

MORE BLESSED

THE POWER OF SECOND MILE LIVING

DALE A. O'SHIELDS

MORE BLESSED - THE POWER OF SECOND MILE LIVING

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MORE BLESSED INTRODUCTION



Jesus' teachings are filled with life principles. One is the principle of "the second mile." Here's what Jesus said:

**"IF ANYONE FORCES YOU TO GO ONE MILE,
GO WITH THEM TWO MILES."**

— Matthew 5:41 (NIV)

What did Jesus mean? What's the principle of the second mile?

During Jesus' day, Israel was occupied by the Romans. This meant Roman soldiers were deployed in the region to keep peace and protect Rome's interests. These soldiers wore armor and carried supplies on their backs. They were stationed around the country, visible to the population.

According to the law of the day—the impressment law—any Israelite citizen could be forced to carry a soldier’s load for them. However, this duty was limited to one Roman mile. Once the mile was completed, the compelled person was free from the requirement, could release the burden, and continue on their way.

Jesus raised the standard for His followers. He instructed them to do something more. They were to go beyond the call of duty, generously serving others. Instead of dropping the backpack at the mile marker, they were to continue another mile—a second mile—out of kindness and love. They were to do this sacrificially and joyously, without expectation of reward. This would likely earn the respect and appreciation of those they served and reflect God’s love to them.

The principle of “the second mile” can and should be applied to all aspects of life. As followers of Jesus, our calling is to go beyond the ordinary and expected in our love for and service to others. “Second mile” living is extraordinary serving and giving. It’s doing extra for others without expectation of compensation or reward.

Jesus, during His earthly ministry, demonstrated this way of life many times and in many ways. One example is seen the evening before His crucifixion. In an upper room in Jerusalem, Jesus did something incredible. He demonstrated “second mile” service. He did what others weren’t willing to do. He washed the feet of His disciples.

Jesus concluded the foot washing with these words:

“YOU CALL ME ‘TEACHER’ AND ‘LORD,’ AND RIGHTLY SO, FOR THAT IS WHAT I AM. NOW THAT I, YOUR LORD AND TEACHER, HAVE WASHED YOUR FEET, YOU ALSO SHOULD WASH ONE ANOTHER’S FEET. I HAVE SET YOU AN EXAMPLE THAT YOU SHOULD DO AS I HAVE DONE FOR YOU.”

— John 13:13-15 (NIV)

“Second mile” living not only blesses others, but it also positions us for blessings from God. Quoting Jesus, Paul, the great apostle of the first-century church, reminded us of the blessing of “second mile” generosity and service:

“...REMEMBERING THE WORDS THE LORD JESUS HIMSELF SAID: ‘IT IS MORE BLESSED TO GIVE THAN TO RECEIVE.’ ”

— Acts 20:35 (NIV)

The “second mile” life is the “more blessed” life!

This devotional contains 25 ways to go the “second mile” in serving others. They are exercises of the spirit and soul. Practicing these will grow your heart and prayerfully build the habit of “second mile” living in your life.

These devotionals aren’t designed for our consideration only. They’re a pathway to a more blessed life—a “second mile” life.

Pastor Dale

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be the initials 'Dale' in a stylized, cursive script.

THE GIFT OF ENCOURAGEMENT



You've felt it, and millions around the world fight it daily. It's called discouragement. It's weariness of heart and mind; a sense of an "empty tank" in one's soul. It's the voice within draining confidence, calling for resignation, or demanding acceptance of limitations.

The one antidote for discouragement is consistent doses of encouragement. This usually comes in the form of words spoken to us by others into our lives.

There's a man in the Bible known for his gift of encouragement. His name, Barnabas, actually means "son of encouragement."

He showed up in Paul's life when most people, even Christian believers, didn't trust his conversion to Jesus Christ. Barnabas did! Barnabas became a friend and partner to Paul. During a critical period of time, Barnabas kept Paul encouraged.

Barnabas also stayed close to a young man named John Mark after a disappointing failure in Mark's life. He kept Mark encouraged. We have Barnabas to thank, in part,

for the Gospel of Mark. His encouragement made a huge difference in Mark's life.

How about you? Are you a Barnabas? Do people feel encouraged by your presence and words, or do you add to the stress and worry of others? How will you go the "second mile" today, and every day, generously giving and encouraging others?

**"THEREFORE ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER AND BUILD
EACH OTHER UP, JUST AS IN FACT YOU ARE DOING."**

— 1 Thessalonians 5:11 (NIV)

THE GIFT OF KINDNESS



Our world, in many ways, is a very unkind place. It's often referred to in canine terms—a “dog-eat-dog” world.

Because kindness is such a rarity, the smallest expressions truly stand out. A kind gesture, a kind word, a kind smile, all of these make a major impact on others. An act of kindness can literally change a person's life.

David, the Old Testament king, was a kind man. He formed a friendship with a man named Jonathan, King Saul's son. David promised to show kindness to Jonathan's family after he became king. Years later, after Jonathan's death, David fulfilled this promise.

Jonathan had a son who was crippled. His name was Mephibosheth. Mephibosheth was unable to care for himself or provide for his needs. He was living in a depressed state—a kind of emotional exile.

