

The Golden Rule

Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC

Dr. H. Powell Dew, Jr.

August 3, 2025

Text: Matthew 7:12

Purpose: We come to the capstone of the Sermon on the Mount. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. It is another way of saying the second half of the Greatest Commandment, "Love your neighbor as yourself." We are commanded to "Go and do likewise."

A guy comes into a coffee shop and places his order: "I want three flat tires and a pair of headlights."



The waitress, not wanting to appear stupid, goes to the kitchen and asks the cook, "This guy out there just ordered three flat tires and a pair of headlights. What does he think, this is an auto parts store?!"

"No," the cook says. "Three flat tires means three pancakes and a pair of headlights is two eggs sunny side up."

"Oh," says the waitress. She thinks about this and then she spoons up a bowl of beans and gives it to the customer.

The guy says, "What are the beans for?"

The waitress replies, "I thought that, while you're waiting for the flat tires and headlights, you might want to gas up." ¹



We come to the passage of scripture known as the “Golden Rule.” In one brief verse, Jesus gives us the summation of what we studied last week concerning

“Asking, Seeking, and Knocking.” Jesus begins by saying “*Therefore.*” Whenever you see that word you need to ask yourself, “What is this here for?”

Jesus’ “Therefore” points back to not only the asking, seeking, and knocking, it also points back over all that Jesus has taught concerning the conduct of the citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven. He is speaking to you and He is speaking to me!

“Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.” (Matthew 7:12)

We find the same verse over in Luke 6:31 which says, “*And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise.*” Luke’s verse comes directly after the passage of scripture which instructs Jesus’ followers to go the extra mile, share your coat as well as your tunic, and turn the other cheek.

A. The World Needs this Principal

Our world desperately needs this kind of ethic alive and active today. I have heard many people lament over the years, “What has happened to the Golden Rule?” I would say instead of the world embracing what Jesus is teaching, our world is saying loud and clear, “Do unto others before they do it unto you!”



Being Christlike involves thinking about others in the same way you think of yourself. Most of us are very good at thinking about ourselves. We think about our income, our 401K plan, our property, our home, our children, our school, our

Alma Mater, our agenda, our rights, our needs, our wants, our hunger, our thirst, our beauty, our success, our things, our pets, our yard, our health, our family, our inheritance, our ... our our. We understand how to look out for **ME, MYSELF, and I** very well.

But Christ is asking us to turn the focus of our life around.



- Have you thought about the income of those you pay to do things for you? Is that enough to meet their family’s needs? Are you tipping fairly for the service you have received?
- Have you thought about your neighbor’s property and how your activity is impacting them? Your trash, your noise, your activity?
- Have you thought about others that may not have a home to live in? What are you doing to help them?
- We are all concerned about our children but what about our neighbor’s children? Do they have enough clothes? Do they have enough to eat? Are they attending church so they can learn about the love of Jesus Christ? How can you encourage your neighbors’ children?
- Are you so concerned about your school that you ignore the needs of other schools?

- Is your calendar so filled with your events that you do not think of the events of others? Is your calendar so filled with activities that you don't have time to do the things necessary in and around the church?
- Are you concerned about other people's surgeries, their procedures, their heartaches, their illnesses, their family deaths? Do you care enough to send a card to tell them you are thinking about them?
- Are you so concerned about your rights that you trample on the rights of others?
- Are you so focused on your life that you cannot be concerned about the pets of others, the yards of others, or the families of others?
- Are you so focused on meeting your needs financially that you have no room to give to your church, your neighbor, or your family?
- Are you so greedy for gain that when it comes time to divide an inheritance, that you are stacking the cards in your favor to the harm of other family members?

Jesus said, *"Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets."* Jesus is talking to His disciples – you and me.

With all of our advancements in science, education, and medicine, we still are just as barbaric and self-centered in our everyday life. As Ray Hodge (former Pastor at FBC Church, Kinston) once said, "Each generation can stand on the shoulders of the last one and reach higher, *but each individual person has to start anew from his own primitive and unconverted self.*" Someone has noted our dilemma in saying,

"We have added years to our lives; we must add life to our years. We have made great gains to conquer the outer space of the universe, while many cannot conquer the inner space of their lives."

