



DAILY DEVOTIONAL FRIDAY BIBLE STUDY FOR OCTOBER 14, 2011

THE GREATER COMMUNITY

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

LET’S JUST SAY THAT THE ROUGH ON TOUR isn’t like the rough at your home course. I cringe every time I’m watching TV and a player’s ball disappears into the thick stuff lining the fairway. Invariably, the announcers will say something like, “He’s not going to manage much from that lie.”

If you were watching last Sunday, though, you saw Bryce Molder successfully extricate his ball from an “impossible” tangled clump in the hazard at the eighteenth hole, enabling him to extend the playoff he would eventually win for his first PGA Tour victory at the Frys.com Open.

In a way that’s where we’re heading today. We will make an attempt to successfully negotiate a tricky passage of Scripture.

To begin, we might as well go ahead and admit out loud that nearly all of Jesus’ teachings are tricky, because they demand so much of us. Moreover, they often have to do with morality, the very thing we are taught to suspect in favor of Christ’s grace. Sure enough, Matthew 5:41 lands us right in the midst of such a thicket. Jesus’ teaching both demanded something “impractical” and “methodically moral” from His followers. How can this be?

First, we must keep in mind that Jesus’ kingdom is virtually never the same as the kingdoms of the world. His thinking is over and over upside-down: the last shall be first, the servant shall lead, one’s life is found in losing it, and a kernel falling to the ground in death produces the greatest crop. So when Jesus taught that we should “go the extra mile,” He was challenging us to surprise the world with the way we honor God and others.

And then, it is in that honoring God and others that we find the core of all Jesus’ teaching. To go the extra mile—and to follow the several teachings that surround this one in Matthew 5 and occur throughout the Gospels—is to defer to and serve others out of love for them and for God. It is to understand that Jesus always had the greater community in mind. That is, you remember, why He died for us!

Community outreach

Read Matthew 5:38-48. Consider what it would mean to live out Jesus’ teachings to the fullest possible degree. What effect would it have on you? What message would it send to the people around you, both believers and unbelievers?

The Jesus Creed

Review Matthew 22:34-40. How does this passage help us understand what is most important to Jesus regarding the way we live under Him? What one step might you take in this direction today?

Morality and religion

Read Romans 6:1-14 and Luke 18:9-14. What would you say is the difference between true morality and law-driven religion?