When David found out about him, he immediately brought him to his palace, restored his land, and gave him a regular place at his royal table. From that time forward, Mephibosheth never wanted for anything. The kindness

of David gave him a new level of respect and dignity. Kindness changed Mephibosheth's life.

Whose life could you change by being a bit kinder? How will you go the "second mile" in showing kindness to others today?

"AND BE KIND TO ONE ANOTHER..."

— Ephesians 4:32 (NKJV)

THE GIFT OF TIME



Time is the great equalizer. We all have 24 hours each day, 168 hours each week. The difference in one person's life and another's is often the result of what's done with time.

In reality, our time is our life. What we do with our time is what we do with our lives. It reflects our values and priorities. It's a mark of our character—good or bad; wise or foolish.

Time is a fleeting thing. It's much like sand flowing downward in an hourglass. None of us knows the size of the glass or the amount of sand allotted to us. At some point, our final grain will drop, and life here will be over.

This awareness of fleeting time should sober us. It's sad to consider how much time is wasted. Wasted time is a wasted life.

Because of the precious and limited nature of time, it's one of the most valuable gifts we'll ever give to someone. An investment of our time in someone communicates their importance to God and to us.

Paul, the first-century apostle, understood the importance of giving time to others. After his conversion to Christ, he spent as much time as possible visiting churches and spending time with believers. He also dedicated his valuable time to sharing the good news of Jesus with people who didn't yet personally know Him. He poured his life out for others through the wise investment of his time.

There are people with great potential all around us. A gift of time could bring their potential into reality. Whether at home, in your neighborhood, at school, or at work, candidates for time investments are waiting for you. Your time can make a difference in their lives.

What are you doing with your time? If you knew you only had a small amount left in the hourglass of your life, how would you invest it?

How will you use your time today to show God's love to the people in your world? How will you go the "second mile" with your time?

"LOOK CAREFULLY THEN HOW YOU WALK, NOT AS UNWISE BUT AS WISE, MAKING THE BEST USE OF THE TIME, BECAUSE THE DAYS ARE EVIL."

— Ephesians 5:15-16 (ESV)

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THE GIFT OF LISTENING



What's one of the greatest ways to serve others? A quick glance in the mirror reveals the answer. If you're observant and have some basic math skills, you'll see one mouth and two ears!

Strangely enough, we reverse this anatomical reality in the way we live. Most of us talk a lot more than we listen. And when we're supposedly "listening," we're often preoccupied with formulating what we'll say next, rather than actually paying attention to what's being said.

There's great power in listening. It's a pathway to learning. We generally aren't learning when we're talking; we're learning when we're listening. Wise people keep their mouths shut more often than foolish people. That's how they became wise!

While listening benefits us in many ways, it's also a great benefit to others. A listening ear helps people sort through confusing thoughts, find direction, make better life decisions, and de-escalate destructive emotions. Listening is a key therapeutic ingredient in helping someone experience inner healing. It validates a person's

worth. Listening communicates love and care.

God is the Great Listener. The pages of Scripture are filled with examples of God listening to people. We're invited to talk to Him regularly, expressing the deepest desires and burdens of our hearts. When we listen well to others, we demonstrate a godly characteristic.

Think of the people in your world who need a listener in their life—a therapeutic listener. You don't need a degree or a fancy certification to be a good listener. Just some practice!

Who would benefit from your listening ear today? How will you become a better listener? How will you go the "second mile," lending your ear to someone in need?

**"MY DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS, TAKE NOTE OF THIS:
EVERYONE SHOULD BE QUICK TO LISTEN, SLOW TO SPEAK AND
SLOW TO BECOME ANGRY..."**

— JAMES 1:19 (NIV)

THE GIFT OF EMPATHY



Life often deals us hard blows. We experience disappointments, losses, failures, regrets, hurts, misunderstandings, betrayals, and a whole host of other tragic and traumatic events. Healthy people navigate these situations with wisdom, resilience, and grace, emerging stronger and healthier. They learn to rely on God's grace and promises. They begin to trust again by building the right relationships with the right people.

As we heal from the blows of life, it's important for us to be there for others who are in the midst of the process. One way we achieve this is through empathy.

Empathy is the ability to connect with someone in their journey to God, to healing, and to wholeness. It's putting oneself in another's shoes without condoning bad attitudes or behaviors, destructive habits, or unhelpful blame and excuses. Empathy is non-judgmental, helpful, uplifting of others. It says, "I'm aware, and understand (or want to understand) what you're going through. I'm here for you!"

Empathetic people aren't dismissive. They're not glib or Pollyannish. They're not condescending. They're not "holier than thou." They create a "walking with you," not a "walking above you" atmosphere.

Unfortunately, the ranks of empathetic people are thin. The world could use many more people who place themselves in the shoes of others, see their perspectives, and genuinely help others navigate through life's difficulties.

Jesus is this kind of Savior. He faced every kind of problem and temptation we face, without sinning or failing, and because of this, He's empathetic toward us. He walks with us through the valleys of life, getting us safely to the other side.

How empathetic are you? What steps can you take to become more empathetic? How will you go the "second mile" to show empathy to someone today?

"PRAISE BE TO THE GOD AND FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, THE FATHER OF COMPASSION AND THE GOD OF ALL COMFORT, WHO COMFORTS US IN ALL OUR TROUBLES, SO THAT WE CAN COMFORT THOSE IN ANY TROUBLE WITH THE COMFORT WE OURSELVES RECEIVE FROM GOD."

