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Go the Extra Mile

In Matthew 5:41 Jesus said, “And whoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.” I am told that, when the passage was written, the Jews were under the bondage of Rome and that a Roman soldier could compel a Jewish boy to carry his pack for one mile. I’ve also read that Jewish boys would go out one mile in every direction and mark the spot; then, when a Roman soldier compelled him to carry the pack, he would take it to that spot and drop it, as if to say, “That’s all I have to do, and I’m not carrying it a step further.”

Jesus said this was not the Christian attitude. He said, ‘If you’re compelled to go one mile, go twain.’ I refer to this as the “second-mile philosophy,” doing more than you have to, doing more than is expected. It is one of the great secrets of success.

Years ago I read this little statement, “The man who succeeds in life is the man who does more than is necessary and keeps on doing it.”

E. J. Daniels once said, “Show me a man who’s looking for payday and sundown, and I’ll show you a man who will not get very far in life.”

It’s the second-miler who makes himself indispensable to the boss and company. It’s the second-miler who has a happy marriage and good relationships.

First Corinthians 15:58 says, “. . .always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.” The word *abound* means “more than enough.” So here the Bible is teaching the second-mile philosophy—always doing more than enough in the work of the Lord, going the extra mile, doing the unexpected.

People usually do not appreciate you for doing what you’re expected to do but rather for doing the unexpected. A wife very seldom, if ever, thanks her husband for paying the house note, furnishing money for groceries, utilities, clothes and all the other big items. He’s expected to do this. This is going the first mile. But if that same husband brings home a dozen roses for some special occasion, she tells all her friends about it. Why? Because he’s done the unexpected; he’s gone the second mile.

A chaplain in the army noticed that some men in his company missed their wives more than others. So he set out to find out why. In interviewing the men who seemed to miss their wives the most, he asked, “What is it you miss about your wife?” To his surprise, it wasn’t the big things but the little, unexpected things. One man said, “My wife shampooed my hair every Saturday night. It was something I looked forward to. And when Saturday night comes, I think about it.”

Another man said his wife manicured his nails. Another mentioned the fact that his wife would rub his shoulders a few minutes every night after he would come home from a hard day’s work. In each case it was something small, something unexpected, where the wife had gone the second mile. The second-mile wives were missed the most.

It you want to make your boss and company proud of you, don’t

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just do what's expected: go the extra mile and do a little more than they expect. If you want to make your parents happy, go the extra mile and do more than they expect.

When I was pastor of a small church in Atlanta, Georgia, I was aware that I did not have the educational background of other preachers in the area. So I reasoned,

They may be more educated than I am. They may be better speakers. And for the most part, they may have better personalities. But not a preacher in town has more time in a day than I have. And I can work as hard as any of them.

I soon learned that the margin of success was going the extra mile. I spent more time visiting, calling on people and winning souls. I've often passed some of those preachers' homes and seen them relaxing in their backyards while I was still out making calls. As a result of going the extra mile, we saw that tiny church grow from thirty or forty members to over 8,000 members and become the largest church in the state of Georgia; and, in 1972, the fastest growing church in the nation, increasing our attendance 846 per Sunday over the 1971 average.

In the last five years we were there, the church was the largest and fastest growing in the state. One of the secrets: going the extra mile.