

Success and the Second Mile

Daniel K Judd

Daniel K Judd is a professor of ancient scripture at Brigham Young University. He has a PhD from Brigham Young University in counseling psychology.

Each year the University of Toronto’s faculty in the School of Applied Science and Engineering honors their finest graduating senior with the Second Mile Engineer Award. As you will recognize, the name of this prestigious award is based on the words of Jesus Christ in the New Testament: “And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain” (Matthew 5:41). With you, I applaud the efforts of the recipients of this award and the faculty and administration who have continued to allow this small fragment of biblical tradition to continue at a major secular university. The principles of selflessness and commitment embedded in the story of the second mile are doctrinal truths that each of us needs to understand and live—within our families, in our Church service, in our education, and in our careers—if we are to be true disciples of Christ.

It may come as a surprise to many of you to learn that the Joseph Smith Translation of the “second mile” text in Matthew contains a

significant textual difference. A comparison of the King James Version (hereafter cited as KJV) and the Joseph Smith Translation (hereafter cited as JST) of the “second mile” verse in Matthew 5 reads as follows:

KJV, Matthew 5:41

And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.

JST, Matthew 5:41

And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him a mile; and whosoever shall compel thee to go with him twain, thou shalt go with him twain.

An examination of the original manuscript of the Joseph Smith Translation reveals that this was a deliberate textual change in the Bible made by the Prophet (with Sidney Rigdon as his scribe) sometime between March 8 and April 6 of 1831.¹ This particular change in the text is one of the changes that was not included in the footnotes or in the appendix of the Latter-day Saint edition of the scriptures. The implications of this change made by the Prophet Joseph Smith are significant and full of meaning for each of us as we attempt to follow the Savior and His teachings. While we are often reminded of the importance of being *true* to what we know is right, my intent in this paper is to avoid what Elder Bruce R. McConkie called being “truer than true.”²

I vividly remember when I first began to learn the significance of Joseph Smith’s translation of Matthew 5:41. I had recently graduated from Brigham Young University with a PhD in counseling psychology, my wife had just given birth to our fourth child, I was working for the Church Educational System as an institute instructor and coordinator, attempting to work part time in a growing practice as a psychologist, and serving as a bishop. The day I discovered the textual change in the Joseph Smith Translation described earlier, I was home with a serious

1. Personal correspondence with Professor Kent P. Jackson, Brigham Young University.
2. Bruce R. McConkie, “The Probationary Test of Mortality,” address delivered at the Salt Lake Institute of Religion, January 10, 1982; http://www.ldslastdays.com/default.aspx?page=talk_probation.htm.

illness that my physicians had not been able to diagnose. I was beginning to lose hope in regaining my health when I read, “And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him a mile” (JST, Matthew 5:41). My first thought was that I must have misread the text. As I read and reread the text, I sensed that I was being blessed with a significant scriptural insight. I credit this precious doctrinal principle as being central to the eventual restoration of my health. The Joseph Smith Translation of Matthew 5:41 helped me understand that going the second mile was not always the right thing to do and that my misunderstanding of the doctrine was contributing to my illness. I am now a living (and healthy) witness of the truthfulness of President Boyd K. Packer’s familiar statement, “True doctrine, understood, changes attitudes and behavior. The study of the doctrines of the gospel will improve behavior quicker than a study of behavior will improve behavior.”³

Before discussing the implications of Joseph Smith’s translation of the second mile verse, it is important to emphasize to the accompanying doctrinal principle that often going the second mile is the right thing to do. My greatest concern in addressing a topic of this nature is that someone who needs to roll up their sleeves and get to work will use what I am saying to justify going only one mile when the Lord asks two. President Gordon B. Hinckley has warned, “I have been quoted as saying, ‘Do the best you can.’ But I want to emphasize that it be the very best. We are too prone to be satisfied with mediocre performance. We are capable of doing so much better.”⁴

To illustrate the significance of what President Hinckley has said, please note the following comparison between the King James Version, Joseph Smith Translation, and the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ:

-
3. Boyd K. Packer, “Do Not Fear,” *Ensign*, May 2004, 79.
 4. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Standing Strong and Immovable,” *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting: The Priesthood and the Auxiliaries of the Relief Society, January 10, 2004* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2004), 21.

