

## Daily Devotional Guide

**Monday** – Read Matthew 5:41. You’ve heard the old adage, “Go the extra mile.” This is the source of that wisdom – Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount. Jesus spoke these words in the context of Roman’s occupation of Palestine. Jews were required by law to carry Roman supplies for a mile. Many Jews would mark a mile post from their houses and would not carry supplies one step further from that post. Yet, Jesus came along and instructed them to carry the load another mile! Imagine their response. One of the hallmarks of Christian behavior is doing more than is required. Are you someone who goes the extra mile? This week’s devotional guide will explore this theme.

**Tuesday** – As we continue our reflection of “the extra mile,” it is important to understand the three ways we can respond to life. The evil way is to return evil for evil or evil for good. The human way is to return good for good. But the Christian way is to return good for evil. This is the essence of the extra mile – doing more than is required. Any person can retaliate. Any person can return good for something good that has been done for them. But it takes someone empowered by God to overcome evil with good.

**Wednesday** -We continue our reflection on going “the extra mile.” The extra mile has been called the smile mile. Doing what is required is drudgery, but going the extra mile brings joy and fulfillment because we are doing it out of love. The first mile is what we have to do, but the extra mile is what we want to do. If we just do what is required, we are controlled, but if we go the extra mile, we control the situation with God’s love. Love always wins. Where is God calling you to go the extra mile?

**Thursday** – You want to know the key to be successful in everything you do? Go the extra mile. Not only will going the extra mile edify you in your walk with Christ, but it will bring you great success at work, play, and in your relationships. Going the extra mile has an accumulative effect. If you do more than is required long enough, you will reap the glorious benefits. It is a spiritual law. Most people do the absolute minimum. So, if you do a little bit more than is required you will find success. Always remember: the difference between ordinary and *extraordinary* is that little “extra.”

**Friday** – As we end this week’s guide on going the extra mile, I want us to focus on how going the extra mile can affect our witness to others. Going the extra mile is one of the most powerful ways to introduce people to Jesus Christ. Because very few people go the extra mile in their lives, when someone does it, people notice. People will want to know why you forgave someone who betrayed you. People will want to know why you are always doing more than is required. It will be easy to tell them about the one who lives within you. How is God calling you to witness by going the extra mile?



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## ~ Living the Dream ~ Rising Above the Crowd

Sunday, January 30, 2011

Sermon by: Dr. Charley Reeb, Senior Pastor

Scripture Lesson: Matthew 5: 38-42 and 7: 12

I need for you to hear today that we manifest the abundant life through inspired action. Love, gratitude, purpose, and faith find their fulfillment in us through right behavior.

I love the old joke about the poor man that went to church every morning for a year to pray. He knelt at the altar and prayed, “Lord, please, please, please, let me win the lottery.” He did this every day for a year. And his prayer was always the same, “Please, please, please, let me win the lottery.” Finally, one morning he heard from God. God said to the poor man, “Please, please, please, buy a ticket!”

Now, God may not want us to win the lottery, but God does want us to live an abundant life. And God wants to empower us to live an abundant life, but we must do our part. We must participate. I like the old quote from St. Augustine, “Without God, we cannot. But without us, God will not.”

Today, I would like to share with you what this inspired action looks like. If we choose to participate with God through these inspired actions, we will draw closer to Christ, manifest the abundant life, and find success in everything we do.

Lessons on the right action to manifest the abundant life are found in the greatest sermon ever preached – the Sermon on the Mount. They are found in Matthew 5:38-42 and Matthew 7:12 (please read these passages).

#### Go the Extra Mile

We have all heard the old adage, “Go the extra mile.” The source of this great wisdom is Jesus, from the text I read a moment ago. Jesus instructs us in verse 41 to go the extra mile. Now, this was not just a figure of speech for Jesus. Jesus gave this instruction in the

context of Roman’s occupation of Palestine. Jews were required by law to carry Roman supplies for a mile. Many Jews would mark a mile post from their houses and would not carry supplies one step further from that post. Yet, Jesus came along and instructed them to carry the load another mile! Imagine their response. This must have turned some heads!