— 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 (NIV)

THE GIFT OF FORGIVENESS



How generous are you? We most frequently define generosity in financial or material terms. While this is a big part of generosity, it's only one part.

Generosity goes beyond acts of material giving. Its biggest test often comes in our relationships. When we've been hurt, offended, or mistreated by someone, our hearts can quickly become bitter, hard, and small. The "payback" bug bites us. We're infected with resentment, bitterness, and the desire for revenge. We hold grudges we're not willing to give up.

Note the phrase "not willing to give up." It says it all. We become the opposite of generous.

The only cure for this infection is to "for-give." It's giving the gift of grace to someone. Forgiveness has nothing to do with whether a person deserves it or has acknowledged their wrong to us. It's gifting the offender (or perceived offender) with the same grace God gives us.

While forgiving someone is certainly meaningful to the person receiving it, it's more beneficial to us. It removes

poison from our soul—a poison that shrinks and shrivels our hearts and infiltrates other relationships.

Generous people give the gift of forgiveness. Without making excuses for someone's wrong actions or minimizing the pain or impact of their offense, forgiveness releases grace to the trespasser; thereby releasing God's grace to us. Forgiveness is a decision, not a feeling. It's obedience to God.

Who are you holding captive in your soul through resentment? What grudge are you nursing? What bitterness are you feeding? Who do you desperately need to forgive, for their good, but also for your own?

Decide to forgive today. Give up what you perceive as your “right” to revenge. Go the “second mile” in extending God's grace.

“GET RID OF ALL BITTERNESS, RAGE AND ANGER, BRAWLING AND SLANDER, ALONG WITH EVERY FORM OF MALICE. BE KIND AND COMPASSIONATE TO ONE ANOTHER, FORGIVING EACH OTHER, JUST AS IN CHRIST GOD FORGAVE YOU. FOLLOW GOD'S EXAMPLE, THEREFORE, AS DEARLY LOVED CHILDREN AND WALK IN THE WAY OF LOVE, JUST AS CHRIST LOVED US AND GAVE HIMSELF UP FOR US AS A FRAGRANT OFFERING AND SACRIFICE TO GOD.”

—Ephesians 4:31–5:2 (NIV)

THE GIFT OF GRACE



While we often think of grace in terms of forgiveness, it goes far beyond this. Graciousness is an incredibly valuable quality.

Gracious people are courteous and polite. They're tactful, considering how their words and actions impact others. They're attentive to the needs and desires of others. They're sensitive to their surroundings and seek to act appropriately and inoffensively.

Without rigidity or stodginess, they discern and follow proper protocols. Their warmth permeates their interactions, and their generosity of spirit is evident and appreciated by others.

Gracious people are also poised. Their feathers aren't easily ruffled. They're not given to high emotions or drama. Their presence creates a steadying, calming atmosphere. They're pleasant to be around, making others feel important and special.

When I think of gracious people in the Bible, I think of an Old Testament character named Abigail. She was married to a man named Nabal, who was quite surly and foolish

(his name actually means fool). When Nabal treated David badly, risking his life and livelihood, Abigail stepped in with grace and tactfully spoke to David, causing him to abort his impending attack against her husband and household. The story is found in 1 Samuel 25.

Gracious people are the lubricants to the harshness of our world. They take the edge off elevated emotions and help drive down rising relational tensions. They're a special breed!

How gracious are you? Do you lose your cool easily? Do you make environments better or worse?

What will you do today to become more gracious? What relationships and environments do you need to bring a greater measure of grace into? How will you go the "second mile" to demonstrate grace in your life?

"BUT GROW IN THE GRACE AND KNOWLEDGE OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST..."

— 2 Peter 3:18 (NIV)

THE GIFT OF PATIENCE



Perhaps you've heard of the man who prayed this desperate prayer, "Lord, please give me patience, and give it to me now!"

We've all been in situations when we needed a quick, divine outpouring of patience. But this isn't the way it works.

Patience is a developed quality. When we respond the right way to the challenges and tests that come our way, patience grows. Practicing patience creates the habit of patience.

Patience protects us from the consequences of impatience. Impatient people make poor decisions. Impatience is primarily felt in two areas of life: in our circumstances and in our relationships.

When facing difficult seasons or situations, we want change—fast change. This can lead to rash decisions or running from problems, only to create more problems. Lots of foolish things have been done by impatient people. Patience involves waiting our way through challenging times in life.

Our patience is also tested with people. The slowness of someone to change, to act, to cooperate, to produce, to contribute, or to engage can be extremely frustrating. This frustration often affects our attitudes, actions, and interactions with family, friends, co-workers, and neighbors. Before long, walls are built, resentment forms, and relationships spiral downward.

Patience is the willingness to wait. It involves letting go of our timelines. It's accepting things we can't control or change. It's realizing great things don't usually happen quickly. It's acknowledging God's timing as superior to our own.

Who have you grown impatient with? Who have you judged as "too slow" for you? How is impatience hurting your relationships?

What will you do today to practice patience with people? How will you go the "second mile" to become a more patient person?

"LOVE IS PATIENT..."

