

Russell Kelfer

Life On Two Mile Island

(Part 2)

553-A

Series: The Beatitudes

dtm DISCIPLESHIP TAPE MINISTRIES, INC.
INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

10602 Mossbank, San Antonio, TX 78230 • (210) 226-0000 / 1-800-375-7778 • www.dtm.org • dtm@dtm.org

Note: Russell wrote each of these lessons in a manner that would enable him to clearly communicate them to his weekly class. The grammar or punctuation you encounter may not be technically perfect, but you will certainly “hear” his unique gift for making the message applicable to the common man in everyday situations.

It’s been said of him that he was really a writer who read his stuff. And that’s a very accurate statement!

May you be richly blessed as you “hear” as you read.

Life On Two Mile Island

(Part 2)

We return in this lesson to “Life on Two Mile Island”. This is a place at the center of life designed only for Christians. This is a place where all of the signs say, “Yield.” Two Mile Island is where the streets Christian Way and World Boulevard intersect at Conflict Corner. You may remember from the last lesson that the Christian is on a one-way street, but, in many cases and in many situations, he comes in conflict with the world. God’s signs along the freeway near Conflict Corner all say, “Yield.” As we pass that corner and look back over our shoulder, we see behind us that on the backside of the “Yield” sign is a cross.

On Two Mile Island, the Christian is the peacemaker. Where interpersonal relationships are concerned, he has all of the rights of a dead man. We find his guidebook of behavior in Matthew 5:38-42. In this passage, we see that the eye for an eye roadmap has been replaced with a new plan called “Yield”.

To enter Two Mile Island, we had to come to a stop sign and recognize seven basic principles that made this passage what it is. These seven principles are as follows:

Principle 1- God’s eye for an eye principle was not a license to retaliate, but it was, rather, to show mercy and restraint to mankind. The eye for an eye principle was primarily for judges to use, not individuals. It was to prevent over responding to injury and was given to restrain men. It was God’s first step toward mercy.

2- The second mile principle which supersedes it is not to be used nationally but personally. The eye for an eye principle still applies to national conflicts. A hostage crisis calls for just retaliation, not mass murders, but not turning the other cheek either. It won’t, and it hasn’t worked.

3- These principles are exclusively for Christians. This is one reason they won’t work nationally. This is also why there are so many frustrated unbelievers trying to live the Christian life without Christ.

Life On Two Mile Island (Part 2)

4- These principles do not apply to a man's responsibility to his nation under war as we see in Romans 13 and I Peter 2. These passages give us the proper response when our nation goes to battle.

5- These are God's guidelines for dead Christians. These are person-to-person principles when Christians come to Conflict Corner.

6- These principles do not imply compromise when God's reputation is at stake. Rather, they are principles that apply when our reputation and rights are at stake.

7- With these things understood, the Two Mile Island principles are the will of God for every Christian. This is God's will for me and God's will for you.

With these in mind, we entered Two Mile Island in the last lesson by way of Retaliation Road. Again, the sign said, "Yield." Jesus' first words were,

"Resist not evil. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, (this is a sign of utter humiliation to the Jew) turn to him the other also. Do not retaliate. Simply, quietly, remain vulnerable to further abuse." (Matthew 5:38,39 paraphrased)

In the last lesson, we looked at what that means in a marriage. We looked at what that means on the job. We looked at what that means in the marketplace. We looked at what it means to become totally vulnerable and thus to be totally usable.

Journeying further, we came again to Conflict Corner and turned right on Possession Pathway. Once again, the sign said, "Yield." It had to do with someone unjustly at law demanding your coat. Jesus said, "Give it to them and give them your cloak as well." The cloak was something that legally they could not take. It was something that by human standards was a necessity. Men only had one, and they needed it for warmth. In the last lesson we looked at the example of someone asking for your lawnmower. Give him your edger, too.

I know that there are Scriptural exceptions and Scriptural discernment is needed in all of these principles. We will deal with those briefly. But my friend, listen for now, forget the exceptions. Learn the principle. Practice the principle. If you do that, God will grant you discernment when the exceptions come into play.

Life On Two Mile Island (Part 2)

In this lesson, we approach Conflict Corner again. This time, the street sign says Second Mile Avenue. It is the main street on Two Mile Island. There is a big clock on the corner. Up ahead we can see this time that the conflict involves our time and our strength. Once again, the sign says, “Yield.” Let’s look at Matthew 5,

And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two.

