

# How to be a Greater Christian

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[0:00] I'm going to show you how you can be a greater Christian.

The Lord Jesus Christ says in Matthew 5, verse 41, And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.

If someone compels you to go a mile, go with him twain, or two miles. And the context here is where the Lord Jesus is speaking of the kind of spirit that we are to display, that we are to have.

When we are called upon to do something. Now the people at this time and in this place were an oppressed people under Roman military occupation. And the law at this time allowed that a Roman soldier could order a civilian to carry his pack, his equipment, for one mile.

And someone could do this. When they are called upon to do this, it was the law anyway. They had to do it. There wasn't any choice. And they could do this grudgingly, carry that load, that weight.

[1:21] And at the one mile mark, they could just choke down on the ground grudgingly and walk off. Because they had done that which was expected of them to do. But the Lord Jesus says here, when you are called upon to do something, don't just stop at what is your duty.

But go a second mile. Go double. Go beyond expectations. I'm going to show you how you can be a greater Christian.

Shouldn't that be our prayer? Shouldn't that be our desire? I want to encourage you, one and all, to aim to be a second mile Christian.

Be a second mile Christian. Don't just settle for that which you have to do, but go above and beyond. The Lord Jesus calls us to go beyond expectations.

Are you willing to go the extra mile? To go the extra mile with people? To go the extra mile with God?

[2:32] This is a call to go above and beyond. To go above and beyond the call of duty. This is Christianity in the everyday.

Where the rubber hits the road. In the practicality of life. The Christian life is called a walk. I urge you to go the distance.

Go the distance. This is not a short distance event. It's a long distance event. It's the long haul. Christianity is about the long haul.

To aim for long haul Christianity. It's a marathon event. It takes some stamina. It takes some sheer determination to go the second mile.

To go and do the hard yards. It speaks to us of Christianity without limits. Sometimes we constrain. We're limited. We hold back. We hold back.

[3:30] We hold back. When we should be letting go. And letting go. We're living in a one mile world. Where you just do the minimum. You just do the minimal.

Just do what's convenient. Just do what suits you. And some adopt a Christianity like that. A Christianity that doesn't cramp my lifestyle.

A Christianity without the inconvenience factor. Without it disturbing my comforts.

Without me having to step out of my comfort zone. Yet some dare I say it. A Christianity that doesn't cost them anything.

A Christianity that doesn't cost them anything. No wonder we've got a problem today with cold Christians. And I'm not talking about the weather.

[4:34] I'm not talking about the air conditioning today. I'm talking about cold Christians. They say don't get too excited. Don't get too fanatical.

Don't get too radical. I recently saw a film that illustrated this. It was like a parable if you like. It told the story of a Christian woman.

Who had a liking for a man who was unsaved. And she was praying for this man to get saved. And the law answered her prayers. And the man got radically saved.

He was so transformed. That he became a very zealous Christian. And he wanted to be at every meeting. But she didn't.

She had some other interests. That took her away from fellowship. He wanted to devour his Bible. And attend study group and prayer meetings.

[5:35] He wanted to give up anything that was doubtful. She didn't. She wanted to enjoy her little sins on the side.

And just be a Sunday Christian. He was sold out to be a witness at every opportunity. This was embarrassing for the woman.

She wanted him to be just the same kind of Christian that she was. Cool, comfortable, casual.

The woman couldn't handle this. She wanted him to cool down. Just settle down. Just be mediocre like me. She wanted him to be a minimal kind of Christian.

Thankfully in this story, his seal rubbed off on her. And she repented of her careless Christianity. And was herself transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit.

[6:38] Amen. Let's be honest this morning. Do we settle for the norm? Or do we aspire to the highest standard? Do we settle for the lowest common denominator?

And just take our Christian commitment just so far. Just only as far as it's convenient for us. Rather, let's join the band of the extreme Christians.

Now you hear of extreme sports. People just do crazy things. We need some craziness. We need some extremeness in our Christianity these days.

The time is short. We need some bold men and women who will rise up and know the Christ-filled life. Know the crucified life. Who will determine to step into living a life of greater Christian living. Greater Christian living that goes beyond expectations. That takes it seriously. It's provocative to some. It will unsettle those who would rather have the middle of the road.

[7:47] Kind of comfortable pace. Provocative to those who want to settle for the norm. Will we have this kind of heart?

The extra mile. The second mile of Christianity. Ephesians 6 verse 6. The context is Paul is speaking to servants. And he's telling us how these Christian servants, essentially slaves working for a master, are to engage in their responsibilities.

