



**THURSDAY 07.08.10**

**Matthew 18:21-35**

One of the themes that has been consistent throughout our readings in the *Why People Leave Church* series is that idea that what we are offered in Christ, we are to share with others. Forgiveness is produced out of our gratitude. Our desire to give to others is a fruit that grows from our sense of what God has given to us. Peter assumes there must be a "limit" to our grace, but Jesus points him back to the enormous debt that God has nullified on our behalf.

- Have you ever been tempted, like Peter, to keep track of the number of times that someone has needed your forgiveness? Has that relationship survived? What might Jesus identify as the dangers of keeping track of someone else's wrongs?
- How has your church enabled you to continue to live a life of grace and peace?

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**FRIDAY 07.09.10**

**John 11:17-35**

It is in moments like these when we are most in need of a community of people who will surround us and support us in our grief and sadness. Jesus comes to the home of Mary and Martha and finds two sisters whose hearts have been broken at the loss of their brother, Lazarus.

- Verse 19 tells us that "many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them." When you have to face difficult situations, how has your community of friends and family supported you? What has your experience of receiving support taught you about sharing it with others?
- John 11:35 tells us that "Jesus wept," but if you continue to read past verse 36, you will see that Jesus is going to raise Lazarus from the dead. Why do you think Jesus is crying? What does this tell you about the heart of Jesus?

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# GROW • PRAY • STUDY

A RESOURCE FOR DISCIPLES SEEKING TO LOVE GOD, LOVE OTHERS & SERVE THE WORLD ...

**Series:** *Why People Leave Church*

**Sermon:** *My Life Situation Changed, and I Just Never Went Back*

**Scripture:** John 11:17-36

*Things I'd like to remember from today's sermon:*

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## Introduction

Life is full of transitions. The birth of a child, the death of a parent, relocating to a new community, dealing with a difficult illness and searching for a new job are just a few “transitions” that individuals and families in this church family are experiencing right now. Seasons of change are opportunities for God to work in our lives in a special way as well as chances for the church to fulfill our promise to support and nurture one another in love. The church was designed to help sustain people in these times.

Unfortunately, these “opportunities” are sometimes missed and people experiencing a time of transition find themselves drifting from the church. During our readings this week, we hope to be reminded of our call to “be the church” for all people in all seasons of their lives.

As you read and reflect on this calling we share, may this prayer guide you.

***God, when life seems to move beyond our control, we know how powerful it is to have someone by our side. Remind us this week of the calling we share as your church to be present with one another during all the different seasons of our lives. For all those living in a time of difficulty, bless them with the courage to ask for help, and give each of us the desire to quickly respond with love when that help is required. AMEN.***



## MONDAY 07.05.10

## Mark 12:41-44

During the last week of Jesus’ life, he goes to Jerusalem, the holy city that served as the geographic center of the Jewish faith. It is there that he teaches his disciples about how the religious leaders had grown corrupt in their guidance of Israel. A poor widow giving away all she has not only represents full devotion to God, but also the irresponsibility of the leaders who were supposed to care for her in her time of need.

- Last week we talked about how God honors the “cheerful giver.” What do you think Jesus found to be so extraordinary about this widow’s gift?
- James 1:27 describes “pure” religion as “to look after orphans and widows in their distress.” Why do you think James chooses to highlight these two groups? Who might Jesus want to highlight for us today as those we need to “look after”?

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## TUESDAY 07.06.10

## Acts 6:1-9

Because of the explosive growth of the church which we read about in the first five chapters of Acts, chapter six identifies one of the first major issues that the church had to address. The church is overwhelmed by the physical needs of this burgeoning community.

- When our lives get too busy, we must either change the way we are doing things or stop doing some of the things we are doing if we are to survive. In this instance, the apostles choose the latter. What was it that led the apostles to refuse to stop caring for the needs of the widows?
- Notice that once the apostles changed their process, the word of God continued to spread and the church “increased rapidly.” God honored their faithfulness. In what ways might God be calling our church to be faithful so that we might continue to reach our community?

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## WEDNESDAY 07.07.10

## Matthew 18:15-17

Throughout the New Testament we find Jesus and the other apostles addressing unforgiveness as one of the primary things that thwarts the work of God’s grace within the family of faith. In the 18th chapter of Matthew, Jesus outlines an extensive process for seeking to restore a broken relationship.

- When someone sins against you, Jesus instructs us to “go and show them their fault.” Many of our conflicts get magnified because we fear sharing our honest feelings. Do you struggle with being honest with someone who has hurt you? Why or why not?
- Not only are we to share our honest feelings, we are to do so first with the person who has caused us harm. Have you ever been the last to know that you had hurt someone? How did that make you feel? How might these brief instructions from Jesus guide you in the future?

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