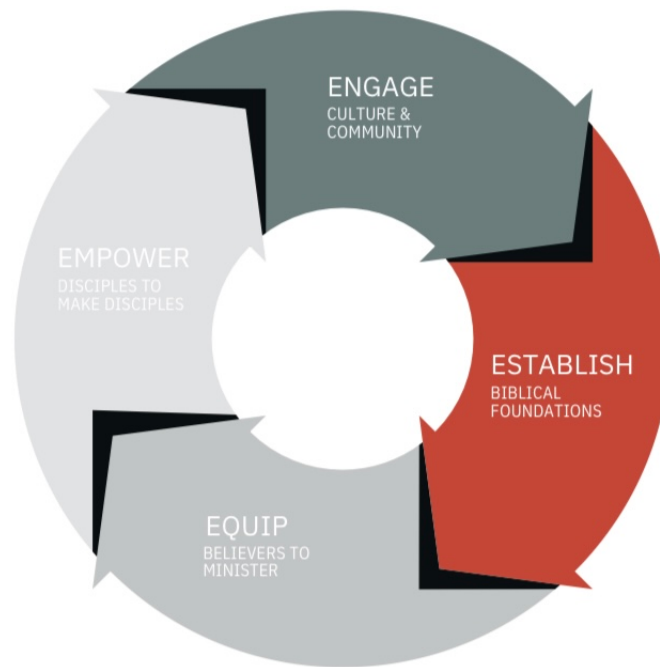


The mission of Rise Up Church is to raise disciples, empower families, and revitalize neighborhoods by the transformational power of the gospel. At Rise Up Church, our discipleship rhythm shapes how we live and expressed in four key movements that we call the 4E's. It is all about following Jesus and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

Based on John 12:20-36

Overview

This guide is designed to help your group engage deeply with the sermon's central truth: to live without Jesus is death, but to die for Jesus is life itself. Use the questions, takeaways, and applications below to encourage honest conversation and personal reflection.

Key Takeaways

1. Jesus Died So That We Can Live The death of Jesus was not a tragedy without purpose. Like a grain of wheat that falls into the ground and dies before bearing fruit, Jesus' death accomplished what nothing else could — victory over sin, death, and separation from God. His death bears fruit in the form of reconciliation, eternal life, and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

2. We Must Die to Receive the Life Jesus Gives Following Jesus requires denying ourselves and the things this world offers. This is not self-hatred or religious performance. It is a radical reordering of allegiance — placing Jesus above every competing loyalty, comfort, identity, and desire. Jesus does not call us to anything he has not already done himself.

3. Will We Receive Him or Reject Him? Every person must decide what to do with the light while it is present. The crowd in John 12 heard the voice of God and some thought it was thunder. The text warns us that rejecting or ignoring the truth of the gospel is not a neutral act — it is a choice with eternal consequences.

Discussion Questions

Opening

1. When you first heard the phrase "living by dying," what came to mind? Did it feel like a contradiction, a challenge, or something familiar?

2. The pastor described how different people respond to death differently depending on who is lost. How has loss shaped your understanding of what matters most in life?

Jesus Died So That We Can Live

3. The sermon explained that Jesus' death was unlike any other death because it bears fruit rather than simply taking something away. What fruit from Jesus' death have you personally experienced in your own life?
4. The pastor made the point that you cannot earn your way into what Jesus freely gives. Where do you find yourself still trying to earn God's favor rather than simply receiving it? What does that reveal about your view of God?
5. Jesus said "truly, truly" to get the crowd's attention before making a critical point. If Jesus were speaking directly to your life right now and said "listen carefully," what do you think he would say next?

We Must Die to Receive the Life Jesus Gives

6. The sermon described how Satan offered Jesus food, comfort, glory, and power at a moment when Jesus was most physically vulnerable. In what areas of your life does temptation tend to show up when you are at your weakest?
7. The pastor said that "the enemy knows exactly what you like." How have you seen this to be true in your own experience? How did you respond?
8. The sermon challenged listeners to ask themselves: "What am I unwilling to surrender in order to follow Jesus?" Take a moment to sit with that question. What comes up for you? Are you willing to share it with the group?
9. The pastor noted that for parents, the idol we sometimes have to lay aside is parenting itself -- becoming so wrapped up in our children's lives that they see a chauffeur and a chef but not someone who glorifies Jesus. What roles, relationships, or responsibilities in your life have the potential to quietly replace Jesus at the center?

Receive Him or Reject Him

10. Some in the crowd heard God speak and thought it was thunder. Others thought it was angels. What does it look like in everyday life when people hear the truth of the gospel but interpret it as something else entirely?
11. Jesus said in John 12 that he would be lifted up and draw all people to himself, echoing the image from Numbers 21 where those who looked at the bronze serpent were healed. What does it practically mean for you to "look to Jesus" when you are struggling, tempted, or in pain?
12. The sermon closed with this question: "What are you looking for the world to give you or answer that Jesus has already given and answered?" How would you answer that honestly?

Practical Applications

Choose one or more of the following to practice individually or as a group before your next meeting.

Surrender Inventory Set aside 15 to 20 minutes this week in a quiet place. Write down the areas of your life where you are holding back from full surrender to Jesus. Be specific. Then bring those areas to God in prayer, one by one, and ask for the grace to release them.