And he talks about doing the will of God from the heart. He talks about that kind of serving that's not just doing the minimal, but doing the service as unto the Lord.

And we can do that even in our everyday jobs. We can put the effort in that even when people aren't watching us, we're doing the right thing in our workplaces. Because we're doing the will of God from the heart.

And the Lord says to serve him willingly, cheerfully, to labour from the heart, in singleness of heart, not grudgingly.

[8:54] Now once I heard a woman who had left the church, and she felt aggrieved, she felt put out by this church, and she told me, with a lot of hurt in her voice, she said this, I work like a dog for that church.

I think it was on the phone I heard her say this, and you could feel the snarl in her nose when she said it. I work like a dog for that church.

And she somehow felt hard done by it, by how that church had treated her. Maybe she was hard done by it. Maybe it wasn't fair.

Maybe she got hurt and hurt wrongfully. Maybe they wronged her. I'm not denying that. She felt somehow hard done by it, by that church, by those church people, by those Christians, her brothers and sisters, for some reason.

And she carried this chip on her shoulder, this whole lot of bitterness she carried and carried and carried. Her heart was not right in this respect, in this aspect.

[10:07] What we do, we need to do as unto the Lord. Not unto men, as unto the Lord.

Not expecting any praise of men. Indeed, we should not be surprised to be overlooked, taken for granted.

And rather expect to get criticism rather than praise. When we're stepping over the line and doing something for God, expect criticism rather than praise.

But it will not deter us. Because we have His heart. How easily we can give up and quit. But when the going gets tough, the tough get going.

We need to toughen up. We need to pray for a toughening up. A thicker skin, if you like. And be a greater Christian.

[11:12] A greater Christian. That you're beyond all of that. That pettiness. And that fleshliness. That your pride is going to be pampered. And you've got to feel valued.

It's not about that. As unto the Lord. As unto Him what you do. Be a greater Christian. We're addressing the question. How can you be a greater Christian?

Maybe you're already on that road to greatness. It takes a decision. A deliberate intent. It's about where you set your affection.

That's right. Where you set your affection. Colossians 3 verse 2. Set your affection. On things above.

Not on things on the earth. What were you aiming for? Do you aim for the maximum? Or do you settle for doing the minimum?

[12:16] Aim to be your best. To give of your best. Give of your best to the Master. Give of the strength of your youth. Throw your souls fresh.

Glowing ardour into the battle for truth. Jesus has set the example. Dauntless was here young and brave. Give Him your loyal devotion. Give Him the best that you have.

Give of your best to the Master. Give of the strength of your youth. Clad in salvation's full armour. Join in the battle for truth. Give of your best to the Master. Give Him first place in your heart. Give Him first place in your service. Consecrate every part. Give and to you it will be given. Give and to you it will be given.

God His beloved Son gave. God His beloved Son gave. Gratefully seeking to serve Him. Give Him the best that you have. Give of your best to the Master. Give of your best to the Master. Give of your best to the Master. Nought else is worthy of His love.

He gave Himself for your ransom. He gave up His glory above. Lay down His life without murmur.

You from sins ruined to save. Give Him your heart's adoration. Give Him the best that you have.

Give Him the best that you have. Give Him the best that you have. Give of your best to the Master.

[13:16] Nought else is worthy of His love. He gave Himself for your ransom. Gave up His glory above. Lay down His life without murmur.

You from sins ruined to save. Give Him your heart's adoration. Give Him the best that you have. Is there a true generosity of spirit?

Or a meanness? Will you be generous? Or will you be stingy? Will you go the extra? Will you go the extra mile?

Or will you hold back? Will you be an extravagant Christian? An extra mile Christian? 2 Corinthians 9 from 6 to 7 it says, But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly.

And he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart so let him give. Not grudgingly or of necessity for God loveth a cheerful giver.

[14:25] What will we choose? Will we be grudging or giving? Will we be stingy or generous? I'm talking about the heart here.

Talking about the heart. Not so much of giving money. That's just one measure isn't it? That's just one aspect. But the giving of ourselves.

Are we stingy with how we give God ourselves? Our time? Our zeal? Our devotion? Are we mean and nasty with what we do for God?

Or are we about giving of ourselves? Giving of ourselves. Is it enough for us just to do what is expected? Just Sundays?

Just one meeting? Just a token lip service kind of giving? Or will it be a heartfelt devotion? What about when we have to get along with others?