— 1 Corinthians 13:4 (NIV)

THE GIFT OF COMPASSION



During the Crimean War (1853–1856), a very compassionate lady stepped onto the stage of history. Her name? Florence Nightingale. Florence led a team of nurses to care for hospitalized British soldiers.

When she first arrived at her post, she discovered extremely unsanitary conditions. More soldiers were dying of infection than from war wounds. Florence busied herself cleaning floors, changing bed sheets, providing uncontaminated water, improving meals, and bringing in fresh air. She roamed the hospital halls at night with a lamp, speaking comforting and encouraging words to the bedridden men. Florence became known as The Lady with the Lamp.

What were the results of her efforts? In addition to dramatic improvements in morale, hospital death tolls dropped from 42% to 2%.

This is the power of simple, compassionate action!

This is the story of the Good Samaritan. It's found in Luke 10. When certain people refused to do anything to assist a beaten, traumatized man, one Samaritan chose

compassion. He washed, sanitized, and bandaged the man's wounds. He provided for the wounded man's care. He fulfilled the calling of a Good Neighbor.

How compassionate are you? Do you go out of your way to alleviate pain and suffering? Are your eyes open to the people in your world who need a compassionate helping hand?

What will you do today to increase your awareness of needs around you? How will you go the "second mile" to care for your "neighbors?"

"THEN A DESPISED SAMARITAN CAME ALONG, AND WHEN HE SAW THE MAN, HE FELT COMPASSION FOR HIM. GOING OVER TO HIM, THE SAMARITAN SOOTHED HIS WOUNDS WITH OLIVE OIL AND WINE AND BANDAGED THEM. THEN HE PUT THE MAN ON HIS OWN DONKEY AND TOOK HIM TO AN INN, WHERE HE TOOK CARE OF HIM. THE NEXT DAY HE HANDED THE INNKEEPER TWO SILVER COINS, TELLING HIM, 'TAKE CARE OF THIS MAN. IF HIS BILL RUNS HIGHER THAN THIS, I'LL PAY YOU THE NEXT TIME I'M HERE.' "NOW WHICH OF THESE THREE WOULD YOU SAY WAS A NEIGHBOR TO THE MAN WHO WAS ATTACKED BY BANDITS?" JESUS ASKED. THE MAN REPLIED, "THE ONE WHO SHOWED HIM MERCY." THEN JESUS SAID, "YES, NOW GO AND DO THE SAME."

— Luke 10:33–37 (NLT)

THE GIFT OF HOPE



The look in her eyes and the distress in her voice communicated one thing—despair. As she considered her current life conditions, it was clear she had little expectation that her situation would improve.

What this lady needed most was hope. More than solutions to her problems, she needed a sliver of confidence—a belief life would somehow, some way, at some time, get better.

The name of this lady? Hannah. She had lost all hope that her prayers would be answered. Her despair left her staggering in a drunken-like state. Yet in the midst of her distress and agony, she continued to pray.

If you know Hannah's story (you can find it in 1 Samuel 1), you'll recall that Hannah's prayer contained a serious commitment to God. Eli, the priest, eventually spoke words of promise to Hannah, and the promise revived her hope. It changed everything.

While Eli wasn't always a shining example of godliness, at least he got it right on this occasion. He did something all

of us should do regularly. He imparted hope to a hurting soul.

Hope keeps people going in the hardest moments of life. It's the weak, flickering flame of a candle in the darkest room, the very dim light at the end of a long tunnel, the slightest ray of sunlight barely peaking through foreboding clouds. Hope is the beginning point for any turnaround. When it's ignited, things begin to change in us. This often leads to changes in the circumstances around us.

Hope-givers are powerful people. They lift burdens. They inspire perseverance. They comfort the distressed. They bring light to a dark world.

Are you a “doom and gloomer,” or are you a hope giver?

What will you do today to give someone the gift of hope? How will you go the “second mile” to inspire someone to believe in and trust the promises of God for their lives?

**“CARRY EACH OTHER’S BURDENS, AND IN THIS WAY YOU WILL
FULFILL THE LAW OF CHRIST.”**

—Galatians 6:2 (NIV)

THE GIFT OF AFFIRMATION



It's something we all long for and need.
It's called affirmation.

Affirmation is the verbal acknowledgment of value communicated by one person to another. It's the expression of pleasure in what someone is, more so than what they do.

Our world is far more focused on doing than being. One of the first questions people ask when meeting someone for the first time is "What do you do?"

While this can be a very useful piece of information, providing meaningful connecting points, the constant pressure of "definition by doing" is all around us. Very seldom are people affirmed for their character and worth.

It's helpful to remember the difference between a "human being" and a "human doing." We're first and foremost the former, not the latter. We matter because we're creations of a loving, caring God, who designed each person with and for a purpose.

The power of affirmation is seen in the life of Jesus Himself. At His baptism, before Jesus did any miracles or taught astounding lessons, His Father broadcast affirmation from heaven for those present to hear: “This is my Son, with whom I am well pleased.” (Matthew 3:17)

What powerful words! Jesus pleased His Father. The Father made sure to communicate His affirmation to His Son.

Many have never heard meaningful words of affirmation from a caring person. We can remedy this by speaking words of life to those God has placed in our orbit.

How affirming are you to others? Do you focus more on people as human beings or human doings? How will you go the “second mile” to speak life to others?

