



## Ahead of the Curve

### PART 1: Exceeding Expectations

#### INTRODUCTION

No one wants to be average. You don't want to be an average spouse or parent. You don't want to be an average boss or employee. You may not want to be extraordinary, but you probably want to stand apart from the crowd. You probably want to avoid the pitfalls you see in the lives of some of the people around you. In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus spoke about three behaviors that have the power to make you anything but average.

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How did the expectations of others shape you as you grew up? In what way do those expectations still influence you?
2. If most people resist the idea of average, what are some reasons that most people, by definition, live average lives?
3. Read Matthew 5:39. What would it look like for you to “turn the other cheek” in your family or professional relationships? Does that seem like a reasonable goal? Why or why not?
4. Read Matthew 5:40–42. What are some common barriers to extraordinary generosity? How does giving to others benefit the giver?
5. Do you know someone who is living the kind “average” life Jason described in the message—burdened with debt, dissatisfied with work, not as healthy as he or she could be, lacking generosity? What are some ways to help people aim for something higher when they seem content with average?
6. What is one thing you can do this week to turn the other cheek, be generous, go the extra mile, or lend a helping hand in one area of your life? What can this group do to support you?

#### MOVING FORWARD

What's expected of you? What does your spouse, parent, child, friend, boss, or employee expect from you? We all resist living up to others' expectations. But what if instead of meeting expectations, you exceeded them? What if you forgave when people didn't deserve it? What if you gave to people who normally take without asking? What if you went above and beyond the demands of others? Imagine what it might do for your family, future, or career. Imagine how it might increase your influence in the lives of the people who matter most to you.

#### CHANGING YOUR MIND

Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

Matthew 5:42 NIV