[15:24] Do we just do the least that we can do? Or do we show a Christ-like spirit? How can we be a great Christian? There's a few ways we can aspire for greatness.

We go through a few of these great things that make a great Christian today. In the early church the believers were marked by a great grace. A great grace.

In Acts 4.33. Acts 4.33 in part it says, Great grace was upon them all. Great grace was upon them all.

Now with certain people we need to show extra grace. Who's got some people like that in their lives? You know? They help you grow in grace.

You know? They just bring out the grace in you. Or they should. Maybe we are what brings out the best grace in others.

[16:21] I know Julie, that's why Julie is such a saint. You know my wife, she's so saintly because she's had to exercise a lot of things. You know, I had to exercise a lot of grace in her life with me.

And 1.7.114 it says, And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which was in Christ Jesus. The grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

Grace exceeding. Grace exceeding. Grace exceeding abundant. Do we have this kind of grace? This kind of grace. How we need extra grace.

And sometimes it's those people that are sandpaper Christians, isn't it? That help bring out the grace in you. They're good for you.

They're actually good for you. They're actually good for you. Spend more time with them. You know, how we need extra grace. Amen. Grace to forbear. Grace to forgive.

[17:18] God wants to bring out grace in you. How can I get this extra measure of grace? Grace. It's about getting rid of our un-grace.

Let go of your un-grace. You know, we can all have those moments when it's not grace that comes out. It's the opposite. Isn't it?

Do we show grace in our language, in our temperament, in our attitude? God wants you to bring out your best. To have that exceeding grace.

Grace abundant. And Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 9.14. He writes of the exceeding grace of God. The exceeding grace of God.

And he says it's in the Corinthians. What? The church at Corinth, they were just about the worst church in the Bible, aren't they? God's grace can work in the most unlikely of his people.

[18:18] Thank God for that. That's why he's working in me. And you. There's lots of Christians I know who've been anointing for being un-gracious.

They're easily ruffled. Oh, don't look the wrong way at that sister over there. You might get her upset. Or that brother over there, if you look like you're whispering, he might think you're whispering about him.

Oh, they're easily ruffled. Easily provoked. Easily offended. They easily get up with me and walk out of the church. I'm not going back to there again. They didn't say hello to me this morning.

It wasn't that they didn't say hello to anyone else. It's not their fault. It's all about the others. It's ungracious Christians.

The churches are full of them. Easily ruffled. Easily offended. Easily provoked. Rather, let's aspire to have greater grace. Greater grace.

[19:18] Ask the Lord for thicker skin. Our Lord shows us how to aspire to be greater Christians. Not only are we to have greater grace, we are to have greater love.

Greater love. The greatest one exemplified greater love. He is the one who said in John 15, 13, Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

The Lord Jesus defines love. He is the definition of love. He is love personified. Love incarnate. He demonstrates love. While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5 verse 8, But God commended his love towards us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

God has truly lavished his love upon us. Ephesians 2 verse 4, But God who is rich in mercy for his great love wherewith he loved us. His great love wherewith he loved us.

[20:30] God's love. You can't measure a greater measure of love. God's love is the greatest love. God's love. It's agape love. It's sacrificial, unconditional, self-sacrificing, undeserved love.

What kind of love are great Christians meant to have? John 15, 12 it says, In the same context of greater love hath no man in the midst that a man lay down his life for his friends, this is my commandment that ye, corporately, you lot, love one another as I have loved you.

Wow, that's a big call, isn't it? That's a tough call. The same word he uses in the very next verse, greater love, love hath no man in the midst.

That's the measure. That's the extra mile, isn't it, in terms of love. The measure that we're meant to love others by is the measure of his love.

As he has loved, so should we love. And it goes even beyond. This is the extra mile here.

[21:51] Matthew 5, 44, But I say unto you, love your enemies. Bless them that curse you. Do good to them that hate you.

And pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you. Love your enemies. It's the same word. Agape. Love.

Unconditional, undeserved. The same kind of love with which we ought to love even our enemies.

That's the extra mile, isn't it? In terms of love. The ones who despitefully use you.

The ones who persecute you. The ones who curse you and hate you. He says, I say unto you. This is important. If our Lord says do it, we ought to do it.

2 Thessalonians 1, 3. It says, We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meant, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth.

[22:53] God wants our love to abound towards each other. You know, that Christian that you have trouble with down here, he or she could be your next door neighbour upstairs.