“DO NOT LET ANY UNWHOLESOME TALK COME OUT OF YOUR MOUTHS, BUT ONLY WHAT IS HELPFUL FOR BUILDING OTHERS UP ACCORDING TO THEIR NEEDS, THAT IT MAY BENEFIT THOSE WHO LISTEN.”

— Ephesians 4:29 (NIV)

THE GIFT OF APPRECIATION



“I appreciate you!” This simple statement can be air in a person’s emotional balloon. To be recognized for one’s contributions, for the value added, the sacrifices made, and the good done is powerful. It’s inspirational and motivational.

Paul, an apostle of the first-century church, was a man full of appreciation. In his New Testament letters, Paul frequently expressed appreciation to God and to others.

One example of this is found in the last chapter of the Book of Romans (Romans 16). Paul dedicated an entire chapter to thanking people for the various ways they helped him, assisted churches, blessed saints, served God and others. He called people out by name, honoring them and thanking them for what they’d done. He showed appreciation.

We should be quick to say thank you to anyone and everyone who is a blessing in our lives, especially to those closest to us.

Sometimes, the people getting the least appreciation from us are those we’re most familiar with and around the

most. We easily take people like spouses, family members, and co-workers for granted. We expect them to know we appreciate them. Worse still, we begin feeling entitled to their efforts.

Expecting someone to know we appreciate them is negligent. The cycle of appreciation isn't complete without communication. Expressing personal appreciation to the people in our lives is a spiritual and relational practice we should engage in regularly.

Who are some folks you appreciate? What do you appreciate about them? When was the last time you told them? How will you consistently go the “second mile” in expressing your appreciation to the good people in your life?

“I THANK MY GOD EVERY TIME I REMEMBER YOU.”

— Philippians 1:3 (NIV)

THE GIFT OF PEACE



There's a powerful Bible verse in the Old Testament Book of Proverbs listing seven things God hates (see Proverbs 6:16-19). The New King James Version of the English Bible describes the seventh abominable quality with these words, "...one who sows discord among brethren."

The imagery of sowing discord is that of a farmer planting seeds. In this case, it's planting seeds of division, confusion, contention, suspicion, distrust, and disharmony. God is hurt and offended by such people.

If we know what God hates, it's easy to determine what He loves. God values peacemakers. He's pleased with people who put great effort into healing wounds, closing gaps, and bringing unity and harmony in relationships.

It's helpful to think of ourselves carrying two bags of seed every day. In any relational situation we step into, we can draw seed out of the discord bag or the peacemaking bag. One handful of seed creates division, the other harmony. The choice is ours. Through our words and actions, good or bad seed is sown.

Unfortunately, we often fail to consider the bag we're drawing from. We allow ourselves to slip into gossip, making disruptive comments, or casting suspicions or aspersions on others. We drop the seed, walk away, without realizing the damage we've done.

What kind of seeds are you planting? Do you do more harm than good with your words, or do you conscientiously work to create harmony and unity?

What will you do to rid yourself of the discord bag? How will you go the "second mile" to avoid creating division and strife? How will you promote peace?

**"BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS, FOR THEY
WILL BE CALLED CHILDREN OF GOD."**

— Matthew 5:9 (NIV)

THE GIFT OF APOLOGIES



“I’m sorry. I was wrong. Please forgive me.”

It’s amazing how tough it is for many people to utter these words. Just reading the statement makes some folks uncomfortable! They’d rather take a beating than admit they’re wrong about anything.

Others may adjust their apologies with carefully chosen, deflecting caveats. The “I’m sorry you feel that way” is one example. The ownership of the apology is tempered by placing some (or all) blame on the other person.

Where does a resistance to apologizing come from? It doesn’t take brilliant analysis to figure this out. It originates from one of four sources (or a combination of the four): a lack of self-awareness (we fail to recognize our own issues for what they are), fear and insecurity, a sense of pride (we believe we are right and others are wrong), or stubbornness.

Obviously, these are unhealthy and unholy character traits. They’re destructive to us and to our relationships. How much better our lives would be, and how much more

grace and love we'd experience if we quickly admitted our mistakes and apologized for our failures.

Many broken relationships would take a major step toward healing through this one simple act. When we own our part in a problem, we're opening the door for reconciliation and restoration.

Who do you need to apologize to? Make a list of names. Identify the specific things you need to apologize for. Then do it, without shifting any of the blame to others.

How will you develop a "quick to apologize" mindset? What will you do to address the underlying causes of your resistance? What steps will you take to go the "second mile," being quick to apologize?

**"BUT HE GIVES US MORE GRACE. THAT IS WHY
SCRIPTURE SAYS: 'GOD OPPOSES THE PROUD BUT
SHOWS FAVOR TO THE HUMBLE.'"**

— James 4:6 (NIV)

THE GIFT OF JOY



When was the last time someone brought you joy? What words or actions ignited joy in your heart?

There's an important connection between love and joy.

Much has been written about the power and importance of a person's love language. Dr. Gary Chapman popularized the phrase in his best-selling book, "The Five Love Languages." It's a worthy read.

Without reviewing the specifics of Chapman's book, the bottom line is that we all experience love in different ways. Knowing the love preferences of people in our lives helps us express love in the language they value, and ultimately, we tend to give love to others in the way we prefer to receive it. We must guard against this tendency.

