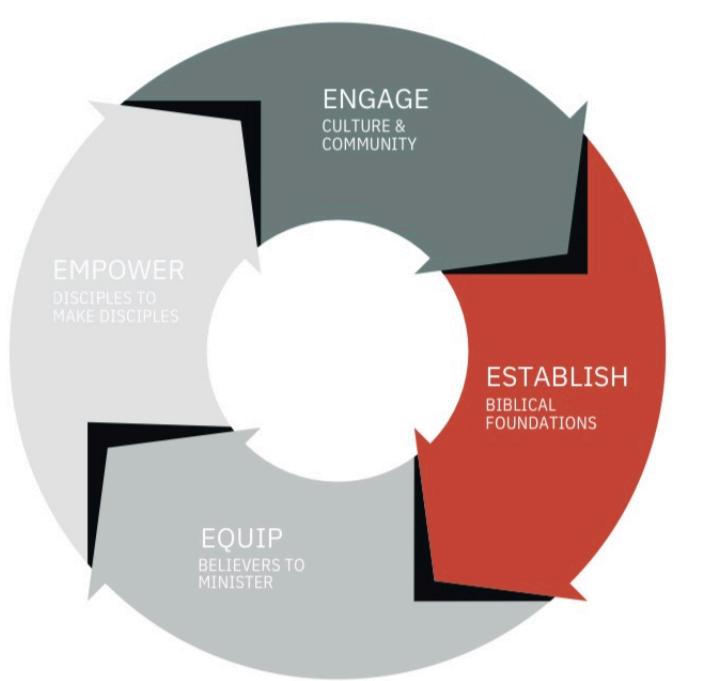


The mission of Rise Up Church is to raise disciples, empower families, and revitalize neighborhoods by the transformational power of the gospel. At Rise Up Church, our discipleship rhythm shapes how we live and expressed in four key movements that we call the 4E's. It is all about following Jesus and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

**Sermon:** Losing the Weight of Worry

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:25-34

**Bottom Line:** Worry doesn't change your future. It just chokes your faith.

### Opening Prayer & Icebreaker (10 minutes)

#### Icebreaker Question:

What's one New Year's resolution (or goal) you've set multiple times but haven't quite achieved yet? Why do you think that is?

### Key Takeaways from the Sermon

1. **Jesus prioritized addressing worry in His first major sermon** because it's one of the greatest threats to kingdom advancement in our lives.
2. **Worry is defined as being "pulled in different directions"** - it disjoins us, divides us, and deteriorates our faith.
3. **Worry is carrying weight we were never meant to carry** - it affects us physically, emotionally, and spiritually.
4. **God's prescription is simple: "Seek first the kingdom of God"** (Matthew 6:33) - when we prioritize Him, everything else falls into place.
5. **We have VIP access to God** - we can cast all our cares upon Him because He genuinely cares for us (1 Peter 5:7).

### Discussion Questions (30-40 minutes)

#### Understanding Worry

##### 1. The "Worry Backpack"

The pastor used bricks in a backpack to illustrate different worries (finances, family, health, future, education, faith). Which of these "bricks" resonates most with you right now? Why?

## **2. Concealed Worry Syndrome**

The sermon mentioned "concealed worry syndrome" - carrying weight that others can't see but we constantly feel. How does this show up in your life? What does it prevent you from doing or being?

## **3. Worry vs. Legitimate Concern**

How do you distinguish between legitimate concern (being responsible) and unhealthy worry (anxiety that pulls you apart)? Where's the line?

### **Biblical Perspective**

## **4. Jesus' Priorities**

Why do you think Jesus chose to address worry in His Sermon on the Mount rather than talking about the devil or other "bigger" issues? What does this tell us about how seriously God takes our anxiety?

## **5. Birds and Lilies**

Read Matthew 6:26-30 together. What specific truth about God's character is Jesus trying to communicate through these nature illustrations? How does this challenge your current perspective on your worries?

## **6. "How Much More"**

Jesus asks, "Won't He do much more [for you]?" (v. 30). Do you truly believe God cares more about you than birds and flowers? What makes this hard to believe sometimes?

### **Personal Application**

## **7. Where Your Treasure Is**

The sermon stated: "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:21). If someone looked at your calendar, bank account, and thought life, what would they say you treasure most? How does this align with what you want to treasure?

## **8. Worry as Rent Payment**

One quote shared was: "Worry is paying rent on a problem that hasn't happened yet." What future problem are you currently "paying rent" on? What would it look like to stop making those payments?

## **9. Casting Your Cares**

The pastor invited everyone to name their worries and give them to God. What specific worry do you need to cast upon Him today? What makes it hard to release?

## Practical Application (15-20 minutes)

### This Week's Challenge:

#### Daily Worry Audit

Each day this week, take 5 minutes to:

1. Write down what you're worried about
2. Ask: "Can I control this?" If yes, make a plan. If no, move to step 3.
3. Pray: "God, I cast this care on You because You care for me"
4. Physically write "Given to God" over that worry

#### Seek First Practice

Before making any decision this week (big or small), pause and ask: "Am I seeking God's kingdom first in this, or am I seeking my own comfort/security/approval?"

#### Accountability Partner

Pair up with someone in the group. Share one specific worry you're carrying and commit to checking in with each other this week about whether you're still carrying it or have given it to God.

