

The Golden Rule

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In the Golden Rule, Jesus encapsulates the Sermon on the Mount, as he teaches that those who acknowledge Him as their Lord and King will increasingly display the supernatural qualities of God's Spirit working in them. The Golden Rule teaches followers of Jesus how, through their trusting relationship with God, they may show Spirit-empowered kindness and generosity in all their relationships.

**PURSUE RELATIONSHIP:** *Connect and pray as a group*

Imagine a place where Matthew 7:12 (the Golden Rule) is practiced. How would life there be different from the place where you now live? Imagine a home, or workplace, or church where the Golden Rule is practiced. What would be different there?

**PURSUE GOD:** *Time that is devoted to the Word of God*

**Observation and Reflection**

- After a careful reading of Matthew 7:12, make a mental list of what the Golden Rule teaches you. What misconceptions need to be replaced? How does this teaching summarize the Law and Prophets (God's Word as recorded in the Old Testament)?
- How do Matthew 22:37-40 and 1 John 4:19 help you live out the Golden Rule?
- Discuss questions or fears that come to mind as you consider applying this on a daily basis.

**Application**

- Tell of an instance where you found strength to live out the Golden Rule. What emotions or concerns held you back? What caused you to make the choice you did?
- Ask a prayer group or a friend to help you apply Jesus' teaching in specific ways in your home, your work or your community.

**PURSUE SIMPLICITY:** *Seek to live simply so that others may simply live.*

When you plan family time, or times with those that matter to you, remember Pastor Henry's words, "It is not just picnics and parties and fun-filled family nights – but experiencing the joy of demonstrating Christ's love to the hurting and spiritually hungry around us. James 1:22-25

During the upcoming week, ask these questions of God and record the answers in a journal:

- How would I like to be treated?
- What are the things that help and encourage me?
- Ask the Spirit to remind you of the things that you wrote down, and help you see them in others.

**Quote:**

Don't forget who you are--and who you belong to! You are a child of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. You are a royal priesthood--for whom Christ died. As God's children, we must not forget that we are meant to look, to act, and to be like the One we worship.

*Pastor Henry*

**THE WORD (NIV)**

**Matthew 7:11–12 (NIV)**

<sup>11</sup> If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! <sup>12</sup> So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

**Matthew 22:37–40 (NIV)**

<sup>37</sup> Jesus replied: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' <sup>38</sup> This is the first and greatest commandment. <sup>39</sup> And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' <sup>40</sup> All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

**1 John 4:19 (NIV)**

<sup>19</sup> We love because he first loved us.

**Luke 6:27 (NIV)**

<sup>27</sup> "But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, <sup>28</sup> bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.

**James 1:22–25 (NIV)**

<sup>22</sup> Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. <sup>23</sup> Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror <sup>24</sup> and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. <sup>25</sup> But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus paints a magnificent picture of what it means to be people of the Kingdom of God. True disciples of Christ live differently than those who do not follow Him – rather than living for the Kingdom of this world which traps people into believing that satisfaction is found by following their own selfish desires and being 'king of their own kingdom.'

In Matthew 7:12, Jesus begins to sum up His teachings of the Sermon on the Mount in what is commonly referred to as "The Golden Rule": ***"In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets."*** (Matthew 7:12)

Commonly misunderstood, it is important to remember that The Golden Rule:

1. Is **NOT** the way to Heaven, rather only faith in Jesus Christ bridges the gap between our sins and righteousness before God. Jesus was teaching the Golden Rule to those who had already committed their lives to Him (Matt. 5:1), so it is not a description of how to become a Christian (or how to get to heaven) but a description of how a Christian lives.
2. Is **NOT** to be used to avoid responsibility or justice. To enable someone to continue on a destructive pathway without consequence is neither loving nor just.

Jesus challenges us to not sit back passively but to take action and make a difference in life by actively pursuing good for others and forgetting about ourselves. Jesus teaches that the primary attitude and motivation of His followers must never be self-advancement or self-preservation but to seek first God's kingdom; in short, love God and obey His will which is to do to others as we would have them do to us.

To live as true disciples of Christ we must not only know the Golden Rule but practice living it out in our lives. Living out God's Kingdom standards is not always easy but by the help of His Holy Spirit it is very possible and extremely rewarding as we begin to experience God's power and presence living in us, and flowing through us. In short, the following three practices enable us to consistently practice living out God's Golden Rule in our lives:

1. **Look Upward.** Living a God Kingdom life loving others begins with our relationship with God. Our capacity to love others with a divine love flows out of our friendship with God (Matthew 22:36-40). You can't give what you don't have; therefore, you can't give unconditional love if you have not experienced God's unconditional love for you. You can't keep the golden rule in your own strength – you must have God's love in you to give it to others. The only way to have the divine love of God in you is to embrace Jesus by faith and surrender your life to Him. When you do, He will invade your life and begin to transform you from the inside out. God the Holy Spirit will fill you with His love, joy, and peace and replace your self-centeredness with the patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, and self control of Jesus. Practicing the Golden Rule begins by looking up through daily surrendering your life to God and inviting Him to transform you and to live His life of love through you.
2. **Look Inward.** Be honest with yourself, realizing that often when you contemplate practicing the Golden Rule in your life, fear often gets in the way. We fear that if we selflessly give and love others the way God calls us to we will not be looked after ourselves. In Matthew 7:11, right before Jesus teaches the Golden Rule, He gives us assurance that all our needs will be met when we ask and trust Him for them. Rather than allow fear to dictate our actions, Jesus calls us to trust God in all things so that as we love others as He calls us to, we are confident that He will meet our needs.
3. **Look Outward.** The daily decision to act towards others as you would have them act towards you. In Luke 6:27 Jesus challenges us to love even our enemies by: Blessing them, doing good to them, and praying for them.

James 1:22-25 teaches that you will be blessed when you choose to be a doer of God's will rather than just a hearer of it. You'll be blessed because you'll feel God's warm smile of approval for being obedient to His call. You'll be blessed because you'll see the impact of kindness and compassion in the life of others, and you'll be blessed as you realize that God used you and your obedience to change the trajectory of someone's eternity.