Joy is a by-product of love. When someone does or says something communicating love in your own language, your heart rejoices.

This is a valuable truth for our relationships. One of our major responsibilities is to discover what's meaningful to others. We then know what brings them joy.

You can brighten someone's life by knowing their needs and desires and generously responding to them. It's not complicated.

Do you know the needs and desires of the closest people in your life? What is their love language? How can you become better equipped to bring them joy? What will you do to go the “second mile” in giving the gift of joy to others?

“YOUR LOVE HAS GIVEN ME GREAT JOY...”

— Philemon 1:7 (NIV)

THE GIFT OF **RESPECT**



After God created the heavens and earth, He introduced light and order into our world. This established the environment required for sustained life. The continuing account of creation describes God calling forth all kinds of life, climaxing with the creation of humanity. What's one message of the first chapter of the Bible? God is the Supreme Giver of Life!

When God inscribed the Ten Commandments on tablets of stone, He included a respect for life, "You shall not murder." (Exodus 20:13)

Jesus expanded on the importance of respecting life with these words, "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'You shall not murder...' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, 'Raca,' is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell." (Matthew 5:21-22)

Jesus calls us to higher moral standards than simply avoiding literal murder. He warns us against acting, speaking, or treating other people disrespectfully.

To be respected is a basic need in every human heart. Respect communicates dignity, worth, and value. It's demonstrated through our attitudes, actions, and words. It begins with seeing people as God sees them—as objects of His love.

Basic respect toward others doesn't depend on agreeing with someone's opinions, beliefs, or behavior. It's an awareness of their value in the eyes of God, and a desire to treat them accordingly.

How respectful are you? Do you view and value people as God views and values them? Who needs to feel your respect? What will you do today to go the “second mile” to demonstrate respect to others?

“SHOW PROPER RESPECT TO EVERYONE...”

— 1 Peter 2:17 (NIV)

THE GIFT OF GRATITUDE



“Thank you!” Such a short, simple statement. Along with “please,” it’s one of the phrases most parents teach their children early in life. They’re sometimes referred to as the two magic phrases.

Sadly, as we progress through life, it’s easy to forget to use them. We fall prey to life’s natural tendency to take good things and good people for granted. Both ordinary and extraordinary kindnesses and blessings slip past us with no acknowledgment of appreciation. Even worse, we grow to expect certain things from people and may start feeling entitled to them.

Even when ingratitude is unintentional, our failure to express appreciation to others has negative consequences. The absence of gratitude creates coldness, distance, frustration, and resentment. Many relationships have been destroyed by a shortage of appreciation. This problem is far more common than we acknowledge.

There’s a story from Jesus’ ministry illustrating the uncommonness of gratitude. One day, ten lepers came to Jesus for healing. Jesus graciously healed all ten of them.

Sadly, they went on their way without expressing any gratitude for their miraculous cure.

Finally, one decided to go back and say “Thank You” to Jesus. Think about this. One out of ten had the awareness and decency to communicate their appreciation to Jesus for what He’d done for them.

While much could and should be said about expressing gratitude to God, gratitude includes others, too. Every day, we’re the beneficiaries of the actions, care, and service of others. It’s likely there’s someone in your life who needs to hear a “thank you” from you.

“...BE THANKFUL.”

— Colossians 3:15 (NIV)

THE GIFT OF COMFORT



Beds often have a topping referred to as a “comforter.” It’s a type of blanket, typically made from layers of fabric sewn together and filled with insulation. It’s called a comforter because it comforts us. It’s designed to be cozy, producing a sense of security, creating warmth, and facilitating good rest.

Our English word “comfort” comes from a two-part Latin word: *com* meaning “together” and *fortis* meaning “strong or strength.” In our daily vocabulary, comfort refers to actions and experiences that communicate and impart strength, consolation, and encouragement to someone.

We all need to be comforted at times. There’s nothing quite like a true comforter showing up when we’re anxious, afraid, grieving some loss, grappling with a problem, or confused by a difficult set of circumstances. The actions of a genuine comforter bring strength and rest to our souls.

If anyone ever needed good comforters in his life, it was the Old Testament character Job. This man went through

terrible trials, troubles, and traumas. When you read the Bible's account of his life, you'll see "friends" showing up. However, instead of comforting Job, they succeeded in making him miserable. The accusations, blaming, and shaming of this poor man threatened to drive him deeper into depression. They made matters worse, not better.

Unfortunately—and often unintentionally—we frequently become modern-day examples of Job's "friends" to people in need. Instead of bringing strength, encouragement, and consolation to hurting hearts, we lay on layers of guilt, shame, and blame. We often walk away from interactions with people, congratulating ourselves for being "helpers," when in reality, we've actually added more pain to the person's life.

One of the greatest services we can perform for others is to provide comfort when it's desperately needed. Rarely does a day go by without an encounter with someone like Job. They're hanging on to life by a proverbial thread. We can either strengthen their grip on life or sever their cord of hope.

Who in your life needs comfort? How are your comforting skills? What do you need to improve to become a more effective comforter? What will you do today to go the "second mile" in giving comfort to others?

"'COMFORT, COMFORT MY PEOPLE,' SAYS YOUR GOD."

