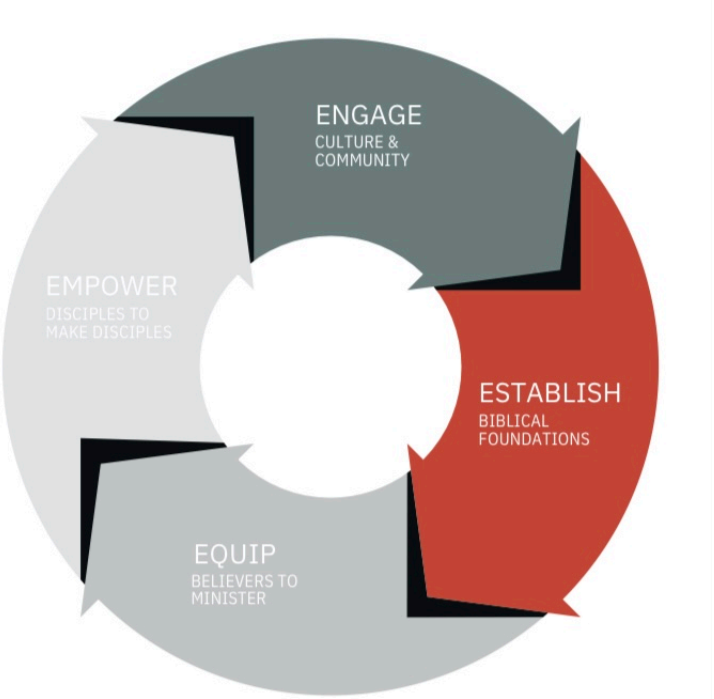
The mission of Rise Up Church is to raise disciples, empower families, and revitalize neighborhoods by the transformational power of the gospel. At Rise Up Church, our discipleship rhythm shapes how we live and expressed in four key movements that we call the 4E's. It is all about following Jesus and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

The True Vine: A 5-Day Bible Reading Plan and Devotional Guide

Day 1: I Am the True Vine

Reading: John 15:1-5

Devotional: Jesus does not simply point the way to life -- He is the source of it. When He declares "I am the true vine," He is making a claim that no circumstance, achievement, or human relationship can make: that genuine spiritual life flows exclusively through Him. Israel had every provision and still wandered. We are no different. We exhaust ourselves striving to produce something good on our own, only to return empty. The invitation of this passage is not to try harder but to remain connected. A branch does not strain to produce fruit. It simply stays attached to the vine. Today, resist the urge to perform. Simply remain in Him.

Reflection Question: In what areas of your life are you striving in your own strength rather than drawing life from Jesus?

Practical Application: Identify one habit or routine today that you can intentionally surrender to Jesus, asking Him to be your source rather than relying on your own effort.

Day 2: The Purpose of Pruning

Reading: James 1:2-4; Hebrews 12:5-11

Devotional: Pruning is uncomfortable by design. The vinedresser does not cut away branches out of cruelty but out of a commitment to greater fruitfulness. James describes this same principle when he says that trials produce endurance, and endurance produces maturity. Hebrews echoes that discipline from God is evidence of His love, not His absence. We often interpret difficult seasons as signs that God has withdrawn. In truth, He may be doing His most precise and purposeful work in us during those moments. The prayers we pray for patience, humility, and Christlikeness are answered not in comfort but in the pruning seasons that shape us into His image.

Reflection Question: Can you identify a past season of pruning that produced growth you can now recognize? What did that season reveal about your dependence on God?

Practical Application: Write down one area where you sense God is currently pruning you. Pray specifically over that area, asking Him to produce fruit in you through the process rather than simply removing the discomfort.

Day 3: The Cleansing Power of the Word

Reading: Psalm 119:9-16; John 17:17

Devotional: Jesus told His disciples they were already clean because of the word He had spoken to them. The Word of God is not merely informational -- it is transformational. It is alive, active, and capable of reaching places in us that no self-help strategy or human counsel can access. Psalm 119 describes a person who treasures God's Word, meditates on it, and finds in it a path toward purity and purpose. Jesus prays in John 17 that His followers would be sanctified by truth. The Word does not simply tell you what to do. It tells you who you are, who Jesus is, and how those two realities reshape everything about how you live.

Reflection Question: How consistently are you allowing God's Word to speak into your daily life, not just as a ritual but as a living conversation with Him?

Practical Application: Choose one passage of Scripture today and read it slowly, pausing to ask God what He is saying to you personally through it. Return to that same passage tomorrow and notice what else surfaces.

Day 4: Abiding as a Lifestyle

Reading: Colossians 3:1-17; Revelation 3:15-17

Devotional: Abiding in Jesus is not a scheduled event -- it is a continuous posture of the heart. Colossians 3 describes what a life hidden in Christ actually looks like in practice: compassion, humility, patience, forgiveness, and love woven into the fabric of everyday interaction. The church of Laodicea in Revelation 3 represents what happens when that posture erodes. Spiritual self-sufficiency -- the quiet belief that we need nothing -- is one of the most dangerous conditions a believer can drift into. It does not announce itself loudly. It settles in gradually, disguised as stability. Abiding means that when you leave a worship gathering, a Bible study, or a moment of prayer, you carry Jesus with you into every conversation, decision, and difficulty that follows.

Reflection Question: Is your relationship with Jesus something you practice in specific moments, or is it a continuous reality that shapes how you respond to ordinary life?

Practical Application: Throughout the day today, pause at three specific moments -- morning, midday, and evening -- and consciously acknowledge Jesus' presence with you in whatever you are currently facing.

