

**God, Change My Attitude!**  
**Attitudes #1: Commitment**

January 25, 2008

(Sermon notes are a transcript from the sermon with only minor editing, retaining the conversational style.)

Let me start our series this morning with a question. Why is it that intelligence—IQ—is such a poor predictor of how well people do at life?

All of us know real bright people who end up in terrible marriages, horrible work situations or relational disasters. All of us know other people who might not be high in the IQ end of the spectrum who are very happy and live a very satisfying life. Why is that?

Some years ago, a man named Daniel Goldman wrote a very influential book called “Emotional Intelligence.” He did a very thorough review of research in the social sciences over the past two decades.

Goldman concluded that living well—doing well at life—is more often due to a whole other set of abilities that are not measured by IQ. These include your ability to tolerate frustration, to motivate yourself, to complete tasks that you start, to empathize with other people, to be able to read their emotions, and to be able to communicate effectively and your attitude as you approach life.

Attitude has the power to change your life. You cannot change your circumstances always. In this life there are a lot of things you simply cannot change. You may not be able to change your boss, your spouse, your kids, your finances, your background or the things that happen to you.

But you can change what goes on inside your mind and heart, and that’s what we are going to devote the next few weeks to. This series is called “God, Change My Attitude Before it’s too Late.” Title is from James MacDonald’s Book. My goal is to help you to develop an attitude and cultivate a mindset that will enable you to master life.

This morning I want to talk about an attitude of Total Commitment.

The writer in Ecclesiastes 9:10 put it like this:

“*Whatever your hand finds for you to do, do it with all of your strength.*” This attitude involves giving yourself diligently, 100%, to the task that God has given you to do in this world.

Sad to say not many people live this way. They only give 50% or 30% or whatever to the task that is set before them. Many people have the attitude of just drifting along the path of least resistance. Never going beyond the daily minimal requirements. They avoid challenges, being stretched and having to grow.

They seek to just get by.

There are only a few people who choose the path, The Road Less Travel.

Today you have a choice to decide which path you are going to take.

- The road less traveled or
- Just getting by on the path of least resistance.

There are three words that I want to impress upon your minds this morning. I never want you to forget them. I want to put them in the front part of your brain. The three words are simple in nature but they can have a profound effect in how you approach life. The three words are simply this: AND THEN SOME.

Do what is expected as required—and then some. Become an and-then-some kind of person.

I want to tell you a story from the Bible about an and-then-some kind of person. This story is found in the book of Genesis at the very beginning of Scripture. As it starts, Abraham—whom some of you know was the father of Israel and the beginning of the nation of Israel—is at this point an old man. His wife had died, and it

was time for his son Isaac to be married.

This was a real important deal. The whole future of the people of Israel relied on this marriage, because they all were going to be descendants of Isaac. Abraham had to find a great wife. She had to be someone who could be the mother of these children, raise the offspring and begin to shape a whole people.

How was Abraham going to find a wife for Isaac? There were no computer dating services in those days, and no newspapers where Isaac could write a personal ad—"attractive nomad with excellent prospects searching for female who likes to travel." They couldn't do it that way.

They had a custom in those days, and the custom was that the parent would arrange the marriage for the kid. The parent would go out, scour the countryside, find a real good candidate, come home and say to the kid, "This is who you are going to marry." That's who the kid would marry. The older I get and now that my kids are out of highschool, this biblical custom doesn't sound all that bad.

Here is what Abraham did. He was old and not far from death, so he called his most trusted servant, not mentioned in the story, but most likely named Eliezer.

*Abraham explained, "My time is almost done, and I am going to die soon. My son, the future of Israel, needs a wife, and she needs to be a person of flawless character. She needs to be someone who can be faithful to God and one with Isaac."*

For Abraham, this wasn't just about finding a good spouse for his child, but it also was about God's promise to create a new people. Abraham said to his servant, "*She has to be a great wife. This is very important, so don't mess up this assignment. Don't find a wife here among these people. I want you to go back to my homeland and find the right woman for my son, Isaac.*"

Eliezer accepted this commission and assembled a caravan of 10 camels laden with gifts. He knew that he was going to have to give them to the family of the girl that he would take away. He went back to a city called Nahor, where Abraham instructed him to go. When he arrived he had the camels kneel down while he stood by a well outside the town.

