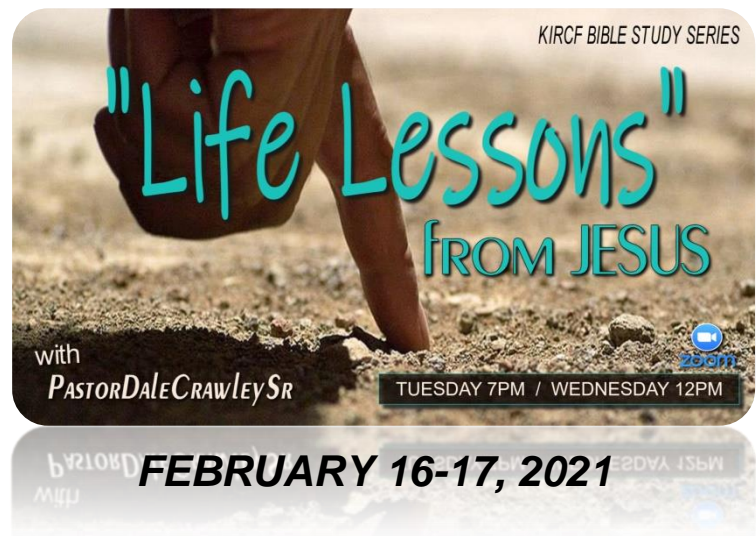


5 - "Always Go Beyond What Is Required"

⁴⁰ *If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also.* ⁴¹ ***And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two.*** ⁴² *Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away."*

--- Matthew 5:40-42 (NKJV)



How we receive advice depends a great deal on who's dispensing it. If your doctor tells you to quit smoking, yet you can see a pack of cigarettes through his shirt pocket, you're less likely to take his advice. You wouldn't pay a personal trainer who doesn't look fit their self ... you wouldn't want to go for counseling advice to someone whose own life seems to be a total mess ... and you wouldn't hire an atheist pastor.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gives advice on ... How to live according to the vision and values of God ... How to live as if we were already in God's realm, God's kingdom, and ... How to live in a way that will make earth more like heaven. People listened because His life testified to the wisdom and power of His words. He embodied a strength, a love and a character that drew people to Him. He lived these words. He walked the walk. His life had authenticity and integrity. So people listened!

- The advice isn't easy. Love your neighbor, but also love your enemies. Pray for those who persecute you. Who wants to live that way, to choose a more difficult path? Life is hard enough already. But people listened, because of the person giving the advice.

THE UNCOMFORTABLE THING JESUS SAID

"Go the extra mile", Jesus said. Here's what that means. In the days of the Roman Empire ... political and military leaders could grab citizens off the streets and enlist their help. "Here," they'd say to a strong looking man, "*help me carry my belongings for a while.*" It would give the traveling soldier a break. If the man had an animal, the animal would become the pack mule for the Roman entourage. This happened often.

Jesus was referring to the Roman law that allowed any Roman soldier to stop a Jewish man on the road and compel him to drop what he was carrying in order to assist the Roman soldier in bearing his load, or, the soldier could have simply made the Jew carry his load out of laziness or a power trip. **However, the law only required the Israelite to walk one mile for the soldier. Not two. Only one!**

So when Jesus said, *“If someone forces you to go one mile,”* people knew what He was talking about. ***It was a kind of abuse, a kind of temporary slavery!***

But there is a clever, clever wisdom to Jesus’ advice. Imagine in this context, someone forcing you to carry their heavy backpack for one mile. You reach the mile marker ... the person stops, expecting you to stop as well, and relieve yourself of the burden ... But you just smile and say, *“Oh, I’ve decided to walk another mile with you.”* **There’s a shift of power here!** You had no choice in the first mile, but now you are exercising your agency. And you do it in a way that shocks the oppressor! ***A bit of power has shifted from them ... To You!***

Going the extra mile is a way of saying to the world, *“I live according to different values.”* Going the extra mile is living according to different rules, God-centered rules. It means willing to be different, to stand out. ***Jesus tells His listeners to go beyond obligation ... TO ALWAYS GO BEYOND WHAT IS REQUIRED. The second mile is not an obligation ... it is an opportunity!***

WE MISS THE OPPORTUNITY THAT OFTEN LIES IN DOING THE DIFFICULT

We Quit Too Quickly. We want to get by with the absolute minimum. We bail out after our obligation is completed. In looking for the easiest path ... we fail to develop the muscle and the endurance for the second mile ... and we miss the opportunity that most often lies in doing the difficult ... and denying our rights to rest, relaxation and respite.

The only way for the good to win over the evil was to go beyond the expectation. The second mile in our lives makes the “Roman” world ask why we would go the extra distance under such a heavy burden. The second mile opens up conversations that would never happen in the first mile. The second mile makes us better humans and better Christians. It builds the muscle we need to carry the Gospel and the endurance we need to remain faithful *through* the seasons of life and not just *for* a season of life.

Always Go Beyond Obligation ... You will only find opportunity when you walk the second mile. Don't worry about the burden wearing you out. You can rest when you reach your destination!

Always Go Beyond What Is Required ... In your career, in your business, in your relationships, in your service, in loving others, and in everything you do. Pursue excellence in all your undertakings.

- Go the Extra Mile in Forgiveness
- Go the Extra Mile in Giving
- Go the Extra Mile in Service ... ***ALWAYS GO BEYOND WHAT IS REQUIRED!***