## Closing Reflection Questions

### Personal Reflection (silent or journal):

- What is one truth from this sermon that most challenged me?
- What is one action I will take this week to lose the weight of worry?
- How would my life look different if I truly believed God cares for me as much as Scripture says He does?

### Group Sharing:

Anyone willing to share their reflection or prayer request related to worry?

## Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

### Prayer Focus:

- Thank God for being our burden-bearer
- Confess areas where we've trusted worry more than we've trusted Him
- Ask for faith to seek His kingdom first
- Pray for specific worries that were shared in the group
- Declare together: "God, You have more. You are enough."

### **Suggested Closing Prayer:**

*"Father, we thank You that You invite us to come to You with all our burdens. Help us to remember who You are - the Creator, the Provider, the One who never forgets us. This week, give us the courage to release what we were never meant to carry. Teach us what it means to seek Your kingdom first. We trust that You will provide all we need. In Jesus' name, Amen."*

### **Scripture Memory Verse**

#### **Matthew 6:33**

*"But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you."*

### **Additional Resources**

- **For Further Study:** Read the entire Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) this week
- **Worship Song Suggestion:** "Goodness of God" by Bethel Music or "Way Maker" by Sinach
- **Recommended Reading:** *Anxious for Nothing* by Max Lucado

*Remember: The goal isn't behavior modification but belief transformation. We don't just need Jesus' promises - we need Jesus Himself.*

## 5-Day Devotional: Losing the Weight of Worry

### Day 1: Remembering God's Faithfulness

**Reading:** Matthew 6:25-27

**Devotional:** Jesus opens His teaching on worry by addressing our most basic needs—food, drink, and clothing. But notice His question: "Isn't life more than food and the body more than clothing?" He's inviting us to shift our perspective from provision to Provider. Today, take inventory of how God has brought you through past seasons. You're here, aren't you? That's evidence of His faithfulness. Every worry you've carried that didn't destroy you, every bill that somehow got paid, every moment you thought you wouldn't make it—yet you did—these are testimonies of God's sustaining power. Your presence today is proof that God has been faithful. Let that truth anchor your faith for tomorrow's unknowns.

**Reflection Question:** What past worries has God already brought you through?

### Day 2: The VIP Access of Being God's Child

**Reading:** 1 Peter 5:6-7; Psalm 139:13-16

**Devotional:** You have VIP access to the Creator of the universe. Not because of your performance, but because you were "fearfully and wonderfully made." God found pleasure in creating you before you ever found pleasure in Him. This isn't about earning His love—it's about receiving it. When worry creeps in, remember: you're not approaching a distant deity who might reject you. You're coming to a Father who delights in you. Cast your cares upon Him, not because you're strong enough to let go, but because He's loving enough to catch them. Your concealed worry syndrome ends when you realize you don't have to hide your struggles from the One who already knows and still chooses you.

**Reflection Question:** What would change if you truly believed God delights in you?

## Day 3: Seek First—The Divine Prescription

**Reading:** Matthew 6:31-33; Proverbs 3:5-6

**Devotional:** "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." This isn't just good advice—it's a divine prescription for anxiety. Notice Jesus doesn't say seek first and then maybe, possibly, if conditions are right, God will provide. He says "shall be added." That's a promise. But seeking first requires trust. It means when you're worried about money, you seek Him first. When family concerns overwhelm you, you seek Him first. When the future feels uncertain, you seek Him first. This isn't denying real problems; it's prioritizing the real Solution. God doesn't promise to fix everything your way, but He does promise to show up His way—and His way is always sufficient.

**Reflection Question:** What area of life are you seeking solutions before seeking God?

## Day 4: Consider the Birds—God's Detailed Care

**Reading:** Matthew 6:26-30; Luke 12:22-24

**Devotional:** Jesus points to birds and flowers—creatures and creations that don't strategize, worry, or plan—yet God provides for them abundantly. His question pierces through our anxiety: "Aren't you worth more than they?" If God attends to sparrows and adorns wildflowers that bloom and fade, how much more does He care for you, His image-bearer? Your worry suggests God might forget you, but His track record says otherwise. He knows every hair on your head, every need before you ask, every tear you've cried. The birds don't have retirement accounts, yet they eat. The lilies don't have wardrobes, yet they're beautifully clothed. God's care is detailed, personal, and constant. Trust Him with the details of your life.

**Reflection Question:** What does creation teach you about God's faithfulness to provide?

## Day 5: Casting Down the Weight

**Reading:** Hebrews 12:1-2; Philippians 4:6-7

**Devotional:** "Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles." Worry is weight you were never meant to carry. It doesn't add days to your life; it steals peace from your present. Today is your invitation to cast it all down—every financial fear, every family concern, every health anxiety, every uncertain future. Bring your concealed worry backpack to the feet of Jesus. He's not asking you to minimize your problems or pretend they don't exist. He's asking you to exchange your heavy burden for His light one. When you seek Him first, you discover that His presence is the provision. His peace guards your heart. His strength sustains you. Lose the weight of worry by remembering who holds you and recommitting to trust Him fully.

**Reflection Question:** What specific worry will you cast upon Jesus today, and how will you remind yourself He's carrying it?

**Closing Prayer:** Father, thank You for inviting us to bring our burdens to You. Help us remember Your faithfulness, receive Your love, and recommit to seeking You first above all things. We cast our cares upon You because You care for us. Give us the faith to trust You with every detail of our lives. In Jesus' name, Amen.