"We can communicate by satellites in multiple ways for the good or bad of the world, while we may not be able to get along with our next-door neighbor because of a pet, a child, a fence, or a boundary line."

"We have spent billions to lead the world in reaching the moon while hunger still persists at home and abroad."

B. The World's Interpretation of the Golden Rule

I am sure you have heard others say that people should keep the Golden Rule. Maybe you have heard a civic club member, a politician, or businessman say that is their motto.

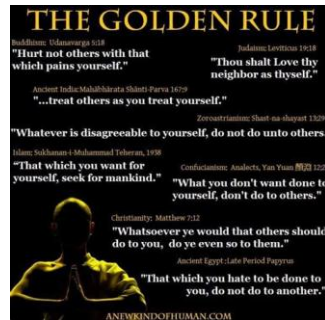
Most of them have no concept of the deeper meaning given in scripture. The world's concept of the Golden Rule has always been negative.



Jesus was not the first to ever state the "Golden Rule." The exception is that from the world's perspective they all look at it from a negative point of view.

Confucius. (5th century B. C.) The Chinese sage said, *"Do not unto others that which you would not want them to do unto you."*

Isocrates. (436-338 B. C.). the Athenian orator said, *“What you are angry at when inflicted on by others, this do not do to others.”*



Aristotle. (384-322 B. C.), the Greek philosopher supposedly said when asked how to act toward our friends. *“As we should wish them to behave toward us.”*

Tobit, the writer in the Jewish apocryphal book (4:15) said, *“And what thou hatest thyself, do to no man.”*

Shammai and Hillel, twenty years before the birth of Christ these rabbis were asked mockingly by a Gentile to teach him the whole law while he stood on one foot. Shammai in great wrath bade him begone. Hillel (greatest of the first century rabbis) replied, *“What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbors; this is the whole Torah, all the rest is interpretation.”*

Philo. (An old man in 40 A. D.) He said, *“One must not himself do what he hates to have done to him.”*

All of these are given from a negative point of view. If we are honest, we may find we look at it in the same way.



- "I'll be fair with you in business if you will be fair with me."
- "You treat me and mine right and I will treat you and yours right."
- "You scratch my back and I will scratch your back."
- “You respect me, I’ll respect you.”

Before we move forward to examine Jesus’ positive perspective on the Golden Rule, I should point out, people have twisted the Golden Rule and used it as a way to cover their own sins. For example, someone that is involved in illegal activity may say, “Don’t report illegal behavior if you don’t want anyone to report your illegal behavior.” Another may quote it like this, “If you like to attend wild parties, you must also give wild parties.”



Maybe we should carefully interpret the Golden Rule not based upon self-centered interpretation. Instead, it should be based upon putting others first.



Throughout the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus causes us to reexamine our old way of thinking. He turns the tables around and looks at it from a positive perspective. Jesus shows us that true righteousness is the constructive exercise of the Christian faith and life and not mere negative avoidance of sin. It is something we do, not something we avoid. To honestly observe the Golden Rule is a command to reach out actively to others.

C. The Christian Meaning of the Golden Rule

We must look at what Jesus is teaching in the context of the whole Sermon on the Mount. It is for Kingdom people to practice, toward all people.

This is not a cure-all for everyone. Unregenerate people cannot truly practice it. They do not have the power of the Holy Spirit living in them to live up to this high standard.

We need to realize this can actually be an *offensive* weapon for Kingdom people. Others use it merely as a slogan and as good advice. To most it is only mutual good will in business. But for the Kingdom person, it is an aggressive weapon for spiritual warfare to win the world to Christ. One should not expect anything in return, but give to others anyway.

1. Jesus Gives Us the Positive Principle

Jesus is the author of this. It is original with him in this unique form. The emphasis is on the word “do. It is not a “don’t” like the other worldly teachers are saying.



“Whatever you want men to do to you” is a present subjunctive. This is a divine-like quality. "Whatever you want" goes beyond human knowledge. Spiritual insight is needed to know really what your desires should be, and "how" to love your neighbor.