— Isaiah 40:1 (NIV)

THE GIFT OF PRAYER



“Please pray for me.” You’ve likely had someone make this request of you. Sometimes the ask is accompanied by an explanation of some specific need or situation that the person is facing. On other occasions, the request is general. Either way, it’s a call for your engagement with them. They are inviting you into their pain and into their need for God.

To be invited to join in prayer with and for someone is an honor and a privilege. It shouldn’t be ignored or taken for granted. An agreement to pray for someone should lead to actual prayer for them.

The call to pray for others goes beyond those requesting it. One of the most valuable things we can do for people is to consistently pray for them.

In the Old Testament, the high priest was instructed to wear two onyx stones on the shoulders of his priestly garments, with the names of six tribes of Israel engraved on each stone. He was also to wear a breastplate with twelve stones carefully sewn in, each bearing the name of one of Israel’s twelve tribes. When the high priest went

into the presence of God, he would bear on his shoulders and near his heart people in need of prayer. This is a picture of Jesus, our High Priest, who continually prays for us.

It also calls us to pray for others. Your prayers make a difference. Carry people to God in prayer, just as the high priest bore names on his shoulders and near his heart.

How regularly do you pray for others? Who has been neglected in your prayers? What will you do today to go the “second mile” in praying for others?

“I URGE YOU, FIRST OF ALL, TO PRAY FOR ALL PEOPLE. ASK GOD TO HELP THEM; INTERCEDE ON THEIR BEHALF, AND GIVE THANKS FOR THEM.”

— 1 Timothy 2:1 (NLT)

THE GIFT OF TRUST



Trust is an absolute essential for any healthy, growing relationship. It's the foundation for good communication. It provides security and fosters peace. The lack of trust, or its erosion, results in shallowness, guardedness, fear, and isolation. No relationship will survive without trust.

The gift of trust is one of the most precious gifts that can be given to someone. It's a statement of belief in a person's character, integrity, faithfulness, commitment, and loyalty. It's also a statement of our belief in their value, worth, and potential. When we say, by words and actions, "I trust you," we're demonstrating the strongest and riskiest quality of a relationship.

While there are some folks who simply can't be trusted, most people at least attempt to be worthy of trust. Certainly, all humans fail the trustworthy test at times, but this shouldn't stop us from trusting others. Shutting down trust because of the failures, disloyalties, or betrayals of others hurts us and robs others of opportunities to prove their character and develop their potential.

One of the most amazing expressions of trust is shown by Jesus. During His ministry, He was surrounded by twelve disciples—very imperfect people. One, Judas, was even a betrayer. Nevertheless, it didn't stop Jesus from giving these men opportunities to serve. Right before Jesus ascended back to heaven, He entrusted the completion of the mission of the Church to His followers, including us! What trust!

Has your trust in others been damaged by disloyalty, betrayal, or human failure? Will you release the pain, forgive others, and move forward? What will you do today to go the “second mile” in trusting others?

“I NO LONGER CALL YOU SERVANTS, BECAUSE A SERVANT DOES NOT KNOW HIS MASTER’S BUSINESS. INSTEAD, I HAVE CALLED YOU FRIENDS, FOR EVERYTHING THAT I LEARNED FROM MY FATHER I HAVE MADE KNOWN TO YOU.”

— John 15:15 (NIV)

THE GIFT OF SUPPORT



Look around at most buildings and you'll likely see columns and pillars. Even if they're not visible, they're there. No building stands without support.

If you travel to ancient archeological sites, you'll usually find support structures still standing strong. Other parts of buildings may be long gone, but the columns and pillars remain to this day.

What's true with buildings is true in all parts of life. When constructing anything, support is required. Support systems bear weight, hold things straight, provide resilience, offer proper flexibility, and ensure strength and longevity.

This is true with people. People needed to be supported. Even Paul, the great apostle of the New Testament, needed and appreciated the support of others. He also felt the pain of losing support.

As Paul faced his last days, knowing he would soon be put to death by the Roman emperor, Nero, one of his helpers, a man named Demas, who had been a great support to him, deserted him. The Bible uses a word to describe

Demas' desertion. Demas' actions left Paul in a lurch. He "dropped the weight" on Paul. The column of support fell. Paul discovered he couldn't count on Demas.

Who is counting on you? What kind of pillar are you to others? What will you do today to go the "second mile" in demonstrating support to others?

**"DO NOT WITHHOLD GOOD FROM THOSE TO WHOM IT IS DUE,
WHEN IT IS IN YOUR POWER TO ACT."**

— Proverbs 3:27 (NIV)

THE GIFT OF MERCY



If anyone ever messed up, it was Jonah. When God told him to go to the city of Ninevah and preach, Jonah purchased a ticket on a ship to Tarshish; a boat that was going in the opposite direction. No question, Jonah was a stubborn guy, determined to live life his way.

Did God give up on this hard-headed man? He didn't. After Jonah was thrown into the sea to calm the storm caused by his disobedience, the Lord sent a big fish to swallow him. Jonah got a free ride to the shores of Ninevah. It was where he should've gone in the first place.

The Bible describes this act of God as a second chance. Instead of allowing Jonah to suffer the consequences of his refusal to obey God, the Lord was merciful to him. God gave Jonah a second chance.

