

The Principle of the Golden Rule # 22

Matthew 7:12

Tonight we come to a statement our Lord made while preaching the Sermon on the Mount that we are all familiar with. No doubt each of us has heard this principle as long as we can remember. The Bible skeptic would argue that there is nothing special about our Lord's teaching in this regard. This is a principle that many follow. I will agree that many cultures may have adopted a similar teaching, but the principle our Lord reveals is unique. If you consider the similarity of other teachings, you also discover a profound difference.

Hillel, the Hebrew rabbi, said, "Do not do to thy neighbor what is hateful to thyself."

Socrates, the Greek philosopher, said, "What stirs your anger when done to you by others, that do not do to others."

Confucius, the Chinese sage, said, "What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others."

These statements are worlds away from what Jesus said. Their rules are negative and passive. Jesus' rule is positive and active. In essence these wise men said, "Avoid doing to others what you do not want done to you." Jesus said, "Think of something good you wish someone would do for you, then do it for someone else." ¹

Let's take a few moments this evening to consider the depth of this fundamental truth as we think on: [The Principle of the Golden Rule](#).

I. The Simplicity of the Principle – **Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them:** This is a principle that even a child can comprehend. The simplicity does not detract from its significance, and yet it is often ignored. We live in an age of excess, indulgence, and greed. Few ever take the time to consider the needs or feelings of others. Our world is influenced by social status and most are willing to do whatever is necessary to get ahead, even at the expense of others.

- We would all have to agree that our world would be a much better place if all people were committed to living according to this simple principle. Our Lord was very clear and precise with this command. This simple principle lies at the heart of humanity; it speaks of the love and care that should be present in all people.
- I have said before: it isn't those things in the Bible we don't understand that trouble is most; we have more difficulty with the things we do understand. This is so simple that a child can understand and yet many are guilty of neglecting this profound truth. Many desire to know the will of God for their lives, but few are willing to do those simple things that God commands.

Micah 6:8 – He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? Eccles.12:13 – Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.

I. The Simplicity of the Principle

II. The Significance of the Principle – Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: It is evident that the Lord desires each of us to practice what He has commanded. It isn't enough to know what the Bible teaches; we must be willing to put those teachings into everyday practice.

- This significant principle cannot be separated from obedience to God. If we are to be what the Lord desires us to be, if we are to represent our Lord in a way that pleases Him, we must be willing to live according to this principle. When the "Golden Rule" is lived out in our lives, we are showing the love of God to others. We cannot please our Savior if we are unwilling to love our neighbor. Mat.22:37-39 – Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. [38] This is the first and great commandment. [39] And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Gal.5:14 – For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.
- Where would any of us be tonight if God had responded to us in relation to how we responded to Him? What if God would have dealt with us according to what we deserved? Consider the treatment of Jesus prior to the crucifixion. He had every right to have destroyed His accusers. They were not worthy of His love or His sacrifice. He did not render what they deserved. He offered grace instead of wrath. He offered what they needed instead of what they deserved.
- The same is true in each of our lives. We were not given what we had earned or deserved. Jesus dealt with us in tender mercy and grace. We are expected to show that same grace to others as well, even if we feel as if they don't deserve it.

III. The Sympathy in the Principle – One cannot look at this teaching of our Lord and miss the sympathy required. If we lack sympathy, we will never seek to treat others as we desire to be treated. One must have compassion for the needs of others. We must seek to understand their need and even feel their pain. We have all had occasions in life where we simply desired someone to be sympathetic to our need, to treat us as they would desire to be treated.

- There are those among us who just need someone to care, someone to offer compassion. They have been rejected and mistreated enough. We have the opportunity every day to make a difference in the lives of people. We have the chance to show compassion, revealing the love of Christ, to everyone we meet. Harsh words and criticism will not win them, but love might.
- Many times in Scripture we find Jesus moved with compassion. He wasn't critical or demeaning. Surely what they experienced was the result of the fallen nature of humanity, but He always responded in love and sympathy. Even as He was dying upon the cross, He prayed for their forgiveness. We need to see others as God sees them, and I can assure you our outlook toward other people would be different.

I. The Simplicity of the Principle

II. The Significance of the Principle

III. The Sympathy in the Principle

IV. The Specifics of the Principle – **Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them:** I want to go back to the thoughts of our introduction. This not a command that is negative and passive; it is positive and active. It involves more than simply not doing wrong. It isn't limited to refraining from those things that we don't enjoy from others. Surely we wouldn't want to be mean or harmful to others, but that alone isn't enough.

- It also involves more than just doing good. As Christians we ought to have a desire to live our lives in a godly manner. We ought to do good at every opportunity. The command our Lord gives takes that a step further. This actually requires that we seek to do good to others. It has the idea of "*looking, seeking, and searching for opportunities to do good for other people.*" It is going out of our way to be kind and compassionate. **Rom.15:1-2 – We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. [2] Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.** That isn't being kind when it is convenient, or when others are kind to us; it is actually seeking ways to treat others in a Christ like manner.

V. The Scope of the Principle – **Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them:** This would have been easier to fulfill had our Lord commanded this behavior in some things, in good things, or even in most things, but He commanded this in all things. He has not offered an optional or conditional requirement, but a continual command in every circumstance we face.

- How often have we “snapped” back at someone who was rude or short with us? How often have we allowed bitterness to build up in our lives and withheld compassion or help to those who have wronged us previously? How often have we ignored the needs of others simply because we had no desire to help in their situation? No doubt we are all guilty, and we have all failed in living according to God’s will for our lives at some point or another.
- I know that our human nature is repulsed by certain actions and attitudes. There are times when we feel as if people have gotten what they deserve. We have all experienced a certain amount of gratitude upon hearing of one “being put in their place.” But, is that doing unto others as we would have them do unto us? We must learn to put personal feelings and fleshly desires aside if we are to serve the Lord and live for Him.

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VI. The Support of the Principle – Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets. We must keep in mind that Jesus was often surrounded by skeptics. There were those who refused to receive Him as the Messiah. There were those who sought to discredit His teaching. His words alone should have been enough, but for those who were skeptical, He offers the support of the Scriptures. His teaching was not foreign to God’s Word. In fact, this principle is found throughout the Bible.

- Jesus confirms this is given in **the law and the prophets**. That phrase was often used in reference to the Old Testament in its entirety. He reveals the whole of God’s Word confirms this principle. The first four commandments deal with man’s relationship to God and the other six deal with our dealings with our fellow man. Many Old Testament passages deal with this truth, but here are a few for our consideration. **Zech.7:8-10 – And the word of the Lord came unto Zechariah, saying, [9] Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother: [10] And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart. Zech.8:16-17 – These are the things that ye shall do; Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates: [17] And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour; and love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, saith the Lord.**

I am sure that we are all familiar with this passage, but are we living according to this simple and significant principle? Do we genuinely seek to treat others as we would have them treat us? Are we as loving and compassionate to others as we expect them to be?

This all hinges upon our love for one another. We cannot treat others as we should if we do not love them. God expects us to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. We have looked at two examples already. [James 2:8 – If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well:](#)

Do you need to seek the Lord in order to treat others as you should? Maybe you need to seek the Lord to help you with an unforgiving spirit or confess your faults before Him. I will tell you, you can't love others as you should apart from a relationship with Christ. If you have never been saved and the Lord has touched your heart, why not come to Him in salvation.

¹ Encyclopedia of 15,000 Illustrations: Signs of the Times.