Eliezer began to pray since he didn't know what else to do.

*He said, "God, grant me success on this mission. I need a sign from you that you are in this, so this is what I ask. When the young women come here to this well, I will say, 'Would you get me some water?' Let one of them say, 'I will get a drink for you and water for your camels as well.' That will be a sign that she is the one."*

In the East in those days, hospitality was taken very seriously. It often was a matter of life or death for travelers and was a sign of character. Eliezer waited.

And wouldn't you know, a short time later women started coming to the well to collect water that they will need for that day.

Among the women coming and going was a young woman named Rebekah. The text says that she was a woman of pure character and very fair to look upon. John Ortberg would say, "*She was a righteous babe.*"

When Rebekah came, she lowered her jar into the well and gave it to Eliezer to drink. When he finished drinking, she said, "*I will draw water for your camels, too, until they have finished drinking.*"

Here's the kicker. Do you have any idea how much one thirsty camel can drink?

One thirsty camel at the end of a journey can drink up to 30 gallons of water. Do you remember how many camels were in this caravan? Do the math.

Here was a guy standing by a well who asked the girl, a total stranger, "*Can I have a drink of water?*" She handed the drink of water to him and then said, "*Sure! I also will pull up, by myself, another 300 gallons of*

*water for your camels.*” This was a girl with some serious biceps.

Here’s the story. Rebekah did everything that reasonably could have been expected of her and then some. It’s the “*and then some*” that made all the difference. It changed her life and the history of civilization. Because she went that extra mile, God used her to make a great nation.

What I’m telling you this morning is simply this, whatever your hand finds for you to do, do it with all of your strength.

I want you now to imagine the transformation that would occur for you if you were to put this principle into practice. How will that change your work situation, your relationships, marriage, with your children, in your mind and intellectual life, your physical health, or the well-being of your soul—if you became an and-then-some kind of person.

You can do this. There are a lot of things that you can’t control, but this one you can do. What I’m challenging you this morning is to move you to a point of commitment by being transformed rather than by just being informed.

In the honesty of your heart, are you an And-Then-Some kind of person? Do you go the second mile?

When you go to work tomorrow, just determine for a day, “I will do everything reasonably expected of me and then some. I am going to water the camels, too.”

For the wives when you husband sits down to watch hockey or basketball, say to yourself,

“Even though I am terribly tired, I will treat him like a king. I will fix him a pre-game snacks and half-time meal, rub his feet between quarters, wait on him hand and foot during the whole game, and do everything that he can possibly want and then some.” Now that I just lost half the listening audience, I’ll move on.

Jesus talked about living with this kind of attitude. The most famous message ever preached on earth is recorded in Matthew 5. One of the things Jesus said is, “*If anyone forces you to go with him one mile, go with him the second mile as well.*”

This is a remarkable saying. \When Jesus was alive, the country of Israel was occupied by the Roman Empire. There were Roman soldiers quite visible all over the place, and they often were forced to go on 50-mile marches. They had to carry heavy packs on their backs when they did this.

By Roman law, these soldiers were allowed to draft people to carry the backpacks and other burdens. They could pull anybody off the street and say, “*Hey you! Carry this.*” That person was required by law to carry it one mile. When the one mile was up, their legal obligation was over. They then could return the backpack.

Of course, this was not a popular law among the people of that day. They didn’t like these enemy forces who were occupying their land.

*Here is what Jesus was saying: “You have to do the first mile. You have no choice. But when you get to the end of that one mile, every once in a while, just for the fun of it, blow the mind of some Roman soldier. Take the burden back and say, ‘Let’s do two.’”*

I can’t say the words, *Let’s do two*, without referring to one of my favorite baseball player, Mr Cub. Ernie Banks. His famous saying about baseball games—“*It’s a good day for two*”? Jesus was telling his disciples just say, “*Let me do another mile. Let me carry your burden another mile. It’s a hot day, and you must get tired sometimes. Let me serve you for another mile.*”

In a world where people generally serve only when they are forced to do it, you can do it voluntarily and with joy. Understand that Jesus was not being legalistic. He wasn’t saying, “*Every time somebody asks you to do something, you have to do that and more.*”

Jesus wasn't saying that you have to tolerate any kind of abuse or injustice. You still must use judgment and discernment. There is a time to protest, a time to say no and a time to set boundaries.