We need to get out of “Our Wants” and begin to look at others as if we were in their place. We need to consider the circumstance they find themselves in – place of birth, family, community, race, or even physical circumstances. How would you want to be treated? Then treat them the way you would want to be treated.

The Christian must be sensitive to the plight of others and determine how he or she would like to be treated if he were in their shoes, and then go out of his way to treat people in this manner.



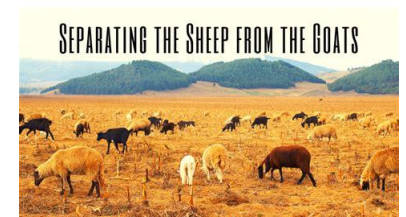
Does that mean we should pick up every hitchhiker, give money to every person who asks from us, or invite every stranger into our house for food and lodging? No. It does mean that we should be sensitive to their needs, and be willing to be imposed upon.

After seeking divine direction as to your own needs, seek to know the needs of others and find ways to alleviate those needs. Finding out the needs of others may take some time and it may take some creativity. But we need to begin.

2. The Positive Principle Applied

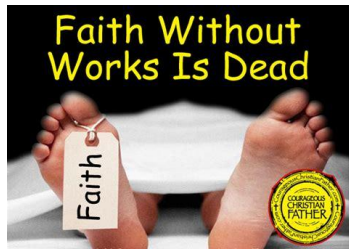
We will be judged in how we, as an individual as well as a church, practically apply these principles in our world. Are we making a difference? Are we reaching out to others? Are we meeting real needs in our homes, schools, and in this church and community?

Jesus took some time in Matthew 25 expanding on how we are to apply our faith to real life situations.



READ MATTHEW 25:31-46

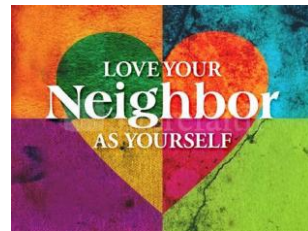
Do you hear how important it is that we begin to think about those that are hungry and thirsty? Do you understand why giving clothes to those that are naked is so important? Do you see why part of the purpose of the church is to visit the sick and those that are in prison? Because Jesus is in the midst of other people's most desperate hours. When you have done good to those that cannot do for themselves, then it is as if you have done it unto Jesus Christ.



Being a Christ follower is more than coming on Sunday morning, singing a few songs, listening to a sermon, and smiling and shaking each other's hands. We must put action to our faith. As the Book of James says, *"Faith without works is dead!"* The implication is if you are not putting your faith into action, then you are spiritually dead and Jesus will not welcome you into His eternal home prepared for those that love and serve the Lord.

Ray Hodge in his sermon on the Golden Rule quoted the once well-known professor and scholar from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Olin T. Binkley. He once said this concerning the Golden Rule:

"In a masculine civilization, Jesus was considerate of women; in an adult civilization, Jesus was considerate of children; in a civilization where disease was considered as the result of sin, Jesus was considerate of the sick." The Golden Rule is the capstone of the whole Sermon on the Mount. It is the distilled essence of that fulfillment which is taught in the



Sermon. It is the lustrous setting in the ring. It is the gold of religious and spiritual rule. It is the gold left after the dross and the impurities have been removed. It reemphasizes the second part of Jesus' summation of the Law as "...loving God and your neighbor as yourself." To observe the Golden Rule is to love your neighbor as yourself. The Law's requirement of man to man is thus "fulfilled" or "filled to the full."

Paul summarizes this statement of Jesus in Romans 13:8-10.

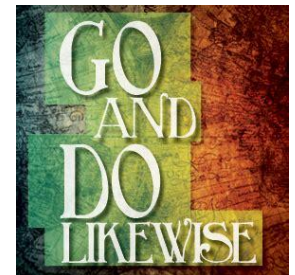


"Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,' 'You shall not covet,' and if there is any other commandment, all are summed up in this saying namely, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law."

Before we close out our time this morning, I want to give you one more vivid illustration as to how we are to live and treat our neighbors.

READ LUKE 10:25-37

Just as Jesus said to that young man who was searching for eternal life – I leave this thought with you – *"Go and do likewise!"*



LET US PRAY

Notes: ¹ Micky's Funnies, April 29, 2024, An Order Funny