Follow When It Costs You The pastor listed several specific moments when following Jesus is costly -- when obedience is inconvenient, when the flesh wants to react, when the shortcut is available. Identify one situation you are currently facing where following Jesus will require a real sacrifice. Make a decision in advance about how you will respond.

Examine Your Sources This week, pay attention to where you are turning for comfort, validation, identity, or answers. Are you going to Jesus first, or is the world getting the first call? At the end of each day, briefly journal what you noticed and what it revealed about your trust in Jesus versus your trust in the world.

Memorize and Meditate Select one verse from John 12:20-36 that stood out to you most during this sermon. Write it down, place it somewhere visible, and return to it daily throughout the week. Let it prompt reflection and prayer.

Share the Light Jesus said in John 12 to walk in the light while you have it. Think of one person in your life who does not yet know Jesus. Commit to praying for that person by name every day this week, and ask God to open a door for a natural conversation about faith.

Closing Prayer Guide

Close your group time by praying through these three areas together:

- **Gratitude** -- Thank God for the fruit of Jesus' death: forgiveness, reconciliation, the Holy Spirit, and eternal life.
- **Surrender** -- Ask God to reveal and remove whatever you are unwilling to lay down in order to follow Jesus fully.
- **Trust** -- Ask God to help you stop looking to the world for what only Jesus can provide, and to walk in the light while you have it.

5-Day Bible Reading Plan and Devotional Guide

Living by Dying: Finding Life Through Surrender

Day 1: The Hour Has Come -- Trusting God's Timing

Reading: John 12:20-28

Devotional: There are moments in life when everything shifts -- when what once seemed distant suddenly stands at the door. Jesus declared that his hour had come not with panic, but with purpose. He had said repeatedly that the hour was not yet here. Then, at the arrival of outsiders seeking him, it was. God's timing is never accidental. Every season of waiting, every unanswered prayer held in patience, is moving toward a divine moment. When your hour arrives -- the moment of testing, surrender, or calling -- will you recognize it? Trust that God has been preparing you for exactly this.

Reflection Question: What season of waiting are you currently in, and what might God be preparing you for?

Practical Application: Write down one area of your life where you have been struggling to trust God's timing. Surrender it to him in prayer today, and commit to watching for his movement.

Day 2: The Grain of Wheat -- Dying to Bear Fruit

Reading: John 12:24-26; 1 Corinthians 15:42-58

Devotional: A seed buried in the ground looks like loss. It disappears into the dark, and from the outside, nothing seems to be happening. But death is the very condition for life. Jesus used this image deliberately. His death was not a tragedy interrupted by resurrection -- it was the plan. The burial was the beginning. Whatever God is asking you to release -- a relationship, an ambition, a version of yourself you have held tightly -- he is not asking you to lose it without purpose. He is asking you to trust that what he raises from that surrender will bear far more fruit than what you buried.

Reflection Question: What has God been asking you to release that you have been unwilling to let go?

Practical Application: Identify one thing you have been holding onto out of fear rather than faith. Take a concrete step today toward surrendering it, whether through prayer, a conversation, or a decision.

Day 3: Denying the World -- Choosing the Greater Allegiance

Reading: Matthew 4:1-11; Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Devotional: The enemy did not approach Jesus with something ugly. He offered comfort, glory, and power -- things that are not wrong in themselves. The temptation was in the source and the shortcut. Jesus resisted because his allegiance was already settled. He knew who he was and who he served, and that clarity made the choice possible. The world will consistently offer you versions of what God has already promised -- faster, easier, and at the cost of your integrity. The only way to resist is to have your allegiance settled before the offer arrives. Love for God must be so strong that the world's offer feels beneath you.

Reflection Question: Where is the enemy currently offering you a shortcut that bypasses obedience?

Practical Application: Memorize Deuteronomy 6:5 this week. Let it become the anchor that settles your allegiance before temptation arrives.

Day 4: Lifted Up -- The Cross as the Only Answer

Reading: Numbers 21:4-9; John 3:14-17; Romans 6:23

Devotional: The Israelites in the wilderness were dying from the consequences of their own rebellion. God's remedy was not a removal of the serpents -- it was a lifted-up image of the very thing killing them. Whoever looked upon it lived. Jesus drew a direct line from that moment to the cross. We are all marked by sin, and without intervention, death is the only destination. But God lifted his Son on a cross so that all who look to him -- not to their own effort, their own religion, or their own goodness -- will live. Salvation is not earned. It is received. Look to Jesus.

Reflection Question: Are you trusting in your own effort to be right with God, or have you truly received what Jesus accomplished on the cross?

Practical Application: Share the message of the cross with one person this week. It does not have to be elaborate. Simply tell them what Jesus has done and what it means to receive him.

Day 5: Walking in the Light -- A New Identity

Reading: John 12:35-36; Ephesians 5:8-14; 2 Corinthians 5:17

Devotional: Jesus warned the crowd that the light would not be among them forever. Walk while you have it. Believe while you have the opportunity. There is an urgency in his words that should not be softened. But for those who do believe, something remarkable happens -- they do not merely receive light, they become sons and daughters of light. This is not just a change in behavior. It is a change in identity. You are no longer defined by where you came from, what you have done, or what this world says about you. You are defined by whose you are. Walk accordingly.

Reflection Question: In what areas of your life are you still walking in darkness despite belonging to the light?

Practical Application: Ask someone who knows you well to honestly identify one area where your actions do not yet reflect your identity in Christ. Receive that feedback with humility and bring it before God in prayer.