

Cheltenham
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14 & 15 May 2016

THE GOLDEN RULE

Message Notes

Text: Luke 6:27-38

"Do to others as you would have them do to you" (Lk 6:31)

"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)

Amp: *"Treat others the same way you want them to treat you"*

The Golden Question...

How do I want to be treated?

The Golden Outcome...

That's how I'm going to live!

And so Jesus fleshes out The Golden Rule in these verses. But before we look at them in more detail let's go back to when this truth was first taught...

1. The Golden Rule in History

About 2000 BC in Ancient Egypt, The Tale of the Eloquent Peasant: *"Do for one who may do for you, that you may cause him thus to do."*

1440 BC: The Hebrew Scriptures: *"Don't oppress a foreigner, for you well know how it feels to be a foreigner, since you were foreigners yourselves in the land of Egypt"* (Exodus 23:9) and *"Love your neighbour as yourself"* (Leviticus 19:18)

Various philosophers then picked up the Golden Rule...

Socrates: *"Do not do to others that which would anger you if others did it to you."* (Greece; 5th century BC)

Plato: *"May I do to others as I would that they should do to me."* (Greece; 4th century BC)

Aristotle: *"As the virtuous man is to himself, he is to his friend also, for his friend is another self"* (Greece; 4th century BC)

Seneca: *"Treat your inferiors as you would be treated by your superiors."* (Rome; 1st century BC)

Philo of Alexandria: *"Don't do to another what you'd be unwilling to have done to you"* (Jewish; 1st Century BC)

2. The Golden Rule in other religions

The twelve classical world religions all contain the Golden Rule:

Judaism: is the oldest religion to embrace it:

"What is hateful to you, do not to your fellow man. This is the law: all the rest is commentary" (Talmud, Shabbat 31a.)

Confucianism: *"Do not do to others what you do not want them to do to you"* (6th Century BC)

Buddhism: *"a state that is not pleasing or delightful to me, how could I inflict that upon another?"* (Samyutta Nikaya v. 353)

Hinduism: *"This is the sum of duty: do not do to others what would cause pain if done to you"* (Mahabharata 5:1517)

Islam: *"None of you [truly] believes until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself."* (Number 13 of Imam "Al-Nawawi's Forty Hadiths)

Shintoism: *"The heart of the person before you is a mirror. See there your own form"* (Munetada Kurozumi)

Taoism: *"To those who are good to me, I am good; to those who are not good to me, I am also good. Thus all get to be good."*

Zoroastrianism: *"Whatever is disagreeable to yourself do not do unto others"* (Shayast-na-Shayast 13:29)

Bahá'í: *"If your eyes be turned towards justice, choose for your neighbour that which you choose for yourself"* (Baha'u'llah)

Jainism: *"A man should wander about treating all creatures as he himself would be treated"* (Sutrakritanga 1.11.33)

Sikhism: *"Precious like jewels are the minds of all. To hurt them is not at all good. If you desire your Beloved, then do not hurt anyone's heart"* (Guru Aranj Devji 259, Guru Granth Sahib)

3. The Golden Rule in modern psychology

What has been known, taught and practiced for thousands of years in various religions and philosophies has now been embraced by modern social psychology where it's referred to as "The Law of Reciprocity."

When someone does something nice for you, you will have a deep-rooted psychological urge to do something nice in return.

One psychology website asked the question: *"Have you ever noticed that you feel compelled to do something for people who have helped you along the way – even if they haven't asked you to? There's something very powerful at play that causes this phenomenon."*

This site also taught about intent: *"If your intent is to give so you get something back then your motive is wrong."* This is what the Bible teaches too...

Luke 6:32-36, *"do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful."*

Agape is the Greek word used to describe the undeserved, sacrificial, no-strings-attached, self-giving love of God...

4. The Golden Rule in the Bible

2 Corinthians 9:6-11, *"Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. As it is written: "He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever." Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God."*

Galatians 6:7-9, *"Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."*

Philippians 4:18-19, *"I have received full payment and have more than enough. I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus."*

(See also Matthew 6:33 and James 3:18)

Luke 6:37-38 gives some practical illustrations of the Golden Rule:

→ Do not judge others, so that others will not judge you
Judge = to pick out by separating

→ Do not condemn others, and others will not condemn you
Condemn = to pass sentence upon

→ Forgive others, and others will forgive you
Forgive = to pardon, to set free or release

→ Give to others, and others will give to you.
The implication here is that instead of giving judgement, condemnation and Unforgiveness, the Golden Rule encourages us to give something good & to give generously...

"A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

Discussion Questions

1. Read Luke 6:27-38 and discuss the various practical examples Jesus gives of The Golden Rule. Share ways that you have applied these principles in the past. How can you apply them in situations you're facing right now?
2. The first time The Golden Rule was embraced by any religion was in 1440 BC. The Hebrew Scriptures put it this way: *"Don't oppress a foreigner, for you well know how it feels to be a foreigner, since you were foreigners yourselves in the land of Egypt"* (Exodus 23:9) and *"Love your neighbour as yourself"* (Leviticus 19:18). Discuss these ancient Scriptures and share ways that these can be applied to situations today.
3. The first century Roman philosopher Seneca wrote, *"Treat your inferiors as you would be treated by your superiors."* Discuss this and apply the truth to your workplace or any situation where there is a hierarchy.
4. Taoism teaches, *"To those who are good to me, I am good; to those who are not good to me, I am also good. Thus all get to be good."* The temptation we all face is to be good to those who are good to us and unkind to those who are unkind. Are you facing a situation right now (or have done in the past) where you've faced this temptation? What did you do? What was the outcome?
5. Modern psychology has discovered that when someone does something nice for you, you will have a deep-rooted psychological urge to do something nice in return. Is this your experience? Share examples.
6. Discuss this statement in the light of Luke 6:32-36, *"If your intent is to give so you get something back then your motive is wrong"*
7. In His "Agape" God has given us His undeserved, sacrificial, no-strings-attached, self-giving love. Jesus died for us "while we were yet sinners." How should this truth impact the way we treat those who haven't come to Christ yet?