celebrate small steps of obedience and trust

Memory Verse: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." -
John 6:68

5-Day Devotional: Remaining When His Words Are Hard

Day 1: When Blessings Are Easy

Reading: John 6:1-15

Devotional: It's easy to follow Jesus when He's multiplying our resources and meeting our needs. The crowd celebrated when Jesus fed five thousand with a boy's lunch, but their devotion was shallow. They wanted a king who would fill their stomachs, not transform their hearts. How often do we approach Jesus the same way—loving Him for what He gives rather than who He is? Today, examine your relationship with Christ. Are you an "observation saint" who follows only when it's convenient? Or do you love Him regardless of what He provides? Jesus doesn't just want to meet your physical needs; He desires your whole heart. True discipleship begins when we worship Him not for His blessings, but for His character.

Day 2: The Danger of Grumbling

Reading: Exodus 16:1-12; Philippians 2:14-16

Devotional: Grumbling is the whisper of unbelief. The Israelites grumbled after God delivered them from slavery and fed them manna. The disciples grumbled when Jesus' teaching challenged their comfort. Grumbling makes us forget what Jesus has already done, overlook what He's currently doing, and doubt what He will do. It turns our hearts away from gratitude and toward entitlement. What are you grumbling about today? A difficult command? An unanswered prayer? A season of waiting? Your grumbling reveals where your flesh is fighting your spirit. Repent of your complaints and remember: the God who brought you this far will not abandon you now. Replace grumbling with gratitude, and watch your faith grow stronger.

Day 3: Turning Back or Pressing Forward

Reading: John 6:60-66; Hebrews 10:35-39

Devotional: Many disciples turned back when Jesus' words became hard. They wanted His miracles without His lordship, His provision without His authority. Turning back always means returning to bondage—to the very things Jesus freed you from. Perhaps you're facing a hard teaching right now: forgiveness when you'd rather hold a grudge, purity when culture celebrates compromise, generosity when you want to hoard. The question isn't whether Jesus' words are difficult; it's whether you'll remain faithful anyway. What feels like freedom apart from Christ is actually slavery in disguise. Don't

turn back to what left you empty before. The momentary discomfort of obedience is nothing compared to the lasting destruction of disobedience. Press forward.

Day 4: To Whom Shall We Go?

Reading: John 6:67-69; Psalm 73:23-28

Devotional: Peter's response reveals mature faith: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." He didn't claim to understand everything Jesus said, but he knew there was nowhere else to turn. This world offers countless alternatives—success, pleasure, relationships, achievements—all promising fulfillment. But only Jesus offers eternal life that begins right now. Whom else will love you unconditionally despite knowing your worst? Whom else can transform your heart, mind, and soul simultaneously? Whom else died to set you free? When Jesus' words challenge you, remember: there is no better option. Even when you don't understand His ways, trust His heart. Eternal life isn't just a future promise; it's a present reality for those who remain in Him.

Day 5: Chosen Despite Our Betrayal

Reading: John 6:70-71; Romans 5:6-11

Devotional: Jesus knew Judas would betray Him, yet He still chose him. This reveals the scandalous nature of God's love—He chooses to love us while we're still His enemies. We were all Judas at some point: hearts far from God, resisting His word, betraying His love. Yet Christ died for us anyway. Some people leave Jesus physically, like the crowd. Others stay physically but leave inwardly, like Judas—attending church but harboring unbelief. Wherever you are today, know this: Jesus still chooses to love you. His love isn't based on your performance but on His character. If He never answers another prayer, He's still worthy of your devotion because of what He's already done at the cross. Surrender fully to the One who loved you first.