(Matthew 5:41 NKJV)

Notice first the word “whosoever”. This is the stick of dynamite that blows up and destroys our Pharisaical availability only to those who can return the favor. It says “whosoever”. It destroys our Pharisaical availability only to those who are of like kind, whatever that means. It says “whosoever”. It destroys our Pharisaical availability to only those who are appreciative and demonstrative. It says “whosoever.” It destroys our Pharisaical availability to only those who are enjoyable to serve. It says “whosoever.”

“Whosoever” means the indignant person, one who demands our time. “Whosoever” means the ungrateful person, the one who takes it all for granted. “Whosoever” includes the obnoxious, the one whose very presence sends chills up our spine. “Whosoever” means the insensitive person, the one who never even knows he is a burden. “Whosoever” means the person who demands our time and our strength. “Whosoever” can be translated, if anyone, no matter who, makes demands of our time and energy as though they had that right, yield. We can then give them more of our time and more of our strength and, if need be, twice as much as what they asked. This is what this verse teaches.

To those who heard the voice of Jesus on that day, this “Yield” sign was an all too visible reality. The picture may seem foreign to those of us in this country, but it was very real to the Jews in Jesus’ day. It is a portrait of one who lives in an occupied country. The word used for compel is the Greek word “*aggareuo*”. As Barclay says, it is a word with a history. It comes from a Persian noun meaning courier. The Persians had an amazing postal system. Each road was divided into stages lasting one day. At each stage, there was food and water for the courier. There were also provisions for his horses, and there were fresh horses for the next leg of the journey. If by any chance anything was lacking when they came to this rest station, any private person could be pressed or compelled into giving food, shelter, transportation

Life On Two Mile Island (Part 2)

or assistance. This was taken even to the point of carrying the message himself. In other words, they could simply put the load on your shoulder and say, “You get to play postman for the next ten miles.” The word for such compulsion was the same Greek word. Eventually, this word came to signify any kind of forced impressments in service by an occupying power.

In an occupied country, citizens could be compelled to supply food or clothing or to carry luggage. Often this service was forced upon them in the most degrading and humiliating of ways. The principle was this: your time was at their command. Your strength was theirs to use. To refuse such service was a personal affront to the king.

Palestine was an occupied territory. At any moment, any Jew might feel the touch of the Roman spear against his shoulder and know that he was compelled to serve in the most menial of ways. “Here, carry this pack for me.” “Hey you, go fetch me some water.” “Son, tie my shoe.” This is, in fact, what happened to Simon of Cyrene and was the word used when he was compelled to bear the cross of Jesus.

What Jesus was saying was this, “You, too, live in occupied territory. The king will from time to time send his personal representatives to you and test you by compelling you and taking advantage of you and challenging the right to your time and your strength. To refuse is an affront to the king.

‘as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’ ”

(Matthew 25:40 NKJV)

But the Master’s goal, as always, is a step beyond willing compliance. He says, “Christian, you are at Conflict Corner, and here is a chance to yield. Don’t grudgingly do what is asked and feel smug and self-righteous. Go joyfully and having done all that is asked, volunteer more, even twice what you have been compelled to do. Then you will have the mark of a peacemaker.”

For example, the doorbell rings and as always, it is at an inconvenient time. It is the guy you work with but don’t like, the one who is always taking advantage of you, then scoffing at you for letting him do so. Bobby Bigshot is his name. He needs help. His car is stalled in the next block. He wants you to bring your new car to give him a boost. The flesh wants to give him a boost right out of the neighborhood, but the spirit sees a visitor from

Life On Two Mile Island (Part 2)

God, sent by the King who owns your time. Hopefully, the Spirit responds with help, and you follow him all the way home to be sure his car does not stall again. You then volunteer to go three miles out of your way the next day to pick him up for work.

You may say, "That is not fair." Let me put it this way. What if you were condemned to die for a crime you actually committed, but a very gracious judge paid your penalty and set you free? The same judge then sent you a friend of his with a need or maybe one of his own children. Would you quibble about helping him? No matter the personality of the person, you would respond, because you owe all of your life to that judge. You are on borrowed time. You would break your neck to help any friend of his. Do you get the picture?

This principle is one of being compelled or taken advantage of because you live in occupied territory. The king needs some of his own time back. Time. Man's great equalizer is time. We learned in the last lesson that each of us must yield our possessions, but there is no easy way to gauge our stewardship where possessions are concerned. One is a ten-talent man. One is a five-talent man. One is a one-talent man. You don't really know if I am a ten or a one-half, but time is something we all have equally. I have sixty minutes in every hour. I have twenty-four hours in every day. I have seven days in every week. I have fifty-two weeks in every year. So do all of you. No one has more, and no one has less. So how we choose to use it and how we choose to cling to it and make it our lord is readily visible to all.

