

# **life groups' sermon guide**

## **switch: the example of Jesus**



*Life Groups exist at Kingsway to provide authentic relationships for spiritual growth, caring for one another, and reaching out to others.*

*"There is no way under the sun of making a man worthy of love except by loving him."*

**Thomas Murton**

*"I've come to understand in my life, that selfishness is weakness – but love and caring for others is a position of power."*

**Joyce Meyer**

### **Jesus Leads by Example**

Jesus had much to say about how we treat others. Throughout Scripture we are admonished and encouraged to place the needs of others before our own. This business of how we treat other people seems – it seems like God is really serious about it. We are told to consider others better than ourselves; to look not only to our needs, but also to the needs of others; to love our neighbor as ourselves; to love one another; to forgive others; to do unto others as we would have them do unto us; not to judge others; to do anything that would cause others to stumble; and to give others food when they're hungry, to show them hospitality when they're a stranger, to give them clothes when they have none, look after them when they are sick and visit them when they're in prison – because when we do that for the LEAST of others, we do it for Jesus Himself.

Jesus gives fantastic examples of putting others first (and are you really surprised?). He does so both in His life, and in His death.

While alive Jesus regularly puts others first, but it's also important to notice the kinds of people He was elevating. He routinely focused great love, care, compassion and attention on those that the culture of His day would overlook, or think to be below notice. Not only does Jesus love these outcasts, but He uses them to teach spiritual truths to those who you would think would already know them.

*in life:*

Read Mark 10:13-16

Q :: What reasons might the disciples have had in wanting to keep the children back?

Q :: What different spiritual truths do we learn from Jesus in this story?

Read John 8:1-11

Q :: In what ways does Jesus act lovingly toward this woman caught in sin?

Q :: What different spiritual truths do we learn from Jesus in this story?

Luke 19:1-10

Q :: Jesus has exalted a child, come to the defense of a sinner, who also happened to be a (gasp) woman - now he stoops even lower and honors a tax collector. Jesus tells him “I must stay at your house today” – why do you think Jesus was so emphatic about this?

Q :: What can we learn from Jesus honoring Zacchaeus, given the reaction of the crowd? How do we apply that in our life today?

*in death:*

I find it very interesting that Jesus is still teaching us these principles of others first as He hangs on the cross. And I’m talking about more than just what His death on the cross accomplished for us in eternity. Yes, His going there was the ultimate act of putting others first – namely us; sinners who according to Scripture were enemies of God (Romans 5:10 and Colossians 1:21). That is such an incredibly powerful truth, that if we’re not paying attention we miss the totality of this “others first” principle as it is still being taught from the cross, amidst agony, pain and suffering that we could never fathom.

Read John 19:25-27

Q :: What can we learn from this about the importance of caring for our own family?

Sometimes our family ends up getting the worst of us. Joyce Meyer said something that I found very thought-provoking and potentially convicting. She said “People will do as a ministry in the church, what they won’t do for their own family at home behind closed doors”. Ouch. Was going to ask a question here, but we’ll just make it a rhetorical one to consider: Are you the same person at home as you are at church? How about as you are at work?

Read Luke 23:39-43

Q :: Here Jesus is still acting out of love and compassion - again, even under the most agonizing of circumstances. What does this tell us about how we should love and have compassion on others?

Read Luke 23:32-34

Q :: Here, astoundingly, Jesus puts first those who put Him on a cross. Note that these people had not asked for forgiveness or shown any sign of a repentant heart as the thief did. No, they were resolute in their cruelty and overtaken by a complete lack of compassion themselves. What does this teach me about those I should be compassionate toward?

Q :: In what ways are Jesus’ examples of placing others first difficult for us to follow?

## Evidence

Pastor Tony Evans has asked members of his congregation, “If someone accuses you of being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?” It’s a good question. Most of us understand that being a Christian is more than just saying we are. Our lives should show some fruit of a transformed heart. If we really love Jesus, there should be some evidence that others can see, right?

Jesus says in John 14:15 “If you love me, keep my commands.” OK, so what are His commands? He tells us in Matthew 22:34-40:

*Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”*

So, if it comes down to “love God and love others”, then there should be evidence of that in our lives. I came to a very convicting realization recently. I realized that if I were accused of loving God, an outsider could look into the life of my me, and my family, and see evidence of that – and beyond just attending church on Sunday morning. Our love of God permeates so much of what we do and what we’re about. Then I thought about the command to love others...

Both individually, and as a family, we would say that, “Yes! Absolutely. We love others.” The conviction came in realizing that there was no the same level of evidence to that fact as there was that we loved God. To use legal terminology, the evidence would certainly be circumstantial, at the least – but I didn’t feel like there would not be a preponderance of it. The idea of loving others had not saturated and permeated my family. We have since set out to change that, step by step, as God reveals opportunities for us to do so.

And lest we think that just because Jesus lists this second, that it is insignificant. It’s easy to overlook, but in the passage looked at earlier, Zacchaeus doesn’t say a prayer, repeat a confession or ask Jesus into his heart – yet Jesus claims that “Today salvation has come to this house”.

Q :: Look back at Luke 19:1-10, on what evidence does Jesus make this claim?

Q :: An impassioned concern for others led Zacchaeus to act boldly, and sacrificially. What are some things might we sacrifice (boldly or not) that could be for the benefit of others?

Q :: What are some ways (not even necessarily big ones) that loving others can permeate your family and become a part of your family’s culture – the thing you’re known for?

## Conclusion

My family went to see Soul Surfer last weekend. For anyone who doesn't know, it is the true story of teen surfer Bethany Hamilton, who lost her arm in a shark attack and courageously overcame all odds to become a champion again, inspiring millions worldwide through the love of her family, her sheer determination, and her unwavering faith in Jesus Christ. It is a powerful (and emotionally draining) movie experience.

I came across a quote from Bethany that blew me away in it's others focus:

*"I think that if I can help other people find hope in God, then that is worth losing my arm for."*

Pow.

For me that begged the question: What would **I** think is worth losing to help other people find God?

It's not a question to be answered lightly.

For if I think it is worth losing, am I willing to give it up?

I invite you to prayerfully ask it of yourself.