Mercy is a wonderful and amazing gift. When we've done something foolish, wrong, or even rebellious, God is kind, ready, and willing to show us mercy. He indeed is the God of the second chance.

Unfortunately, we're not always as eager to do the same for others. We're notoriously quick to close the books on

someone who has erred in their journey. We arrogantly write them off as lost causes, hopeless cases, foolish souls who should have known better, all the time forgetting how many times we've done the same. We're eager to seek mercy for ourselves while demanding retribution and judgment for others.

There're people in your life who need mercy. Mercy isn't something anyone deserves. Mercy's not mercy if it's deserved. By its very nature, mercy is undeserved, but so necessary for us. We need it. We also need to give it to others.

Who in your world needs a second chance? When was the last time you needed one? What will you do today to go the "second mile" in showing mercy to someone?

**"THERE WILL BE NO MERCY FOR THOSE WHO HAVE NOT SHOWN
MERCY TO OTHERS. BUT IF YOU HAVE BEEN MERCIFUL, GOD WILL
BE MERCIFUL WHEN HE JUDGES YOU."**

— James 2:13 (NLT)

THE GIFT OF GENTLENESS



At the start of Jesus' ministry, He gave a startling, stirring sermon. It's called The Sermon on the Mount because Jesus delivered it on a mountainside above the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee.

Our Lord began this life-altering message with a preamble known as The Beatitudes. The Beatitudes are eight statements that describe the uniqueness of His Kingdom culture and the pathway He expects His students to follow. It's the pathway to real happiness.

In one of His Beatitudes, Jesus exalted a quality many during His day despised. Many despise it today. Jesus said, "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth." (Matthew 5:5)

The Greek word used by Jesus for "meek" is *praus*. It's also translated as gentle.

Meekness is often misunderstood. It's confused with weakness. Nothing could be farther from its real meaning.

Meekness is strength under control. It's avoiding harshness and brutality in our words and actions; instead, it's inner

strength that properly controls emotions. It's saying and doing the right things in the right ways, with a non-destructive touch. It's the opposite of the "bull in a china closet" approach to life. Meekness is always looking for ways to avoid collateral emotional damage to the people around us.

One of the gifts you can give to people is the gift of gentleness—the gift of meekness. You'll be surprised at how it changes your relationships.

What will you do today to go the "second mile" in practicing gentleness with others?

**"A GENTLE ANSWER DEFLECTS ANGER, BUT
HARSH WORDS MAKE TEMPER FLARE."**

— Proverbs 15:1 (NLT)

THE GIFT OF PRESENCE



“You can count on me. I’ll be there for you!” Precious and powerful words, when they’re sincere. It’s great to have someone’s promise to stand with us in the good times and the bad.

The fear of abandonment is a common and significant fear for many people. No one wants to be alone or to feel they have no one in their corner. In our increasingly emotionally isolated culture, feelings of abandonment and loneliness are at an all-time high.

What we’re really looking and longing for is the gift of presence. Not just people around us, not massive numbers of social media followers or fair-weather “friends,” not acquaintances or business network connections, but people who know how to be with us in and through life’s ups and downs.

One of the beautiful things about a relationship with God is the promise of His presence. Many times in Scripture, we’re assured He’s with us.

One of the ways God’s presence is felt and experienced is through people. God shows up in our lives through the

sweet, calm, reassuring presence of God’s people—people who aren’t present to give us a sermon, advice, a pat answer, or a glib slap on the back, but who are just there—quiet, but strong.

There’re people around you who need to be reminded of God’s presence through your presence. What will you do today to go the “second mile” to be present with someone?

“TWO ARE BETTER THAN ONE...”

— Ecclesiastes 4:9 (NIV)

THE GIFT OF FRIENDSHIP



From a communication perspective, the world is more connected than ever before. Social media apps, messaging platforms, emails, video, and emerging technologies are all at our fingertips. You'd think friendships would be abundant and blossoming.

Not so. Actually, the consensus of mental health professionals and social scientists gives us pause and great reason for concern.

Genuine, authentic connections are shriveling. With the rapid advent of AI, an increasing number of people are regularly interacting with bots instead of real people. This kind of communication can be addictive. You can "train" a bot to say what you want it to say and act in the way you want it to act. With AI "friends," you can virtually eliminate much of the tension and the challenges inherent in human relationships (to our detriment, by the way).

We're on a dangerous societal journey. It's a new world, and the harbingers of the future aren't hopeful. In fact, they're very concerning.

This is all the more reason to reaffirm and reestablish tried-and-true life principles. One of the evergreen principles of life is the time-tested power and importance of real friendships.

We need friendships. We need to have friends and be a friend. Essential parts of our spiritual and emotional make-up languish without friends. Vital aspects of our character often go underdeveloped or remain completely undeveloped without friendships. Real friends make us healthier. Real friendships make us better people.

How are your friendships going? Are you investing time in nurturing them? Are you building new friendships? What will you do today to go the “second mile” in nurturing your friendships?

“A MAN WHO HAS FRIENDS MUST HIMSELF BE FRIENDLY...”

— Proverbs 18:24 (NKJV)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Dale A. O'Shields is the founder and Senior Pastor of Church of the Redeemer, a multi-cultural, multi-site, multi-generational church based in Maryland. Church of the Redeemer was founded in 1986.

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