Jesus was saying, "If you really want to do life in the Kingdom with the heart that God made you to have, then live as a servant. Find ways to delight and surprise people with your servanthood. Don't do it grudgingly or with a bitter heart and spirit. When you get to the end of the mile, go another one.

*"If somebody asks to borrow your coat, give that and your shirt as well. Do everything that the law requires and then some, because it is and-then-some people who really live. It's and-then-some people who change the world." Jesus says, "My people are an and-then-some kind of people."*

When you become that kind of person, God will be able to use you in ways that is beyond your imagination. Rebekah had no idea of the plans that God had for her. God was able to use her to make a great nation because she was an and-then-come kind of person.

Here's the deal with us. We often settle for just-getting-by. Getting by in our jobs, our relationships, marriages, and spiritual lives.

We pray "just-getting-by little prayers."

We settle for discount, thrift-shop kind of things when God calls us to settle for the best.

When you develop the attitude of being a And Then Some kind of person you will discover that the secret to abundant living is creative, joyful, freely-chosen servanthood.

In the time that we have left in this talk, I want to look with you at 3 areas in your life where you can become an and-then-some kind of person. Being an and-then-some kind of person in these three areas of your life will change you and your little world.

I would like to ask you to assess how you are doing right now in these three areas and then to think through the steps you can take to pursue and-then-some kind of living.

Here we go.

## **1. The first area involves your work.**

This might be at an office, in a job, at school if you are a student, at home, or in volunteering. All of us are involved in certain tasks in life.

A study was done to discover the secret for long life. According to this study, the primary predictor of the longevity of our life is the extent to which we enjoy our work. Now that you know this, how many of you feel as if you might die at any minute?

I would like you to take out a piece of paper and a pen or pencil and then rate yourself on whether you are an and-then-some kind of person in your work. Whatever your work is, rate yourself on a scale of 1 to 10.

Let me set the scale for you.

If you are a 10 as an and-then-some kind of person in your work, you could say, "Whatever my hand finds for me to do, I do it with all of my strength. I really do focus and concentrate. I have an appropriate level of commitment and passion for the work of my hands. I am not over-committed or a workaholic, and I don't exhaust myself. I really do seek to stretch, be challenged, grow and to serve." That would be a 10.

At the other end of the scale is a 1. If this is you, you honestly would have to say, "I find myself doing just enough to get by. One of my favorite sayings is 'that's not my job.'"

If you are a student, you would say, "My favorite question is, Will this be on the final? I would hate to think that I am wasting energy learning something that makes me wise but won't contribute to the final grade."

Where are you between 1 and 10? Write it down.

If you are not writing this down because you think it is too much work to get out a pen and a piece of paper, give yourself a 1. The person next to you can write down 1 and put your name there so you have something to carry off with you.

The question is, what can I do tomorrow to be an and-then-some kind of person in my work life? God made us to do work. It says in the Book of Genesis that God created human beings and put them in the garden to work and to care for it. It is part of our obligation in God's view.

What can I do? What is one action step tomorrow? Maybe I can give help to another person at work who needs guidance or support even though it's not my job. Maybe it's an attitude deal. Maybe you have become increasingly sour, bitter, withdrawn or apathetic at work.

The apostle Paul had a very important statement for people who were on the lowest rung of the ladder, which was the bottom of the oar chart in his day. He said, "*Work wholeheartedly, not only while you are being watched to please those above you but as unto the Lord,*" as if God were above.

This does not mean that you should tolerate being exploited and abused or that injustice in the workplace is OK. It does not mean that people never should change jobs. It means that your work matters, because God notices what you do. When you work, you create value. You prepare meals, balance the books, care for people, or help them in their education.