LIVING THE TWO MILE WAY

Time. What is the purpose of time? It works like this. God lives in eternity. He has created "time" for us, for at least five reasons. He has created it as a framework to reveal himself to man and to prepare man for eternity. Therefore, time is a vehicle created by God to take man from eternity to eternity with the maximum amount of glory to Himself. Time brings five things to man.

1- Time brings order. The evening and the morning were the first day. God regimented and ordered time. God gave man divine regimentation. It is a new starting place and a way to keep records. It is a way to test progress. It is a place to start and stop in life. God is a God of order, so He ordained time.

Life On Two Mile Island (Part 2)

2- Time brings rest. On the seventh day, God rested. God made the night for man to rest. We, without time, would not have sense enough to rest. Even in the midst of war, when night falls, guns go silent. Man is forced by time to rest and recoup and to start over again.

3- Time brings change. God ordained seasons. He caused the animals to adapt. He caused the plant life to sleep and awaken. He causes nature to change color. Man ages and changes. By using time, God calls attention to change. So man has a dimension by which to measure change. It is called time.

4- God uses time to bring contrast. God created time to give man in his limited body a measuring stick. By pointing to eternity, He paints a portrait of that which is infinite. Man longs for eternity, because he lives in the limits of time.

5- Time brings equalization. As we said earlier, God gives man each day an equal amount of time. This is the true test of man's commitment to Christ. It shows how fruitfully and how unselfishly he uses it. This is the real measure of man. Time.

What God is looking for is the yielding of that time on a day-to-day basis as though it belonged to Him, because it does. Acts 17:26 tells us that God owns time and that He appoints certain segments to each of us.

And He has made from one blood[a] every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings,
(Acts 17:26 NKJV)

Galatians 4:4 tells us that when the fullness of His time was come, at the precise moment that was appointed, He sent forth His Son.

But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law,
(Galatians 4:4 NKJV)

Ecclesiastes 3:1 says that to everything there is an appointed time. Verse 17 says, that there is a time for every matter and a time for every work.

To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven:

I said in my heart, "God shall judge the righteous and the

Life On Two Mile Island (Part 2)

wicked, for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work.”
(Ecclesiastes 3:1,17 NKJV)

That is why Colossians 4:5 says we are to walk wisely in the presence of unbelievers, wisely making use of the time allotted us.

Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time.
(Colossians 4:5 NKJV)

The clock belongs to God. He designed it. He owns it. When His use for it is finished, He will dispense with it as a disposable commodity never to be used again. The clock belongs to God, so when, in love, He stoops down and borrows some time, He is only using wisely what is His. Let Him. Yield. In the yielding, you will find that He has returned to you a measure of eternity in exchange for a moment of time. What a trade!

The conflict comes because man, apart from God, is a slave to time. Every second and every minute is a countdown to death for the unbeliever. Like a condemned man bound for execution, time is a long hallway leading to an eternal gas chamber. So selfishly, he must preserve it, hoard it and buy delays however he can. Time is his enemy. It can only destroy him. Try to borrow some, and you threaten the only commodity between him and destruction.

For the Christian, the end of that hallway called time leads to a sunlit outside world called eternity, heaven. Here, he will be free. No more sin. No more pain. No more sorrow. No more night. No more sickness. No more tears. Time is his ally. It is merely a countdown to freedom, so he uses it up freely to whoever needs it, for something infinitely better awaits him.

Even today, the world is poised on the edge of destruction. Man wants to turn back the clock of history. Countdown to Armageddon means destruction for the world, but the Christian heart is beating with a new expectancy, a new spirit of expectation. Time is on our side. Time belongs to us. It is a gift from God. Give it away.

The secret is one of learning to give your clock to God so that God can give it back to you with a way to use it. There is a two-fold application of the principle. The first principle is first things first. Only two things in this life are eternal, God and His Word and people. God wants your time with Him set aside first. Here, He will not compel you. He will stand daily at your heart's door

and knock. If you ask Him, He will come in and sup with you. That is, He will feed you and offer you friendship and fellowship. Here is the first key to your use of time. If you refuse to take time to refuel, you will give up that time later by the side of the road. All you need is thirty minutes at the start of the day. You may say, "I don't have time." Two hours a week is what you need. You say, "I don't have that kind of time." A day or a month to be alone with God may be what you need. You may say, "God, you are kidding. Who has that kind of time?" God has. You have.