One of the hallmarks of Christian behavior is doing more than is required – going the extra mile. There are really three ways we can live life. The evil way is to return evil for evil or evil for good. The human way is to return good for good. But the Christian way is to return good for evil. This is the essence of the extra mile – doing more than is required. Any person can retaliate. Any person can return good for something good that has been done for them. But it takes someone empowered by God to overcome evil with good.

If we choose to live our lives by going the extra mile we will experience amazing changes in our lives. We will see a change in our attitudes immediately. The extra mile has been called the smile mile. Doing what is required is drudgery, but going the extra mile brings joy and fulfillment because we are doing it out of love. The first mile is what we have to do, but the extra mile is what we want to do. If we just do what is required, we are controlled, but if we go the extra mile, we control the situation with God’s love. Love always wins.

When we go the extra mile, we will also find success in everything we do. All successful people apply the principle of going the extra mile. Think of the successful people that you admire. They all go the extra mile in their chosen field. This is why they are successful. Think of your favorite store, mechanic, barber shop, or restaurant. Chances are you like these

places because they go the extra mile.

Let me give you an example. Take grocery stores. There are many places to buy bread, milk and cereal around here. And if you go into most grocery stores and ask where the soup is, they will simply say, "It's in aisle 8." But there is one particular store in this area that is different. If you go into that store and ask where the soup is, they will not only tell you; they will show you. They will walk you to the aisle and the very place where the soup is shelved. So, there is a reason why Publix rises above the crowd! They go the extra mile.

Would you like to be successful in what you do? Just do a little bit more than is required. You see, most people just do the absolute minimum. Most people's attitudes are, "I don't get paid to do that." "This is all I am required to do, so I am out of here." Folks who have this attitude are never successful. People who just do the bare minimum never rise above the crowd. So just do a little bit more than is required. Go the extra mile and watch yourself rise above the crowd. Remember, the only difference between the word ordinary and *extraordinary* is that little "extra."

The principle of the extra mile touches on a spiritual law. We reap what we sow. When we do more than is required, great blessings are returned to us in the same manner we gave those blessings out through the principle of going the extra mile.

Of course, one of the greatest benefits of going the extra mile is that it provides the best opportunity to influence others for Christ. Very few people go the extra mile, so when someone does it, people notice. People will want to know why you forgave instead of retaliated. People will want to know why you are working on that project an extra hour at work. People will want to know why you are doing more than is required. And you will be able to tell them it is because of the love of Jesus in your heart.

I remember a lady in another church I served who was a friend of many people in the church, but she never came to church. She would show up to outside events like concerts and festivals, but she never came to worship or Bible studies. She claimed she had issues with God and organized religion. Finally, she showed up to worship one day and the whole church was buzzing about it. A couple of weeks later I asked her what influenced her to come to worship. She told me something I will never forget. She said there was a man she knew at work who was betrayed by a friend. She told me that her coworker forgave his friend and that she never saw anyone do that before. She was amazed. She found out he was a Christian. She said, "I wanted what he had. That's why I have come to church."

Go the extra mile. You never know what a

difference it will make.

### **Live By the Golden Rule**

The premise behind the Golden Rule is not unique to Jesus. Long before Jesus, philosophers would speak of this idea. However, before Jesus, it was always in the passive sense: "Don't do unto others that you would not want done unto you." In other words, don't harm others.

When Jesus came along, he radicalized this rule by making it active. He said, "DO unto others that you would want DONE unto you." In other words, Jesus was saying, "Project yourself on to the people you see every day. Think about how you would like people treating you. Then go do that!" Anybody can keep their hands to themselves and not harm people. But it takes someone empowered by the love of God to actively seek ways to treat others right.

If you live your life by the Golden Rule, you will rise above the crowd. Let me give you an example. Most of us don't have many nice things to say about the airline industry. Over the last several years, most airline companies have laid off many people and scaled back their customer service. Many of them have gone belly up while some of the CEO's have run off with lots of money. However, there is one airline that has risen above the crowd. There is one airline that has never gone bankrupt or had to lay off anyone. There is one airline company that has made money every year it has been in business. The airline is Southwest.

