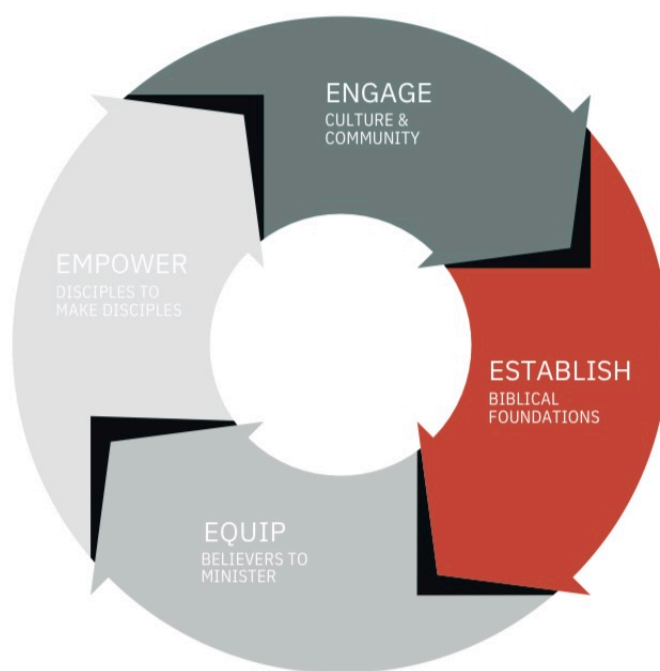


The mission of Rise Up Church is to raise disciples, empower families, and revitalize neighborhoods by the transformational power of the gospel. At Rise Up Church, our discipleship rhythm shapes how we live and expressed in four key movements that we call the 4E's. It is all about following Jesus and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

Based on John 7:37-39

### Opening Prayer

Begin your time together asking God to open hearts and minds to receive what He wants to teach through this discussion.

### Ice Breaker

Share a time when you were extremely thirsty (after exercise, in hot weather, etc.). What did it feel like, and what finally satisfied that thirst?

### Key Sermon Points

#### Main Focus

Jesus invites the thirsty to come to him, believe in him, and the Spirit will flow through them.

#### Three Main Movements

1. **Jesus invites the thirsty to come to Him**
2. **We respond by believing in Him**
3. **The Spirit flows through us like rivers of living water**

#### Discussion Questions

##### Understanding Our Thirst (15-20 minutes)

1. **What does it mean to be "spiritually thirsty"?** What are some signs that someone might be experiencing spiritual dehydration?
2. The pastor mentioned we often try to satisfy our spiritual thirst with "spiritual Minute Maid and Kool-Aid." **What are some things people commonly turn to instead of Jesus when they're spiritually thirsty?** (Examples: relationships, work, entertainment, substances, etc.)
3. **Why do you think it's so hard for people to come to Jesus "just as they are"?** What barriers prevent people from accepting His invitation?

### Believing vs. Acknowledging (15-20 minutes)

4. The sermon distinguished between "acknowledging Jesus" and "truly believing/trusting in Him." **What's the difference?** Can you give examples of what each looks like in daily life?
5. The pastor pointed out that even demons believe and acknowledge who Jesus is (James 2:19). **What does it mean to move from theological belief to heart-transformed trust?**
6. **Share about a time when you had to truly trust Jesus with something difficult.** What made it hard? What was the outcome?

### Rivers of Living Water (15-20 minutes)

7. Jesus promises that "out of his heart will flow rivers of living water" for those who believe. **What does this look like practically in someone's life?**
8. The pastor said the Holy Spirit wants to pour out in every area of our lives—conversations, parenting, marriage, friendships, etc. **Which area of your life do you find it hardest to let the Holy Spirit flow through?** Why?
9. **If someone asked your three closest friends, would they say rivers of living water are flowing out of you?** What would they point to as evidence?

### Personal Reflection (10-15 minutes)

10. The sermon asked: **"Do you go to Jesus when you're thirsty, or do you go elsewhere and be dehydrated?"** Be honest—where do you typically go first when you're struggling?
11. **What lies has the enemy told you about God's promises?** (Examples: "This is too hard to change," "It's been too long," "God can only change part of your life," etc.)

### Key Takeaways

- Jesus' invitation is for **ANYONE** who is thirsty—no matter your past, present circumstances, or struggles
- Coming to Jesus is a **command, not a suggestion**—He's moving us from dry places to living waters

- True belief means **trusting Jesus with every area of your life**, not just acknowledging Him intellectually
- The Holy Spirit wants to **flow through every part of your life** like rivers of living water, bringing life wherever you go
- Jesus poured Himself out on the cross so we could have **abundant spiritual life**

## Practical Applications

### This Week's Challenge

Choose ONE of the following to practice this week:

#### Option 1: Identify Your "Go-To"

- Make a list of where you typically turn when you're hurting, stressed, or feeling empty
- Each time you're tempted to go there this week, pause and pray: "Jesus, I'm thirsty. I'm coming to You instead."

