

# Deliver Us: Overcome Evil With Good

Romans 12:17-21 – November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023

D E L I V E R U S  
*life in the victory of Jesus*

## Begin with Prayer

In silence, invite the Holy Spirit to guide you. Then pray:

*Empowering God, we pray that you will send your Holy Spirit to move us to understanding; to help us to believe the gospel; to give us strength and wisdom to live by it. Amen. (Worship Sourcebook Q.3.5.8)*

## Reconnecting and Debriefing

Take a moment to check in with one another (2 minutes each).

1. *As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?*
2. *When was a time that someone treated you positively in a way you didn't deserve?*

### Introduction

Whether we gather in person or online, our goal remains the same: to be a people apprenticed to the life of Jesus. His life and teaching is our example and our source of truth. Remember the commitments we make to each other to foster safety and freedom as we pursue spiritual growth together:

- Whenever possible, please listen to the sermon prior to gathering (Sunday or online).
- While we are meeting (even online), commit to focussing rather than multitasking. Be all here.
- Give every person an equal opportunity to share, even if it takes time to form or finish their thoughts.
- Be respectful and non-judgmental.
- Honour sharing boundaries (only what you have permission to share, no gossip) and guard confidentiality (what we share here stays here).
- Don't try to fix, problem-solve or rescue; keep pointing one another to the truths of the gospel for our lives.

## Listening to God's Word

In our world, we see the constant cycle of evil giving rise to more evil. A nasty online post leads to nasty responses, a shrewd business deal causes the victim to cheat others to break even, and acts of violence produce even more violent retaliations. Jesus and the writers of the New Testament repeatedly condemn these vicious cycles, claiming that the only way to end them is by doing good in response. As the enemy seeks to produce evil in the world, this is Jesus' weapon against the evil schemes of the enemy: do good.

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## Small Group Discussion

**Read Romans 12:17-21.** Then discuss together:

- ***What is your first thought when you read through this passage?***
- Paul begins and ends this passage by talking about not doing or being overcome by evil. *How are the ideas of not doing evil and living at peace with others connected?*
- *What is the difference between doing "what is right in the eyes of everyone" and people-pleasing? How do you do "right in the eyes of everyone" without people-pleasing?*
- Paul gives disclaimers to living at peace with everyone, saying "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you." *How do you know if peace is possible/dependent on you? What do you do if it is not?*
- The authors of the New Testament seem well aware that we will encounter all kinds of evil. *If encountering evil is inevitable, what does it mean to be "overcome" by evil? How can we encounter evil and still not be overcome by it?*

*"A stark alternative is set before us; no neutrality, no middle way is envisaged. If we curse, repay evil for evil, or take revenge, then, because all these are evil responses to evil, we have given in to evil, been sucked into its sphere of influence, and been defeated, overcome, even overpowered by it" (John Stott)*

- What kind of "good" overcomes "evil"? Where have you seen this in your life?
- How does doing good in response to evil "destroy the devil's work" (1 John 3:8)?

**Read Matthew 5:38-48.** Then discuss together:

- **What is your first thought when you read through this passage?**
- What is your typical response to those who hurt you?
- How do you love those who hurt you without enabling their activities?
- How does God do good to those that don't deserve it? How does this shape how you respond to wrongdoing?
- **How do you sense the Holy Spirit calling you to respond to or act on what we have read and discussed?**

## Practices

**Praying for our enemies:** Jesus' law of love was to respond to evil with blessing, teaching us specifically to "pray for those who persecute you" (Matt. 5:44). This is one of the most counter-intuitive yet revolutionary teachings of Jesus.

Take some time in quiet and think through those who have hurt you. If it is a long list, pick one name that stands out; if you are struggling to think of somebody, think of who it is you struggle to be around or get easily frustrated by. The word "enemy" may feel too strong for some, but there are still people that we struggle to bless.

Once you have one name in mind, take some time to pray for them. First acknowledge to God your current feelings towards them ("I am angry at them," "I feel unable to forgive them," "I don't even want to pray for them"). God knows your thoughts, but naming them in prayer is a powerful act. If this is a conflict/relationship that carries deep hurt that has not been processed, this step of acknowledgement is crucial, but it may take a long time.

Then pray for some kind of blessing for them. It may be as simple as "God, bless them," or it may be more specific. Avoid passive-aggressive prayers, such as "Help them apologize to me" or "Convict them of their wrongdoing," even if you are valid in asking for those. Focus as much as possible on their wellbeing as you bring them before God.

*As you think about the person you prayed for, is there any way you could actively do good to them this week?*

## Caring for One Another

- Suggest a prayer request that is related to the topic we've discussed.
- **Do you or your family have a need that the Life Group can help meet?**

Using **the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13)** as a guide, based on what you've shared together, spend time listening to God and praying for one another.