



**EXPLORING THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN MATTHEW:
UNDERSTANDING AND APPLYING THE "GOLDEN RULE"**
APRIL 15, 2018

Text: Matthew 7:12

- Last week, we looked at the power and privilege of petitioning God in prayer; the command and blessing to keep asking, seeking, and knocking!
- Praise our LORD for His marvelous grace and being so giving and long-suffering towards us!
- Despite our "being evil" (Matt 7:11), our good Father gives us "good gifts!" Praise Him!
- Today, we turn to one of the most well-known verses in all of Scripture, what many have called the "Golden Rule." It is called that because 1) it sums up the Law and Prophets and 2) it is an easy way to remember to apply the Law of God (like the Ten Commandments) in daily life, which would bring **blessings**.
- It has also been called "The Christian Law of Reciprocity."

Therefore?

1. As we look at this verse, we immediately notice the word *therefore*. This means that the LORD Jesus teaches this principle in connection to, or in the context of the verses that precede it.
2. So how does the Golden Rule connect with asking, seeking, and knocking?
3. I submit it has to do with the goodness of God towards us and His desire that we display such goodness toward others. Since God is good to us, we should be good to others. Since God forgives us in Christ, we should forgive others in Christ. Since God models mercy towards us, we should model mercy towards others.
4. I also submit that the Golden Rule and our success in **prayer** are connected. Can we really expect consistently good things from God when we are evil towards our neighbors? Should we expect blessings when we curse?
5. Does the Scripture not say:

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." Gal 6:7-10 (KJV)

UNDERSTANDING THE GOLDEN RULE

1. Ultimately, what is being said here is this: "*Love your neighbor as yourself.*" (Matt 22:39; Lev 19:18) The Golden Rule is a different way of communicating part of the Greatest Commandment, also called the "royal law" of Scripture.
2. This is made particularly clear in Luke 6:31-36.
3. Because it sums up "the Law and the Prophets" and is given in the Sermon on the Mount ("The Constitution of the Kingdom"), the Golden Rule principle is meant to undergird all life in the Kingdom so that our behavior in all spheres and jurisdictions will be fair and equitable and rightly represent our King.
4. Such a rule smashes against injustices like racism and sins like selfishness and greed. Why? Because it makes us consider the feelings and needs of **others!**

- “How would a person who looks different from me want to be treated?”
 - “How would someone I know who lacks daily bread want to be treated?”
 - “How would someone who is outcast want to be treated?”
5. Matthew 7:12 clashes against our “do me” tendencies and forces us to see the Imago Dei in one another; the glorious truth is we are all made in the image of God (Gen 1:26-17)!
 6. One author wrote that the Golden Rule “...is universal for all classes—for employers and employed; for all lands and times. Consequently, the great advantage and blessing of such a rule. It teaches that with us, as with God, there is no respect of persons. The law is mutual and universal, and if acted upon would bring social salvation.”
 7. Here is an important clarification: The Golden Rule does NOT imply that roles, offices, and distinctions vanish. Rather it means we must consider how we are to treat others **if we were in their place**. This is key to understanding what Jesus meant. For example:
 - It doesn’t mean you ignore your employer’s authority. It means you put yourself in his/her place and ask, “If I had their responsibilities and pressure, how would I want my employees to respond to me?”
 - It doesn’t mean you ignore your wife’s femininity. It means you consider her as the “weaker vessel” (1 Pet 3:7) and respond/interact with her with that in mind. You might ask, “Given the difficulties of her responsibilities, how might I love her in tangible ways today?”
 - It doesn’t mean you ignore your husband’s role as head of the home. It means you might ask, “Given his daily burden of preaching, prophesying, protecting, and providing, how might I help in ways that will bless him?”
 - It doesn’t mean you ignore you pastor’s authority. It means you ask, “Since he must give an account for me, how might I contribute to his joy, not his grief? How would I want to be treated if I were in his place?” (Heb 13:17)
 8. Indeed, this simple-to-understand teaching of our Master, if applied, would quickly revolutionize our homes, churches, government, and businesses!
 9. As a caution however, let me interject here that the Golden Rule does **NOT** say,

*“Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even to them: **according to the dictates of your own heart or the whims of the changing cultural standard!**”* :)
 10. If we read the whole verse, Jesus concluded with, “...for this is the Law and the Prophets.” Since this command is a summary of the Law of God, it must NEVER be applied so as to affirm transgressions of God’s Law! That would be a perversion of the Golden Rule.
 11. As a reminder:
 - Love is always **Lawful**.
 - Jesus said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments.” Joh 14:15 (KJV)
 - Paul wrote, “Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk

honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying." Rom 13:10-13 (KJV)

- Although we can always offer people kindness and **dignity**; we must NEVER affirm iniquity.

APPLYING THE GOLDEN RULE

1. So again, the key to being able to live out the Golden Rule is the willingness to see through our neighbors' eyes and sympathize with their **weakness**. It is to "place thyself in thought, in the condition or the circumstances of thy neighbor, and judge accordingly." (PHC)
2. One can approach the Golden Rule either through "me" or "thee" lenses. Since the goal is to figure out how to treat OTHERS in the Kingdom, as we have seen, beginning with "thee" makes the most Kingdom sense.
3. This is NOT easy to do! Why? Because by nature, we are me-first people! Most of us aren't in the habit of considering where others are and how they might feel before we consider ourselves.
4. Applying the Golden Rule means we must learn to, "*Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than (our)selves.*" (Php 2:3, ESV)

TEN CRCC GOLDEN RULE APPLICATIONS!

Some of the pastors sat down this week to discuss ten areas we felt would immediately bring a greater measure of God's blessing to CRCC based on the Golden Rule. Remember, these things are easy to understand but HARD to do. Here they are:

1. Consider those who serve and go out of your way to say, "Thank you."
2. Reach out to those you haven't seen in a while in an intentional way.
3. Honor your leaders in tangible ways: be on time, be submissive, be generous, be faithful.
4. Consider those who are naturally quiet and let them know they are loved.
5. Respect our seniors, and learn to show them consistent honor.
6. Consider how many lost people have never heard the Gospel directly and give it to them.
7. Expand your circle of hospitality (both in church and without).
8. Be honest with people when they need to here a Word from God.
9. Give others the benefit of doubt rather than assuming the worst.
10. Offer weekly words of edification to as many members as possible. Be a peacemaker.

Also, please consider the Golden Rule with respect to our LORD. Ask, "How does Jesus want to be treated? How does He want us to treat His Word?" The answer might be life-changing...

APPLICATIONS FOR EDIFICATION AND ENCOURAGEMENT

(ROM 14:19; EPH 4:9; 1 THES 5:11; JUDE 1:20)

1. Discuss the Golden Rule in family worship this week.
2. Help your children by asking them how they wanted to be treated and to consider how they treat others.
3. Think about your neighbors through the lens of the Golden Rule. Any adjustments needed?