

Discussion Guide 10/15/17
Living by the Golden Rule

Ice Breaker: Name the top 5 cities you would like to visit

Sermon Summary

The “Golden Rule” found in Matthew 7:12 is so common that many people don’t know it comes from the Bible and Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount. They mistakenly think it is simply moralistic advice or a positivity quote. Really, Matthew 7:12 is a spiritual principle that gets to the heart of Jesus’ sermon on the mount. When we quote this verse we usually leave off the critical beginning, and ending. These help us see that the verse is more than simply good advice. While this verse is important, it is not the essence of Christianity. It is God’s standard for our interactions with one another that we can only live out through the power of His Spirit.

Read Matthew 7:12

The Big Idea: Obedience to Jesus’ “Golden Rule” has the power to transform all of our relationships. It is a call to put God and others first in all that we do. This verse shows us how to truly love our neighbor as we love ourselves.

“So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.”

- “So” - In response to all Jesus has said in the Sermon on the Mount up to this point...
- “for this sums up the law and the prophets” - this is the essence of what is taught in the law and the prophets.

Galatians 5:14 - “For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

- How does the beginning “so” and ending “for this...” position the golden rule in Jesus’ sermon on the mount and make it more than a moralistic statement?
- How does the golden rule differ from “an eye for an eye” or “tit for tat”?
- Pastor Loren said, “True love gives without expectation.” Where else is this illustrated in scripture? Read and discuss Matthew 18:21-22.
- Pastor Loren said, “If you want joy...give to those who cannot pay you back. Give to those who cannot return the favor. It is God who rewards and blesses us.” Can you recall a time when you gave without expecting anything in return? How did you feel?
- Some might try to reduce Christianity to the golden rule. Why is this inaccurate?

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You cannot reduce Christianity to be kind to your neighbor. *Obedience to the Golden rule is the outflow, or the result of someone whose life has been changed due to a conversion experience.* Christianity is about God, motivated by incredible love, rescuing us from our sinfulness by Jesus sacrificial death on a cross. It is about God restoring to a relationship with Him. The result of our placing our faith in Jesus and receiving His salvation, is a life that is lived by a completely different set of values.

- Why does the golden rule fail when we attempt to do it without Christ?

A Christian society is not going to arrive until most of us really want it: and we are not going to want it until we become fully Christian. I may repeat "Do as you would be done by" till I am black in the face, but I cannot really carry it out till I love my neighbour as myself: and I cannot learn to love my neighbour as myself till I learn to love God: and I cannot learn to love God except by learning to obey Him. And so, as I warned you, we are driven on to something more inward – driven on from social matters to religious matters.¹

1. A transformed heart leads to transformed relationships.

When we came to Christ and received salvation, up to that point we only lived for self. That's not to say we were incapable of offering kindness to others. But in most cases, our greatest concern was our own happiness. We see this lived out every day in our society.

Here's a great truth to remember: Jesus doesn't want to just transform your behavior, he wants to transform your heart.

2 Corinthians 5:17 - "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."

In Matthew 22 Jesus is going to say... **"Love your neighbor as yourself."** I hear people saying, "you need to love yourself." In most cases, this is not a struggle for us. We love ourselves very much. We are very aware of our needs, wants, and desires and are pretty intentional about meeting them.

- How does the popular idea of focusing on self love in order to love others conflict with biblical principles?

The philosophy of self-love is based on the idea that humans are fundamentally good and lovable. When self-love doesn't work and we are dissatisfied, we might attribute

¹ CS Lewis, [Mere Christianity](#)

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this to our own blindness. "We just can't see how beautiful we really are!" But Scripture and personal experience both show that without looking beyond ourselves to Christ, there is very little to love.²

- What does it look like to love our neighbor as we love ourselves? Do we treat people in a God-honoring way? At the end of the day is Jesus pleased with how we spoke to people? Interacted with people? Accepted people? Blessed people? And even, thought of people?

2. Obedience to this command leads us away from the sins of jealousy, envy, pride, and selfishness.

The sins of pride and selfishness are at the root of our sinful nature. It seems every sin we have ever committed flows from this core. Everyday we have the opportunity to die to ourselves and walk in obedience to God.

- Does your relationship with Jesus impact how you treat people?

To live by the Golden Rule we must put ourselves in the shoes of another person. We have to stop and ask ourselves the question: **"How would I like to be treated if I was in this situation?"**

- If I was new to a church, how would I hope to be welcomed?
- If I were sick, how would I like to be treated?
- If I had failed miserably, how would I hope people responded to me?
- We can give people the benefit of the doubt instead of assuming the worst.
- We can refrain from drawing conclusions about people based on surface issues such as skin color, ethnicity, social status, or appearance.

3. As we live out this verse daily, our lives are a witness for Jesus.

1. Matthew 5:16
2. 1 John 4:7

² James Beavers, "[Do You Love Yourself Enough](#)," Desiring God