The men in history who controlled God's calendar were men who allowed time with God to regulate their clock. They gave time with God first priority. God gave them back time as an ally controlled by the Spirit. The sun can be made to stand still for the man who builds his time around the Son. When you reach the place in your time with God when you lose track of time simply being in the presence of God, then you know that you have received a taste of eternity.

The other commodity that is eternal is people. God's men and God's women always have time for people. Organizations, projects, programs and performances are, if need be, expendable. God's one concern for you and for me is people. Time is the greatest expression of love that a person can give.

Looking back on your childhood, what would you rather have had from your parents, more gifts? More privileges? Or, more of their time or their undivided attention when you needed them? How many of us who are older parents, if we had to do it over again, would give our children less of things and more of time? Oh, how much you can tell about yourself by how you react to the tug of a little child on your coat or your dress. Do you look down with a condescending stare and say, "Not now, Son. Okay, Son, yes. Now as I was saying about the Spurs chance for the playoffs next year..." Or do you say, "Excuse me," then bend down eye to eye and communicate love and say, "Wow Son, did you color that in Sunday School? Let me see it. Can I show it to my friend?" What is the difference? Time, about thirty seconds. But to your son, it was an eternity. You changed it from indifference or rejection to the love of God.

Men, when you come home from work bushed, with your eyes glazed like a zombie, do you march into the house and find your own special staring chair? There you whine and cry over the day.

Life On Two Mile Island (Part 2)

Meanwhile, your wife has waited all day for you to come home to have a few minutes of your time. She may just want to tell you what she heard about some friends. You could care less about what she heard about them. She may want to ask you what color she should cover the couch. You don't care if the couch is purple with pink polka dots. Or she may just want to show you that the petunias came up in the backyard, and you just think it is something else to mow around. All she wants is a few minutes of your time.

I must confess that I am the world's worst in this area. I come home and usually walk into the room where my wife is, and she will begin to share something with me. The first thing that comes out of my mouth is, "Uh, huh." I didn't hear a word she said, and I wasn't listening. If I had a hearing aid, I would have turned it down. It is a bad habit. But the worst thing I do is that in addition to not listening, midway through it, I turn around and walk out of the room. I don't why, but it is a habit. It is not extremely gracious, but it is a habit. I can just hear her trailing off talking to herself and I'm in the other room wondering what in the world she is talking about but not sensitive enough to stay and listen. All she wanted was a few seconds of my time.

Now let's reverse the situation. A husband comes home, and he wants to share what happened at the office. The wife wants to cook. She says to herself, "After all, I'm cooking for him." Ladies, stop just for a moment and give him a little H&L. Hug and listen. He wants to share a little bit of his world. All it takes is time.

Then there is the customer who interrupts a sale that you have just about closed. You say, "Yes, sir, what can I do for you?" He says, "Can you tell me how to get to St. Louis Street?" He may be an angel sent from God to test your response. All he is asking for is a little time. Maybe a neighbor interrupts your dinner just to chat. He may be an angel God has sent to test your love.

People. Give your time to people. You may say, "My house won't get cleaned." So what? You may say, "I might miss my golf game." Big deal. You will probably lose anyhow. So you miss the six o'clock news, you can see it again tomorrow. It is the same news every day it seems. If someone needs you, go. Go farther than they have asked. God's rewards are for time spent with people. This little poem says it best, "Find the Time for People."

THE CLOCK RUNS FAST

The clock runs fast and life's swift pace
Quickens with each day,
The pressures mount and each minute counts
And what a price we pay.

We find ourselves the slaves of time
With every hour that's past
We scramble just to stay afloat
Forgetting which things last.

People, that's God's plan for life,
That's His mission for you.
To minister to those with needs
Until His love breaks through

Make time, make time for people
Too busy? Too tired? No, never.
Make time, make time for people,
For people last forever.

The second application has to do with God's divine interruptions. Jesus thrived on life's interruptions. His greatest miracles did not appear to be on His schedule. A centurion was concerned about his servant and Jesus stopped and listened. A father was concerned about his child. Jesus stopped and healed. An unexpected death was another circumstance He faced. Jesus altered His plan. An unexpected tug on His garment caused power to go out from Him. He stopped and healed. An unscheduled stop from Jesus for a blind beggar seemed to cause the hands of time to stand still.

Interruptions in your life are God's divine tests for a dead man. For instance, the phone rings and God says it may well be an angel unawares. Answer it like you are talking to God. The doorbell rings. Another angel could be there to borrow a little bit of God's time. I know your time is precious, but whose time is it? How much time does a dead man have? Time rules us.