Day 5: Abiding in His Love and Joy

Reading: Romans 8:35-39; Philippians 4:11-13

Devotional: Jesus tells His disciples that He loves them with the same love the Father has for Him -- a love that existed before the foundation of the world, a love with no terms and conditions attached. Romans 8 declares that nothing in all of creation can separate us from that love. And from that love flows a joy that is not dependent on favorable circumstances. Paul writes from prison that he has learned contentment in every state. That word "learned" matters. Joy rooted in Jesus is not automatic -- it is cultivated through abiding. It deepens as we remain in Him through seasons of abundance and adversity alike. The fullness of joy Jesus promises in John 15:11 is not the absence of suffering. It is the settled confidence that He is enough in the midst of it.

Reflection Question: Where are you currently looking for joy outside of your relationship with Jesus, and how is that search leaving you empty?

Practical Application: Make a written list of three specific truths about who Jesus is and what He has done for you. Return to that list whenever your circumstances threaten to define your joy this week.

Koinonia Gathering Guide: The True Vine

John 15:1-11

Overview

In this sermon, Pastor Kevin walks through Jesus' final "I am" statement in the Gospel of John: "I am the true vine." The central focus is this: **abiding in Jesus means reflecting the fruit that Jesus gives us.** This guide will help your group explore what it means to remain connected to Jesus as the source of all spiritual life, growth, and joy.

Key Takeaways

- Jesus is the true vine, the Father is the vinedresser, and we are the branches. All spiritual life flows from Jesus to us, not the other way around.
- Bearing fruit means becoming more like Jesus -- growing in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, and self-control, as described in Galatians 5.
- Pruning is purposeful. God removes and refines things in our lives -- through both adversity and abundance -- so that we bear more fruit.
- Abiding is not a one-time decision or a Sunday-only practice. It is a continuous, lifestyle-level relationship with Jesus.
- The joy Jesus offers is not the same as happiness. It is a deep delight in knowing who God is, what he has done, and that our future is secure in him -- and it is available in every circumstance.

Discussion Questions

Opening (Getting the Conversation Started)

1. When you hear the word "abide," what comes to mind? How would you describe what it means to abide in someone or something in everyday life?

2. Pastor Kevin asked the group a direct question: "Do you abide in Jesus or do you just visit Jesus?" How would you honestly answer that question right now?

Going Deeper (Exploring the Sermon Content)

3. Pastor Kevin described how Israel in the Old Testament had everything they needed from God -- provision, rescue, restoration -- and still turned away repeatedly. In what ways do you see that same pattern in your own life or in culture today?

4. The sermon described pruning as God's intentional work to help us bear more fruit. Can you identify a season in your life that felt like pruning? Looking back, what did that season produce in you?

5. Pastor Kevin pointed out that pruning can happen through adversity but also through abundance, using the example of Hezekiah in 2 Chronicles. Which do you think is harder to recognize -- pruning through hardship or pruning through blessing? Why?

6. The sermon drew a contrast between bearing fruit through relationship with Jesus and trying to produce good things through personal effort or willpower. Where in your life are you most tempted to rely on your own effort rather than remaining connected to Jesus?

7. Pastor Kevin said, "The words of Jesus precede your work. And your work is not your worth." How does that statement challenge or encourage you personally?

8. In John 15:7, Jesus says that if we abide in him and his words abide in us, we can ask whatever we wish and it will be done. Pastor Kevin connected this to prayers that align with God's will rather than personal preference. How has your prayer life reflected -- or struggled to reflect -- that kind of alignment?

9. Pastor Kevin described the love Jesus has for us as love without terms and conditions -- a love that existed before the foundation of the world and persisted through our failures and rebellion. How does understanding that kind of love change the way you approach your relationship with Jesus?

10. The sermon defined joy as "the delight in having a relationship with God, knowing who he is, knowing what he has done, and knowing your future is secure in him." By that definition, would you say you are currently experiencing joy? What do you think is either producing or hindering it?

Personal Reflection (Going Inward)

11. Pastor Kevin mentioned that when people go through hard seasons, one of the first things they tend to do is pull away from God and the church -- waiting until

they "get themselves together" before returning. Have you ever done this? What did that season teach you?

12. He also described the danger of spiritual complacency -- the attitude of "I need nothing" that Jesus addresses in Revelation 3:15-17. In what areas of your life might you be operating with that mindset, even subtly?

Practical Applications

The following are concrete ways to practice what this sermon calls us to do.

1. Audit your abiding. Take an honest look at your daily rhythms. Are there consistent, intentional moments where you are sitting with Jesus -- not just completing a checklist, but genuinely renewing your mind and focusing on him? Identify one specific time in your day where you can carve out that space this week.

2. Pray through your pruning. If you are in a difficult season, write down what you are experiencing and bring it to God in prayer. Rather than asking only for the circumstances to change, ask God what he is producing in you through this season. Share what you write with a trusted person in your group.

3. Examine your fruit. Using Galatians 5 as a reference, honestly assess where you see love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, and self-control growing in your life -- and where you see a lack. Pick one area and ask someone in your group to pray for and check in with you on it over the next few weeks.

4. Return if you have drifted. If you have been in a season of visiting Jesus rather than abiding in him -- or if you have been staying away until you feel ready -- take a step back toward him this week. That might mean returning to church, reaching out to a pastor or group leader, or simply opening your Bible and asking God to meet you there.

5. Memorize a verse on abiding. Consider committing John 15:5 to memory this week. Let the truth that apart from Jesus we can bear no lasting fruit become something you carry with you throughout your daily life.

Closing Prayer Focus

Close your group time by praying together over these areas:

- Gratitude for Jesus as the true vine and the source of all spiritual life
- Honest acknowledgment of the areas where you have not been abiding
- Openness to whatever pruning God is doing in your life right now
- A request for the kind of joy that is not dependent on circumstances

"Abiding in Jesus means reflecting the fruit that Jesus gives us." -- John 15:1-11