

# SECOND-MILE SERVANTS

by Bill Rasco



# Table of Contents

<b>1. The Second-Mile Savior.....</b>	<b>5</b>
(Matthew 5:41)	
<b>2. Second-Mile Identity.....</b>	<b>12</b>
(Matthew 5:2-3a)	
<b>3. Second-Mile Relationships.....</b>	<b>18</b>
(Matthew 5:16)	
<b>4. Second-Mile Priorities.....</b>	<b>24</b>
(Matthew 7:7)	
<b>5. Second-Mile Faith.....</b>	<b>30</b>
(Matthew 8:10)	
<b>6. Second-Mile Hearts.....</b>	<b>36</b>
(Matthew 13:16)	
<b>7. Second-Mile Influence.....</b>	<b>43</b>
(Matthew 13:43)	
<b>8. Second-Mile Perspective.....</b>	<b>50</b>
(Matthew 14:14)	
<b>9. Second-Mile Proclamation.....</b>	<b>57</b>
(Matthew 17:2)	
<b>10. Second-Mile Forgiveness.....</b>	<b>64</b>
(Matthew 18:27)	
<b>11. Second-Mile Transformation.....</b>	<b>70</b>
(Matthew 22:37)	
<b>12. Second-Mile Blessings.....</b>	<b>76</b>
(Matthew 23:12)	
<b>13. Second-Mile Compassion.....</b>	<b>83</b>
(Matthew 25:34)	

# Introduction

While only mentioned in the Sermon on the Mount, the call to go the second mile is a foundational theme that is both lived out and taught by Jesus throughout the Gospel of Matthew. In the pages of Matthew's gospel, you will discover what it means to follow a second-mile Savior, wear a second-mile identity, and live a second-mile lifestyle. You will see how walking the second mile shapes your faith, mission, and growth. As second-mile servants, you will be called to surrender, focus, forgiveness, and joy. Welcome to the second mile.

## About the Author

Active in ministry for twenty years, Bill Rasco has filled the roles of pulpit minister, youth minister, and education minister. Bill currently serves as the Pulpit Minister for the Spring Creek Church of Christ in Tomball, Texas. He also serves as Speech coordinator and sits on the Board of Directors for North Texas Leadership Training for Christ. Bill is the director of Camp Kichaca, a "first experiences" camp for 3rd through 5th graders. Bill, his wife Robin, and their son currently live in northwest Houston.

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*A Church That Spreads*

Co-authored with Casandra Martin:

*Tell Me the Story: Heroes of Faith*

*Tell Me the Story: Meeting Jesus*

*Tell Me the Story: Armor of God*



## *Lesson 1*

# **The Second-Mile Savior**

Matthew 5:41

### **Key Verse:**

**If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles  
(Matthew 5:41).**

### ***WARM UP***



The Gospel of Matthew is the story of Jesus. His life and ministry. His love and sacrifice. In his book, Matthew paints a panorama of pictures in order to reveal to us who Jesus is. Jesus is the King who conquers the enemy attacking the hearts of His people. He is the Son of Man who walks among us and points us to God. Jesus is the Savior who redeems mankind from sin, inviting us to live as children in the kingdom of God. One of the most powerful pictures woven throughout the canvas of Matthew is the picture of Jesus as a Servant. In Matthew 5:41, Jesus calls His people to go the “second mile.” It is a picture of people who willingly and deliberately show the grace of God to others. The Savior who washes feet and touches lepers calls His people to do the same.



### **A Call to Service**

Imagine sitting on the hillside during the Sermon on the Mount. Pictures of the kingdom of heaven explode in your mind as Jesus speaks of being salt and light. He tells us how to treat our neighbors, spouses, and strangers. He talks about judgment and honesty. And then right in the middle of the sermon, the words of Jesus reach straight into your heart. He calls you, compels you, to be a servant. But not just any kind of a servant. Jesus is not calling us to grit our teeth and serve someone out of a grudging sense of obligation. Jesus doesn't want us to add busyness to an already busy lifestyle. Jesus calls us to serve with purpose. He calls kingdom servants to have an impact on the world we live in by pointing to Jesus with every act of service. He empowers us to make a difference in the world today as we mirror the actions and attitudes of Jesus Himself.

This is a call that seems wildly radical, but it is at the heart of what God wants for His people. Think for a moment about what it means to be a servant. A servant puts another's needs before his own. Being a servant is a humble position. In service, we give our time, our resources, our bodies, and our hearts. The Gospel of Matthew shows us that Jesus is a servant. He gives Himself to meet the deepest need man has – the need for a relationship with God. Since we are called to look like Jesus, to grow in Christ-likeness, we too must become servants. Looking like Jesus means that we reflect the nature and character of Christ.

## **A Servant's Vision**

In the center of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus goes deeply counter-culture by describing servants who live a second-mile life-style. In Matthew 5:41, there is a call that captures the essence of what it means to walk with Jesus and impact the world in which we live with His grace. It is a call to go the second mile.

In order to understand the dramatic nature of Jesus' call to second-mile living, we need to understand the political and social context of Jesus' words. The Romans walk the streets of Judea. They hold power over the people. The law even says that the lowest Roman soldier has the right to demand that any Jew carry his pack for one mile. Every Jew is subject to this command. Power, position, wealth, and age provide no exception. All are vulnerable. To be called means you must stop what you are doing and follow the command of a foreigner, an invader, an enemy. It is degrading. It is a mark of shame to submit to another's control. It is something about which to be angry and defiant.<sup>1</sup> Jesus' call to second-mile living shakes the hearts and minds of His listeners. Jesus calls the children of God to act and think differently about serving. Jesus commands us to do the unexpected. He challenges us to go beyond grudging obligation and see the power of service. Jesus calls us to change our attitudes and willingly walk the second mile.

Think for a moment about the Roman soldier. His demeanor is commanding as he orders the Jew to shoulder the fifty pound pack. He knows what to expect. The man will begin to count steps or look for road markers that signify the end of the one-mile trip. At the end of one mile, the Roman expects that the Jew will drop the pack to the ground and walk away, service done.

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1 Nolland, J. (2005). *The Gospel of Matthew : A commentary on the Greek text* (259–260). Grand Rapids, Mich.; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press.

Now imagine that same soldier at the end of the one mile if the man took an extra step. Two extra steps. Ten extra steps. Can you picture the soldier's face? He sees kindness instead of hatred. Willingness instead of obligation. Joy instead of bitterness. In this moment, he comes face to face with the heart of God. The heart of a Christian becomes the window through which God reveals Himself to the world. Second-mile living is an invitation to look into the faces of those with whom we walk and see the wonder and vulnerability that play across eyes that see God's grace for the first time. Jesus points to the moment, telling us it is an opportunity to extend God's grace, show God's love, demonstrate God's kindness, and reveal the Savior. Walk the second mile. In this simple call to walk a second mile, Jesus defines the purpose of His people. ***Second-mile servants are people who deliberately look for opportunities to show God's grace to others.***

We live in a one-mile world. A world that settles for just enough to get by. A one-mile world demands that we look out for ourselves, count our steps, and drop back when it is no longer to our advantage. A one-mile world demands that we focus on self, harden our hearts to the needs of others, and close our fists in preparation to fight for our "rights."

Second-mile living is a call to walk differently in this world. Following in the steps of Jesus demands that our focus move from self to the Savior. Our hearts must be tender to the need of a world that lacks Jesus. Our hands must be open for others to see God working in our lives. Going the second mile offers a powerful vision of what living a Christ-filled life will look like.

## **A Servant's Heart**

In order to show the grace of God to others, it is important to see the grace that God provides us. Jesus calls us to second-mile service because Jesus is a second-mile Savior.

Choosing to live like Jesus means reflecting His life in our own. It is a life-long process of choices and decisions that allows the power of God to work in us to change our lives. Our thoughts, actions, feelings, and attitudes are all transformed as we walk the second mile with Jesus. To better understand how the second mile works in our own lives, we must look at how Jesus made the deliberate decision to walk the second mile for us.

Paul gives us a great picture of Jesus as a second-mile servant in Philippians 2:5-8.

*"Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus." Second-mile servants do not walk alone. Jesus is our standard. He defines who we are and works in us every day to change us to be more and more like Him. It is only by His strength, His grace, and His power that we are able to live as second-mile servants.*

*"Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness." We walk the second mile because Jesus walks the second mile. He stepped out of heaven in order to live among men. He became a man in order to point us to God. He shows us that second-mile service is about love, self-denial, and a heart that longs to show people the grace of God.*

*"And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!" Jesus went to the*

cross in order to show us the grace of God. He gave His life so that you and I could be stunned by God's love, amazed by God's grace, and humbled by God's desire to live with us.

## ***COOL DOWN***

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### **Walking the Second Mile**

Second-mile service is about taking on the attitude of Jesus. It is about walking with Jesus and seeing every encounter as a chance to be transparent so that others can see Him filling our lives. Second-mile service is about being so amazed by God's grace that we can't help sharing that amazement with others.

Spend some time in prayer about having a second-mile heart and second-mile eyes. Ask God to give you a Christ-like attitude.

Think of an example of somebody in your life who has gone the second mile for you and deliberately shown you God's grace. If possible, send a note to that person describing the impact that moment had on your heart. If not directly possible, tell someone else about the power a second-mile servant had on your life.

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## **Second-Mile Review**

1. What does it mean to be a servant?
2. What does it mean to look like Jesus?
3. Matthew 5:41
  - Describe what it means to go the “second mile.”
  - What different set of actions and behaviors do we need in order to walk the second mile?
4. Philippians 2:5-8
  - What attitude do second-mile servants have?
  - Describe the second mile that Jesus walked.
  - How do the actions of Jesus show us how to be second-mile servants?