Whoa. You better get used to it, hey man? You better get to love that one. May your love abound and your faith grow exceedingly. How to be a great Christian.

Love like Jesus loves. Our Lord wants us to know this greater grace, this greater love, and also greater works. How are we to work?

As a servant. Matthew 20, 26. The Lord Jesus says, It shall not be so among you, but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister. Or servant, in other words.

And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant. It's about a servant's heart. Being a great Christian, the Lord will call on you to do greater works.

[23:55] John 14, 12. He says, Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do, shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do.

Because I go unto my Father. Greater works. We're called to be messengers of a truly life-transforming message, of new life in Christ.

And the greatest thing that we can do, the greatest work that we can do, is to tell another soul about the Saviour. And see them trust him.

And have that joy, of that heavenly joy, the angel's joy, of someone repent and trust Christ and be born again. The very miracle of salvation, that's the greatest work, of being born again, through faith in Christ.

Greater grace. Greater love. Greater works. Greater righteousness. Our Lord calls us to a greater righteousness. In Matthew 5 verse 20, For I say unto you, that except your righteousness, exceed the righteousness, of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise, enter into the kingdom of heaven.

[25:13] This is an amazing call here, isn't it? How can our righteousness, exceed that, of the scribes and Pharisees? Here were the epitome, of as much as human perfection, you could realise on planet earth, walking in shoes, at that time.

They were the very, utmost and greatest examples, of strict obedience to the law. So the letter of the law, you couldn't get any more, outwardly perfect than them.

They had a very strict standard, the scribes and Pharisees. But Jesus says, except your righteousness, exceed their righteousness, you can't.

You can't enter into the kingdom of heaven. What does this mean? I consider that what is being talked about here is the righteousness that is by faith.

By faith. By his gift. By his mercy. And tender compassions. Romans 3.22 it says, even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all them that believe.

[26:28] Our righteousness is not, the righteousness of the Pharisees, but it exceeds. Why? Because it is the righteousness of the Lord.

It's his righteousness. It has to be his righteousness. One of the names that speak of our Lord Jesus is the Lord, our righteousness.

In Jeremiah 23.6, a prophecy speaking of the Lord Jesus, the Lord, our righteousness. So, friends, our grace, our love, our works, and our righteousness will be greater as we depend on him.

As we draw nearer to him. As Adam referred earlier, as he lives his life in and through us. Because it's his grace. It's his love.

It's his works. It's his righteousness. As we draw nearer to him. As we diminish, he grows greater. As we grow less, he grows greater.

[27:31] And you can be a greater Christian in your Christian walk and life today. As you let go of your own works and trust in his.

Trust in his. My constant prayer is this for the people in the reach of this church that we will be greater Christians. That you'll be a greater Christian today than you were yesterday and tomorrow you'll be even greater still.

There'll be something extra, something extra special about you. That you won't shy away from going the extra mile. There'll be that supernatural strengthening and empowering that truly spiritual heart and zeal, that love, that joy that is beyond human terms.

Beyond human manufacture. And that you will not draw back. You will not hold back. You'll pull out all the stops. Because you want to be an extra mile Christian.

You'll be one of those who will lay aside every way and the sin which doth so easily be set and run with patience the race that is set before you. Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of your fame.

[28:45] Brothers and sisters, today, I want to encourage you that it is a possibility that can be realised today. This is not a theoretical, academic message today.

This is practical. We can know and live out our walk with God in an unlimited way. And we can know personally the greater grace, the greater love, the greater works, the greater righteousness and the greater faith.

We can know a greater faith. An unlimited faith. As the centurion who had a sick servant at home came to the Lord and he just said to the Lord, I believe. Just say the word.

He believed that God could work. He believed the Lord and he took him at his word. Just say the word. And Luke 7 verse 9, When Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him and he turned him about and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.

Luke 7 verse 9, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. Greater faith. Faith that sees the invisible.

[30:07] Faith that believes having not seen him. Faith that trusts him when the storm is all around. Faith that finds its refuge in him.

Faith that finds his saving grace when we're feeling absolutely lousy and totally unfit. That's the place we've got to be for his grace to work.

because it's all about his grace and faith we exercise. Friends, we've been talking about the extra mile. You can just stop at the mile point.

You can just do the minimum. We really don't have to do anything, let's face it. Your Christianity is not based on anything that you do. You can do nothing. Right.

And you'll be saved so as by fire. I heard someone say by the skin of their teeth they got saved. Well, that's true of all of us really. Because we can't do anything to get any extra credit.