KJV, Matthew 5:41	JST, Matthew 5:41	3 Nephi 12:41
And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.	And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him a mile; and whosoever shall compel thee to go with him twain, thou shalt go with him twain.	And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.

While the text of the Joseph Smith Translation eliminates the doctrine of the second mile, you will notice that the Savior's sermon to the ancient Nephites retains the teaching. In addition to what the Savior taught in 3 Nephi, President Hinckley has also said the following about going the second mile:

There is much of . . . sickness among us. I speak of conflicts, quarrels, arguments which are a debilitating disease particularly afflicting families. If there be such problems in the homes of any within the sound of my voice, I encourage you to invite the healing power of Christ. To those to whom He spoke on the Mount, Jesus said: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:

"But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. . . .

"And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain." (Matt. 5:38–41.)

The application of this principle, difficult to live but wondrous in its curative powers, would have a miraculous effect on our troubled homes. It is selfishness which is the cause of most of our misery. It is as a cankering disease. The healing power of Christ, found in the doctrine of going the second mile, would do wonders to still argument and accusation, fault-finding and evil speaking.⁵

5. Gordon B. Hinckley, "The Healing Power of Christ," *Ensign*, November 1988, 52.

I am confident that at least one of the reasons President Hinckley has taught the importance of going the second mile is that there are many of us who are falling short of what the Lord has asked of us, and that we, our families, and others with whom we associate suffer as a result. But why would President Hinckley and the Lord Jesus Christ both speak of the blessings of going the second mile when in the Joseph Smith Translation the Savior directs the Jerusalem Saints to go only a mile?

One possible answer to this provocative question comes in understanding the diverse circumstances of the audiences that both the Savior and President Hinckley were addressing. The disciples to whom Jesus was speaking in Jerusalem were living under oppressive conditions. Most of us are familiar with the explanation that by law Roman soldiers had the right to compel a civilian to carry his pack (which generally contained his armor) for a mile. It makes sense that Jesus would tell the disciples of New Testament times to go the mile when compelled by those in authority. To do so was to follow the Savior's counsel to honor and obey the laws of the land—a principle recorded in Matthew in the debate between Jesus and the Pharisees over submission to Roman law: "Tell us therefore [said the Pharisees to Jesus], What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not? But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Shew me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (KJV, Matthew 22:17–21).

A modern example of rendering "unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's" is found in our payment of state and federal taxes. Many members of the Church understand the law and pay their taxes. How many of us would even consider writing out a check for double the amount of money that the government requires us to pay? On the other hand, would not members of the Church be more likely to pay more in tithes and offerings than is asked of them by the Lord and His servants? While one is never obligated to pay more in tithes and offerings than the Lord requires, we are encouraged to be generous with the abundant

means we have been blessed with. Still we must be cautious, even in our generosity, of traveling unwise or unnecessary second miles.

The Saints to whom the Savior appeared in the ancient Americas lived in a much less hostile environment than did their brothers and sisters in ancient Israel. The wicked had just been destroyed in the natural disasters accompanying the Savior's death. The second miles they were being asked to travel accomplished righteous purposes among faithful people. Unlike their Jerusalem counterparts, the Nephites and Lamanites had little risk of being exploited by the authorities. The Savior's counsel to the Jerusalem Saints to "go with him a mile" (JST, Matthew 5:41) was inspired direction to the members of the Church in that day to comply with Roman law but not to waste their strength in doing more than was needful. It has been my experience, personally, ecclesiastically, and professionally, that many members of the Church in our day have become spiritually, emotionally, and physically weary because they have been going the second mile when the Lord would have them go only one or even none. It is also interesting to note that we can also become weary by going one mile when the Lord would have us go two. It is vital to our health and perhaps even to our salvation to be prayerful and use good judgment as we make decisions whether or not we should go one mile or two as we strive to be obedient to the Lord's counsel. As I will soon show, the temptation to travel unnecessary (and often unhealthy) second miles may especially attract those who are attempting to balance their careers, family life, and Church responsibilities.