I think that the crux of this matter can be explained by what happened to me last night. I had a rough week time-wise and strength-wise. I had a lot of good things that I felt were God's will to be involved in, but it seemed like time was pressing, and there wasn't enough time. I was about as exhausted as I have been in a long time, because circumstances had caused the absence of

slumber. I sat down at my desk rather late last night, and I was looking at this lesson. I had my famous coversheet. This is the only thing that keeps me going. I will make out the coversheet that has the title and the lesson number on it. I feel like I have begun. All I had was a coversheet, and I was mad at God. As I was sitting there I said, "Lord, You know I've got this lesson to do, and I don't have enough time. Lord, I am so tired. My mind won't work. I can't think. How can I do a lesson at a time like this?"

It was as though the Lord said quietly to me, "Now what was this lesson about, Son?" So I scrambled through my notes from last week to see where we were heading and I said, "It is on time. That time belongs to God and that God gives us all the strength we need. Oh..." It was just as though God quietly said, "You've got the time, if you've got Me. You've got the strength, if you ask Me for it." It is so hard for our flesh to stop and say, "Here, God, this is what I seem to need to do, and this is all the time there is to do it in. Lord, I give it to You. Please multiply the seconds and make the sun stand still. Here, Lord, it is Your clock anyway." Take a deep breath and give it to God. Some of us need to learn that everyday could start like that. We need to give God back the clock He already owns and actually pray for divine interruptions and a divine manifestation of eternity in time.

The second element being tested in verse 41 is strength. Scripture teaches and experience confirms that tests generally come when we are weak: physically, emotionally and spiritually. The cross we are compelled to carry is usually more than the flesh can bear. Scripture teaches that herein lies the secret of godliness. We need to rejoice in our weakness so that God can show Himself strong. God often seems to call on us to carry someone's load that we cannot carry. Then, He asks us to carry it a second mile. It may be a physical task, and we may be exhausted. It may be an emotional need, and we may be emotionally stretched to our limits. It may be a spiritual need, and our reservoir may appear to be dry.

Enter the strength of God. In II Corinthians 12,

And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in

Life On Two Mile Island (Part 2)

needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

(II Corinthians 12:9.10 NKJV)

The power in that passage was not simply that God could work as well in Paul when he was without strength. The key was that God really couldn't work in Paul until Paul was without strength. Only when Paul acknowledged his weakness could God really express His strength. Paul goes on to say that there is a law of direct return. More weakness produces more God. So Paul concludes, "God stretch me. God pull me. Test me. Make me weak, because if I have more of You, there's got to be less of me. It stands to reason to do whatever You need to do to lessen me."

We find this same circumstance with Job. You may say, "I can't stand another trial." It is then that you may stand on the edge of victory. God now is ready to send you the second mile. Never say, "I'm too tired to serve another person." Stop, take a deep breath and breathe Isaiah 40. It goes like this:

Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, Neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable.

He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength.

Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall,

But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

(Isaiah 40:28-31 NKJV)

So when you think that you can do no more and the phone rings, it is God on the line. How would you like some strength? Here is someone with a need. You are powerless. What a chance for God to work. That is life on Two Mile Island. No private ownership of the clock. No signs that say, "Sorry, Too Tired To Help." The doorbell or the phone call is the touch of the spear of the Master's army. He needs you. He will give you eternity for time. He will trade you strength for weakness, if when the conflict comes you will be willing to yield.

In the next lesson, we will conclude our visit to Two Mile Island with a trip to the village bank. We will take a look at the books. We will see how God reconciles our account. We will examine His

Life On Two Mile Island (Part 2)

response to the cry of the poor. We will examine the case of the petrified pocketbook. We will hopefully deal with heaping coals of fire on someone's head, so bring your asbestos bonnet.

In the meantime, why not set your watch to eternal time. Eternal time pays attention to eternal things. Only two things are eternal, God and His Word and people. Next time you go to church, don't look at your watch or fret over a better seat, look for a person. Find a person and look into their eyes and communicate the love of God. Relax. Take the time to be available.

This week, amidst life's interruptions, let's learn to relax. Look beyond the interruptions to the angel. The angel of God may have been sent to your door to test your time, to test your strength, to test your willingness to yield to life's eternal values. These values are everything when you live on Two Mile Island.

dtm DISCIPLESHIP TAPE MINISTRIES, INC.

10602 Mossbank, San Antonio, TX 78230

210-226-0000 or 1-800-375-7778

www.dtm.org • dtm@dtm.org • © Russell Kelfer

(04.09.14)