[31:12] You can't get any extra points. You don't get any gold stars for anything that you do really. to say that you're more deserving of salvation than anybody else. Or they're less deserving.

You can stop at the one mile point in your Christian life. You can just do the basics. Just do the minimum. Or you can go the extra mile. The extra mile.

Go longer. Go further. Go beyond. Beyond the mere duty. Beyond the norm. Beyond what everybody else does. Beyond the minimum. Beyond expectations. Beyond the crowd. We'll be greater Christians when we're willing to go the extra mile. Now the extra mile means extra effort, doesn't it? The extra mile takes extra exertion. It takes more time. It takes more commitment. I urge you today, go the extra mile in how you treat others. That was the context the Lord gave, wasn't it? When someone asks you to do something, do more than what they ask you to do.

[32:21] That's being an extra mile Christian. Go the extra mile in how you treat others. Go the extra mile in how you regard our Lord. That you'll want to grow your relationship with Him.

Go the extra mile in how you live and how you give and how you serve. Go the extra mile. It's a marathon. Will you finish well? It's a choice.

Set your affection. Set your affection. That's a decision. Let's keep aspiring. Keep growing. I pray that you, brother, sister, that you will not have stunted growth but that you will truly grow and keep on growing.

That we'll still be growing the day that He comes or the day that we expire our last breath. We'll still be growing. You know, there's some people in this church, I said to a brother lately, keep on keeping on.

But there's people in this church, I've got to actually say, slow down a bit, brother. You know, some people are probably doing more than their fair share. Slow down a bit.

[33:29] But I don't know too many Christians that I need to say that to. Honestly, today. Keep on growing. Keep on growing.

Keep on reaching out. Extending yourself. How do you get stronger? How do the people down the gym get stronger? They exert themselves and the muscles grow.

That's why Brad's such a huge bulk of a man here. It's all those hours down the gym. You know? It's workout. Your own salvation.

We need a workout, brothers and sisters. You know, go into the gym, as it were, you know, exercise yourself unto godliness. How do you be a stronger Christian? Use some of those muscles you haven't used in a while.

You know, I know I need to do that. Use some of those muscles that you've lain dormant for a while. Honestly, brothers and sisters, I'm saying this to myself. This is not having a go at new message.

[34:32] It's about all of us exerting ourselves and so much the more as you see the day approaching. How do you be a stronger Christian? Take spiritual disciplines.

Self-discipline. You know, I was kind of joking this morning thinking this wet weather that it's only the spiritual people that be here this morning because it's so cold and wet and miserable.

But then the weather changed, so you've got no excuse now. But really, I was thinking, you know, we can make so many excuses. Why to slacken off? You know, why to slacken the pace?

You know, oh, it's a bit colder. Oh, I don't feel 100%. Oh, something on telly I want to watch. Oh, no, you'll never say that. But no, this is the reality, brothers and sisters, isn't it?

The second mile Christians, friends, we're living in a time, I read this startling fact today, well, yesterday, 11 Christians are killed somewhere in the world every hour.

[35:34] Seven days a week, 365 days a year for reasons related to their faith. 11 Christians every hour in this day, in this time.

Friends, there's people dying to get into church, dying to fellowship, dying to get with God's people to hear the preaching of the word, to study it, to feast on it.

And yet, we in the West, we miss that sometimes, let's be honest, don't we? An extra mile Christian, it might take inconvenience, it might take disaster, it might take suffering.

Perhaps it's the refiner's fire will come, so that you'll feel the heat, whatever the cost, whatever the cost, deeper, deeper, in the love of Jesus.

Daily, let me go. Higher, higher, in the school of wisdom, more of grace to know. Oh, deeper yet, I pray, and higher every day, and wiser, blessed Lord, in thy precious, holy word.

[36:45] We're going to close with that, to sing that now. Number 14. Friends, be encouraged today, greater grace, greater love, greater righteousness, greater righteousness, greater works, greater faith.

How? By letting God work in you, letting Jesus fill you with himself, with his grace, with his love, with his works, with his righteousness, and with his faith.

I urge you today, be encouraged, and go the extra mile this week ahead, and God will bless you, as you do that. For some reason, if any of those are not ready, any of those are not ready.

if any of those are not ready, any of those are not ready. For some reason, if any of those are not ready, For some reason, if any of those are not ready, any of those are not ready. For some reason, any of those are not ready. For some reason, Thank you.