#### Option 2: Holy Spirit Audit

- Identify one area of your life where you haven't let the Holy Spirit flow freely (parenting, work relationships, finances, entertainment choices, etc.)
- Ask God specifically to pour out His Spirit in that area
- Journal what changes you notice

#### Option 3: Be a River

- Intentionally look for one person this week who seems spiritually dry or struggling
- Ask the Holy Spirit to flow through you to bring refreshment to them
- Follow up with your group about what happened

#### Option 4: Confession and Surrender

- Write down one thing you've been trying to control or fix on your own
- In prayer, specifically surrender it to Jesus, acknowledging your thirst for His help
- Share your commitment with one trusted person for accountability

## Prayer Time (15-20 minutes)

### Guided Prayer Prompts

1. **Confession:** Acknowledge areas where you've been going to other things instead of Jesus

2. **Invitation:** Ask Jesus to meet you in your thirst right now
3. **Belief:** Declare your trust in Him, even in areas that seem impossible
4. **Holy Spirit:** Invite the Holy Spirit to flow through every area of your life
5. **Others:** Pray for people in your life who are spiritually thirsty and don't know Jesus

### **Prayer Partners**

Break into pairs or triads and pray specifically for:

- Areas where you're experiencing spiritual dryness
- Breakthrough in believing God's promises over the enemy's lies
- The Holy Spirit to flow through you to others this week

### **Closing**

**Memory Verse for the Week:** *"If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" — John 7:37-38*

**Reminder:** Share your experiences with the group next week. How did God meet you in your thirst? Where did you see rivers of living water flowing?

### **Leader Notes**

- Be prepared to share vulnerably about your own spiritual thirst and journey
- Create a safe space for honest answers—some may be struggling significantly
- Don't rush through questions; let the Spirit guide the conversation
- Have tissues available—this topic can bring up deep emotions
- Consider having resources available for those dealing with addiction or deep struggles
- Follow up individually with anyone who seems particularly burdened

## 5-Day Devotional: From Thirsty to Rivers

### Day 1: The Invitation to Come

**Reading:** John 7:37-39; Isaiah 55:1-3

**Devotional:** Jesus stands among the crowd with an urgent cry: "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink." This isn't a polite suggestion—it's a divine command. Notice the word "anyone." No matter your past, your present struggles, or how far you've wandered, the invitation remains open. Jesus doesn't require you to clean yourself up first. He meets you in your mess, with all your baggage and pain. The religious feast commemorated God's provision of water in the wilderness, but Jesus declares He is the fulfillment of that promise. Where are you searching for satisfaction today? Jesus invites you to stop drinking from broken cisterns and come directly to Him. The same grace that invited crowds two thousand years ago invites you now: Come as you are.

**Reflection:** What "thirst" are you experiencing in your life right now? What keeps you from bringing it directly to Jesus?

### Day 2: Beyond Acknowledgment to Trust

**Reading:** James 2:14-26; Mark 9:14-24

**Devotional:** Even demons believe in Jesus and shudder at His name. They acknowledge His authority, recognize His identity, and tremble before His power. Yet they remain condemned. This reveals a sobering truth: intellectual belief without heart transformation means nothing. Jesus calls us beyond mere acknowledgment to complete trust—surrendering control of every area of our lives. This is difficult because we've been disappointed by people, let down by circumstances, and hurt by broken promises. Trusting fully feels impossible. But Jesus isn't like the people who've failed you. When He says "believe in me," He's inviting you into a relationship where He proves faithful every single time. The father in Mark cried, "I believe; help my unbelief!" That honest prayer moves us from theological agreement to life-changing faith.

**Reflection:** In what areas of your life are you acknowledging Jesus but not truly trusting Him?

### Day 3: Rivers of Living Water

**Reading:** Ezekiel 47:1-12; John 4:10-14

**Devotional:** A desert is characterized by death—cracked earth, barrenness, absence of life. But when water flows, everything changes. Animals gather, plants flourish, fish swim. Life multiplies. Jesus promises that out of your heart—that dry, dead place—will flow rivers of living water. Not a trickle, not a single stream, but rivers. The Holy Spirit wants to overflow every area of your life: your conversations, your parenting, your marriage, your friendships, your work. This isn't about managing your spiritual life in compartments, allowing God access to Sunday mornings while keeping other areas off-limits. The promise is complete transformation. Where the Spirit flows, life follows. The very places you've given up on, the relationships you've declared dead, the habits you think will never change—these are exactly where God wants to pour out rivers of living water.

**Reflection:** What "desert places" in your life need the Holy Spirit's rivers of living water today?

#### **Day 4: The Promise for Believers**

**Reading:** Acts 2:1-21; Joel 2:28-32

**Devotional:** The Holy Spirit's indwelling presence is the distinguishing mark of New Testament believers. In the Old Testament, the Spirit came upon individuals temporarily for specific tasks. But after Jesus' resurrection and ascension, everything changed. Now the Spirit dwells permanently within every believer. This means the living God resides in you—convicting, empowering, comforting, strengthening, and guiding. Yet how often do we try to entertain ourselves with lesser things? We have access to divine power, yet we settle for spiritual dehydration. The enemy whispers lies: "You can only change a little." "You'll slip back into that sin." "That situation is hopeless." But these contradict God's promise. The same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead lives in you. That's not partial power for partial transformation—that's resurrection power for complete renewal.

**Reflection:** How does knowing the Holy Spirit dwells within you change your perspective on current challenges?

#### **Day 5: Jesus Thirsted So We Could Drink**

**Reading:** John 19:28-30; 2 Corinthians 5:21

**Devotional:** On the cross, Jesus cried out, "I thirst." The One who offered living water experienced ultimate spiritual dehydration. He poured Himself out completely, enduring separation from the Father, so that thirsty sinners could receive rivers of living water. When Jesus declared "It is finished," He secured our access to the Holy Spirit's indwelling presence. This is the gospel: Jesus experienced spiritual death so we could have spiritual life. He was forsaken so we could be adopted. He thirsted so we could drink freely. Now the invitation stands: Come to Jesus and believe. Whether you've never trusted Him or you're a believer doubting His promises, the answer remains the same. Stop searching elsewhere for satisfaction. Stop trying to work your way out of dehydration. Come to Jesus now and receive what only He can give.

**Reflection:** How will you respond to Jesus' invitation today? What specific step of faith is He calling you to take?