When you are doing these things, you are helping people and blessing life. That matters to God. You might want to put a little sign on your desk that says, "I am working for God," because you really are.

"Business Week" a while ago listed the 10 toughest jobs in the world, and the job of being a homemaker was right at the top of the list.

John Ortberg tells this story,

*After our third child was born, my wife Nancy was staying at home full-time for a few years. The oldest of our three kids was three and a half. Next was a two-year-old and then a newborn. That was hard work for her. She was home full-time while I was working outside the house.*

*A few months after our third child was born, Nancy decided at the last minute that she wanted to go away for a weekend. I was going to be teaching at the church that weekend, so she said, "Is it OK if I go away? Will you take care of the kids and the house this weekend and do the Mr. Mom thing?"*

*I said, "Sure. Go ahead. It's no big deal." It was kind of a nice thought that if I applied some organization, things would flow pretty smoothly.*

*She left about noon on Friday. By 2 p.m., I had lost my keys. My wallet was in the toilet. The house looked as if a Patriot missile had landed on it. I had put wrong things in the microwave, which was not good.*

*By Friday night, I was exhausted from feeding, fighting, pleading, changing, quieting and refereeing. The only moment of peace that I had was bath time. Do you know what it is like to thank God for Mr. Bubble? Even bath time wasn't so hot, because the darnn kids kept trying to get into the tub with me.*

How would you rate yourself when it comes to work?

## **2. The second area involves relationships.**

Reflect for a little while now on your friends and family. Ask yourself the question, would the people whom I am in relationship with say that I am an and-then-some kind of friend, spouse or parent?

I'm going to ask you again to rate yourself here.

*If you are a 10, you can say, "I am an and-then-some kind of person in my relational life. I am a servant around the house. I not only do acts of service, but I do them with a willing heart. I don't do them with a resentful or grudging spirit.*

"In my relationships with people, I keep open deep channels of communication. I express affection for people in creative ways. I give some thought ahead of time about how to do that, and then I express affection. I am very intentional in staying emotionally connected with my friends. "I confront people when it would be easier not to confront them. I am willing to challenge or to say hard things when they need to be said, and I work toward trying to do that with a spirit of love and graciousness." That would be a 10.

On the opposite of the spectrum, a 1 would have to say, "In my relational world, I just try to get by and generally follow the path of least resistance. I avoid confrontation and rarely express my heart in creative ways. I sit and wait for friends to come to me instead of going to them. At home, my idea of sacrifice and servanthood is occasionally to hand over the remote control.

Give yourself a rating in this relational area. How do you stack up in your relational life? Again ask yourself the question, what is one step that I could take today to connect with people that I am closest to and the people I most want to love?

Then say, "I will go the second mile with you, so I just am not getting by in my relational world."

Husbands are you a And Then Some type of husband. Are you intentional in connecting with your wife on an emotional level daily.

There has been a few times when I have come home and my wife wants to process (talk) about what happen that day. I have made the mistake by walking out of the room and walking upstairs while her back was turned working in the kitchen. You can imagine what happens when she turns around and no one is there. Then you can imagine what happens when I come back downstairs and I see steam coming out of her ears, and then I say, "I'm sorry were you talking to me?"

You don't want to get to the end of your life and just have gotten by with the people whom you are called to be closest to. You don't want that.

What are some things that you can do? Maybe it is an act of service. Maybe it is cleaning something. Maybe it's being intentional and having lunch with that person. Maybe buying a simple gift of some sort. Maybe it's picking up the phone or here is a novel idea, write a note and send it in the mail. Not e-mail but snail mail.

Relationship with people take work. These relationships just don't develop on their own. You have to be intentional about it.

As you relate to the people whom you are closest to—friends and families—go the second mile with them.

- Are you building friendships and then some?
  - Are you building a marriage and then some?
  - Are you building a family and then some
- or are you just getting by?

The first area is your work life. The second area is your relational life, and the

### **3. Third area that I want to mention is in your relationship with God.**

Are you an and-then-some kind of person as you relate to God? I again will ask you to rate yourself here.