Research on Latter-day Saints

Several years ago while doing research about the relationship of religious affiliation and mental health, I observed an interesting phenomenon. Among the many individuals and families I interviewed, including Latter-day Saints, Seventh-day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, and members of the Baha'i and Hare Krishna faiths, I was pleased to note that many of the Latter-day Saints whom I interviewed and tested earned some of the most favorable mental-health scores. The scores from the Latter-day Saint sample, however, appeared to be more polarized than the test results from the members of the other faiths.

Latter-day Saints also earned some of the poorest mental-health scores. Although we know that rain falls “on the just and on the unjust” (KJV, Matthew 5:45), that serious problems come to faithful individuals and families as well as to the less faithful, the data that I collected confirmed the Lord’s statement in the Doctrine and Covenants: “For of him unto whom much is given much is required; and he who sins against the greater light shall receive the greater condemnation” (D&C 82:3; see verses 1–10). The good news is that the opposite is also true. The scriptures clearly teach that when individuals and families are true to the greater light, especially when life is hard, increased blessings eventually follow.

My research and personal observations have also confirmed to me that much, but not all, of the trouble we have in Latter-day Saint homes comes from not being true to what the Lord and His servants have taught us. We either fall short of what has been asked of us, or, as I am attempting to illustrate in this presentation, we go beyond the first mile to the second, and sometimes even to the third, and begin to suffer the consequences of what the Book of Mormon prophet Jacob described as “looking beyond the mark” (Jacob 4:14). Jacob provides valuable insight into how the Lord’s ancient covenant people went into apostasy: “But behold, the Jews were a stiffnecked people; and they despised the words of plainness, and killed the prophets, and sought for things that they could not understand. Wherefore, because of their blindness, which blindness came by looking beyond the mark, they must needs fall; for God hath taken away his plainness from them, and delivered unto them many things which they cannot understand, because they desired it. And because they desired it God hath done it, that they may stumble” (Jacob 4:14). Elder Neal A. Maxwell taught that the gravity of this oversight was that the *mark* the Jews were looking beyond was Christ.⁶ In addition to the mark being a symbol of Christ, it also represents the teachings of the Savior and His authorized servants. It has been my experience that the temptation to go beyond the mark also extends

6. Neal A. Maxwell, “Jesus of Nazareth, Savior and King,” *Ensign*, May 1976, 26–27.

to the workplace. Such a temptation is strengthened by the fact that we are often richly rewarded for going above and beyond. The harder we work and the more product we produce typically results in a larger income and increased notoriety among our peers. Each of us needs to remember the Savior's counsel, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (KJV, Matthew 16:26).

As one enters the workforce, it is important to remember the Lord's counsel to the Prophet Joseph Smith, "Do not run faster or labor more than you have strength" (D&C 10:4). King Benjamin taught the same principle: "And see that all these things are done in wisdom and order; for it is not requisite that a man should run faster than he has strength" (Mosiah 4:27).

Running faster than we have strength leads to what the business world calls *burnout*, a symptom which has been defined as the "exhaustion of physical or emotional strength or motivation usu[ally] as a result of prolonged stress or frustration."⁷ Just as engineers learn the significance of positive and negative stress ratios in their engineering classes, they also learn that misplaced stress can lead to disaster. In addition to learning the dangers of too little and too much stress in our own lives, it is imperative that we also come to understand the importance of priorities. Jonathon Lazear, the author of *The Man Who Mistook His Job for a Life*, wrote:

I started thinking about the role of work in my life and saw how easy it was to have fallen into a trap. . . . Your job [becomes] such a big part of your life that it dwarfs everything else. There is no denying the satisfaction it can bring, but you're also wondering if it isn't taking from you more than it's giving. You've spun a web that defines but also conceals you. It is your salvation and your damnation—you're living inside the job and whether it makes you unhappy or fulfilled almost doesn't matter anymore, because you feel it's your only choice. And when

7. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed., s.v. "burnout."

you look at your life, you see the moments, the symptoms of being a man who mistakes his job for a life.⁸

While striving for excellence in every area of our life is a commendable pursuit, we must be sure that we are looking and working toward the right mark. In relation to this idea, Elder Bruce C. Hafen of the Seventy has taught: “The trouble with modern pursuits of excellence is that they can become a striving to please other men, or at least to impress them or to seek their approval. A desire for such approval is not all bad, especially among Church members, who generally reserve their approval for accomplishments having positive value. But man is not finally our judge, and making too much of either the affirmative or the adverse judgments of others can actually undermine our relationship with God and our development of sound values.”⁹ While the Apostle Paul instructed us to “run, that ye may obtain” (KJV, 1 Corinthians 9:24), he also taught that in conjunction we must “run with patience . . . looking unto Jesus” (KJV, Hebrews 12:1–2), and that “every man that striveth for the mastery [must be] temperate in all things” (KJV, 1 Corinthians 9:25). Excellence, then, will most always be a worthy objective to pursue, but it may not be *excellence* as the world commonly defines it.

If we do not properly define excellence and success in our minds and hearts, we may be in danger of looking beyond the mark and exceeding the mileage the Lord expects from us. If the adversary cannot entice us to fall short of the mark, he will tempt us to go beyond. President Packer once counseled, “A virtue when pressed to the extreme may turn into a vice.”¹⁰ Perhaps that is why Elder Hafen has said the following concerning excellence: “I have only two cheers for excellence. I have reservations not because I believe it justifiable for us to exert less than our finest efforts; rather, I fear that without a wise perspective, an unqualified commitment to goals and excellence can distort our

-
8. Jonathon Lazear, *The Man Who Mistook His Job for a Life* (New York: Crown 2001), 5–6.
 9. Bruce C. Hafen, in *Excellence* (Salt Lake: Deseret Book, 1984), 76.
 10. Boyd K. Packer, “Covenants,” *Ensign*, November 1990, 84.

understanding of certain long-term principles about life and its larger purposes—even if we do put forth great effort.”¹¹

This same phenomenon can be found in Church service. There are those of us who fall short, and there are others of us who go beyond. President James E. Faust once visited a sacrament meeting in my stake where I was serving as the stake president. Upon his arrival in the chapel, the bishop of the ward asked President Faust if he would consider sharing his testimony at the end of the meeting. President Faust agreed, but counseled, “Bishop, I’m happy to speak, but I see that your name is on the program as a speaker and I want you to go ahead and give the talk you have prepared.” President Faust then explained that he would share his testimony at the end of the meeting.

The meeting progressed, and one of the speakers took more than double the time that had been assigned. When it was time for the bishop to speak, he stood and explained that he would not give his remarks because the time was short, and he was sure everyone present was anxious to hear from President Faust. The bishop introduced President Faust and announced the closing hymn and prayer that would follow President Faust’s remarks. President Faust stood and kindly said, “We will now hear from your good bishop,” and returned to his seat. The bishop stood at the pulpit, apologized to President Faust for not following his instructions, gave his remarks, and sat down. President Faust shared his testimony, and the meeting ended.

We had all learned an important lesson about obedience. In the words of the prophet Samuel, “to obey is better than sacrifice” (KJV, 1 Samuel 15:22). While the first speaker had gone the second mile when asked to go only one, the well-meaning bishop was in danger of not going anywhere when he had been asked to go one mile. It is important to remember that success in the workplace, in our families, and in our Church assignments is more about obedience to the will of the Lord than it is about fulfilling our own desires or meeting others’ expectations.

11. Hafen, in *Excellence*, 68–69.

Most of us know well-meaning individuals who have developed one great passion for their work or for one particular principle of the gospel. The Apostle Paul said these people “have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they [are] ignorant of God’s righteousness, and [go] about to establish their own righteousness” (KJV, Romans 10:2–3). Elder McConkie said the following about gospel hobbies: “Through the ages religious fanatics have fought and died on the field of battle in false causes; in the Church there are those who became fanatics on such things as the Word of Wisdom, even to the point that they teach against the use of white bread, white flour, refined sugar, chocolate, and sometimes even milk, eggs, and cheese. *Stable and sound persons are never fanatics; they do not ride gospel hobbies.*”¹² Elder McConkie’s words remind me of the following definition of a fanatic: “A fanatic is a man who does what he thinks the Lord would do if He knew the facts of the case.”¹³

This same fanatical behavior can be found in the workplace. It is heartbreaking to see people who have lost their families and sometimes their faith by devoting their energies to climbing the corporate ladder, only to find in the end that the ladder they have been climbing is leaning against the wrong wall.

While the scriptures do not contain the word *fanatic*, we do find a synonym. In the Book of Mormon we read of Zeniff’s being *overzealous*. It is significant to note that the first description of Zeniff’s overzealousness was given by his own grandson, Limhi:

And again, that same God has brought our fathers out of the land of Jerusalem, and has kept and preserved his people even until now; and behold, it is because of our iniquities and abominations that he has brought us into bondage.

And ye all are witnesses this day, that Zeniff, who was made king over this people, he being *over-zealous* to inherit

12. Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake: Bookcraft, 1966), 275; emphasis in original.

13. Finley Peter Dunne, in *The Third—and Possibly the Best—637 Best Things Anybody Ever Said*, comp. Robert Byrne (New York: Atheneum, 1986), no. 549.

Daniel K. Judd

the land of his fathers, therefore being deceived by the cunning and craftiness of king Laman, who having entered into a treaty with king Zeniff, and having yielded up into his hands the possessions of a part of the land, or even the city of Lehi-Nephi, and the city of Shilom; and the land round about. (Mosiah 7:20–21; emphasis added)

Like you, I hope when my children and grandchildren describe me, *overzealous* will not be a part of their description. To Zeniff's credit, he too realized the consequences of his overzealousness. In Mosiah 9:3, Zeniff records: "And yet, I being over-zealous to inherit the land of our fathers, collected as many as were desirous to go up to possess the land, and started again on our journey into the wilderness to go up to the land; but we were smitten with famine and sore afflictions; for we were slow to remember the Lord our God." While it would not be appropriate nor doctrinally sound to propose a cause-effect relationship between Zeniff's overzealousness and the sins committed by members of his own family, it is at least interesting to note that Zeniff's son was the wicked King Noah. Have you ever known rebellious children who were the offspring of overzealous parents?

Conclusion

During His ministry to the inhabitants of the ancient Americas, the Savior carefully articulated the doctrinal foundation upon which He directed the people to build their lives. After defining this foundation as being composed of faith in Christ, repentance, baptism, and the Holy Ghost, He then taught a principle of application that is a summary of the principle I am illustrating: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and whoso buildeth upon this buildeth upon my rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them. And whoso shall declare *more or less than this*, and establish it for my doctrine, the same cometh of evil, and is not built upon my rock; but he buildeth upon a sandy foundation, and the gates of hell stand open to receive such when the floods come and the winds beat upon them" (3 Nephi 11:39–40; emphasis added).

The adversary is the master of temptation and counterfeit. While we often recognize and acknowledge his efforts to tempt us to be *less* faithful than we know we should be, how many of us have been deceived into doing *more* than is expedient? I personally believe that this is one of the adversary's most effective and best disguised deceptions to handicap and destroy faithful people. While success is often found in going the second mile, so is failure. True success is less about professional excellence and more about obedience to the Lord and to the counsel of His servants. True success is to identify the will of God and to do our very best to follow His direction, whether doing so means that we go the second mile or only the first.