The reason Southwest has been so successful is because the business is run by the Golden Rule. The former CEO, Herb Kelleher, believed in one principle above everything else – treat the employees right. Kelleher believed that if you treat the employees right, you will treat the customers right. When Kelleher received a profit through his stocks so did the mechanics through their profit sharing program. When someone was promoted and given a raise, they would not lay that person off and hire someone cheaper to make more profit. They encouraged loyalty and they got it. And because the employees were happy, they began to make the customers happy. The rest is history. Why? Because Herb Kelleher ran his company by the Golden Rule.

Go the extra mile. Live by the Golden Rule.

### **Make Other People Feel Important**

This sums up what I am seeking to express to you today. In fact, in many ways, it sums up the teachings of Jesus. Make other people feel important because they are! God made them. They are special.

Think of the people you love to be around. Chances are you like being around them because they

make you feel good about yourself. They make you feel like a million dollars.

So, how do we make other people feel important? It is really pretty simple. One of the things we can do is remember people's names and call people by their names. The old adage by Dale Carnegie is true: "The sweetest sound a person will ever hear is the sound of their own name." It is true.

I learned this lesson a few weeks ago as I was walking from my office to the gym. On my way, I ran into a familiar lady who had a name tag on. I looked at her name tag and called her by name. She was floored. She said, "Your recall is amazing! I'm only here two months out of the year and you remember my name!" Well, she obviously forgot the she was wearing a name tag. So, I had to be honest. I said, "Well, I cannot lie. You are wearing a name tag." She said, "Oh! I forgot!" But I will never forget the look on her face when she heard me call her name!

Another thing we can do to make other people feel important is by simply smiling at them. A smile can do amazing things. A smile can light up a room. Most people walk around with a sour look on their face. Smile and the whole world just might smile with you.

I remember being in the post office several months ago. It was a Saturday and it was crowded. People were waiting in line and they were all fidgety and frustrated. There was a lady in front of me in line who was very agitated. For some reason, she turned around, and I just smiled at her. She replied, "Thanks." I said, "For what?" She said, "For smiling at me. I can't remember the last time someone smiled at me. I needed that." A smile can do more than we think.

Of course, one of the best ways to make people feel important is to get them to talk about themselves. You want to be an interesting person? Then act interested! Because people's favorite subject is themselves! People will rise up and call you blessed if you get them to talk about themselves. It happens to me all the time. Someone will come into my office or I will see them at the store and I will ask them about themselves and they will tell me and I will listen. They say, "I just love talking with you. You are so insightful. You are a great counselor." And I am thinking, "I just asked them three questions about themselves. They did all the talking." But what am I doing? I am listening. You know how rare it is to find someone who just listens to us. Listening is the highest form of love.

I learned this lesson at a dinner party a while back. I met a man at the party by the name of Tom. We got into a corner and started talking. And he asked me about my favorite subject – golf! For an hour he just asked me questions about golf and I was off to the races talking about the swing, and courses and clubs.

Well, at the end of the party I told the hosts how great Tom was. Then I asked them where Tom played golf. They said, "Tom doesn't play golf! Tom hates golf!" I said, "What? Are we talking about the same Tom?" They said, "Yeah, we heard you talking to him Charley!" I said, "I don't understand. Why would he ask me about something that he didn't like?" The host said, "Well, that is just the kind of guy Tom is. He knew you were interested in it." Wow! I never forgot that guy!

Go the extra mile. Live by the Golden Rule. Make other people feel important. And watch as you rise above the crowd.

Let me conclude the series by saying this. As you seek to live the dream of God it will be very easy for you to get distracted. But just keep your eyes on Jesus. It's like the story of the three boys who were playing in a snowy field one day. They were rolling in it, having a ball. Their neighbor noticed them and came outside and asked them if they wanted a race. He said he would have a prize for the winner. The boys agreed. But the neighbor said, "The race is not going to go to the fastest. It will go to the one who runs in the straightest line." The boys lined up and he said, "Ready, set, go!" And they were off. The first boy just kept looking his feet as he ran to see how straight he was going. The second boy kept looking at the other boys to see how straight they were running. But the third boy understood the race. All he did was look at the man as he ran. And he won the race.

As you seek to live the abundant life, don't look down on yourself and focus on your shortcomings and mistakes. And don't compare yourself to others or listen to your critics. Just be yourself and keep your eyes on Jesus and you will win in life. You will win the abundant life. Amen.