A 10 on this scale would be someone who could say, "I diligently seek to know God better." This could be

true if you already have made a commitment to God and have been following Christ for many years. This also could be true of you if you just are seeking and haven't made that commitment yet.

Can you say this with integrity? -- "I am diligently seeking to know Him better, so I will try to read things. I will try to talk to people who might be able to help me. I will listen to tapes and do whatever I can to know him better."

If you are a follower of Christ, can you say this? -- "I am pursuing a life of prayer as best I can. I am real serious about the fact that God created me and that I am accountable to him for my whole life."

That would be a 10.

*A 1 on this scale is someone who would say, "I just am getting by in my spiritual life. I don't think about God very much or his purpose on earth. If I have any questions about God, it is likely to be, what is His minimal requirement? I make sure that I can sign off on that. I am drifting in my spiritual life. I have avoided giving it much thought or effort."*

I will ask you for the last time to do an assessment of this. You decide. Where are you at on this scale? Give yourself a number and then decide, what can you do? What is a simple step that you can take today, tomorrow or sometime this week to be an and-then-some kind of person in your relationship with God?

Maybe you don't know much about God. This week you may want to read one of the books in the New Testament that talk about Jesus' life—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. You could say, "I want to take one of those four books and read it this week. I will get to know Jesus in a way that I haven't before."

Maybe you never have expressed your heart to God. Say, "I am going to write a letter to God this week. I am going to sit down, write to God and tell him what I think and what I do. Or I am going to make this week an and-then-some kind of worship. I just won't think about God occasionally. I am going to worship him and then some."

The reason that this is so important and flows so deeply into human beings is because we are made in the image of God, and God is an and-then-some kind of God. The Bible says that God created heaven and earth, and he could have stopped there with just the earth and the sun.

God didn't stop. He made solar systems, the Milky Way, galaxy upon galaxy, and black holes. He made heaven and earth and then some. He could have made everything on earth flat and plain but didn't.

He made mountains and oceans and then some. He could have made a few birds to fly or a few fish, or a few things that creep around on the ground. No. He made thousands and thousands of different creatures and then some.

Did you ever ask yourself, why are there 500,000 species of beetles? Why would God go to all that trouble? Wouldn't 10, 20 or even 50,000 be enough? God made one beetle and then some, because he is that kind of a God.

God made a human being in his own image and could have stopped with one human being—Adam. Yet, God made another one—Eve.

Adam looked at Eve and said, "That's a human being and then some."

Men, aren't you glad that God is an and-then-some kind of God.

God loves you and then some.

Jesus came to earth and then some.

Jesus died for your sins and then some.

Jesus arose from the grave and then some.

Jesus is in heaven preparing you a place and then some.

That is the type of God that we serve.  
And-then-some God who doesn't just go the second mile,  
but the infinite degree mile to demonstrate his love for you.

If God did all that for you, don't you think for one moment you  
can go the second mile.

In your work...And then Some  
In your relationships...And then Some  
Most of all your relationship with God...And then Some.

You have to decide what kind of person you want to be.  
I'll close with this story.

One of the great musicians of our time and the greatest cellist of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, is a Spaniard,  
Pablo Casals, who has since died. He dominated his field like very few artists ever have dominated their field  
and clearly was the top guy. Even though his reputation was secure, he still would practice the cello eight hours  
a day when he was an old man.

Somebody came to Pablo Casals one time and said to him, "You already are the best cellist in the world by  
far. Everybody knows that you are famous and wealthy and have more status than anybody else.

*You are the greatest musician of any cellist. Why do you practice eight hours a day at your age?"*

Pablo Casals' response was, "Because I think that I am getting better."

You have to decide. No one will force you.

Which path are you going to go down, the road less traveled or the path of least resistance?

Attitude is everything!

Whatever your hand finds for you to do, do it with all strength. Do it and then some.

Let's stand for closing prayer.

### ***Resources used for this Series"***

- John Ortberg: "Living With An Attitude" series
- James MacDonald, Lord, Change My Attitude
- John Maxwell, The Winning Attitude
- Louis H. Valbracht

The purpose of posting this sermon is for personal Bible study and resource material for pastors: