

Living by the Golden Rule

TEXT:

THESIS:

INTRODUCTION:

1. Much of what God expects of us as His children involves relationships with others.
 - a. Take for instance, the Sermon on the Mount.
 - b. It is filled with teachings that will alter our relationships with each other and with God.
 - i. In fact, in Jesus' teachings, you ought to pay close attention to the words he uses.
 - ii. Words such as: "others," "one another," "men," etc.
 - c. Even the ten commandments involved six commandments that had a bearing on relationships with others.
 - d. Also, the "second" commandment mentioned by our Lord, according to Matthew 22:34-40, involves one's "neighbor."
 - e. The judgment scene presented in Matthew 25:31-46 is made up of situations involving others.
2. And so, Jesus gave us a principle, that if applied, it would bring about drastic changes in the world.
 - a. In Mat. 7:12, it states, "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."
 - b. Well, Paul applied this to the Christian age in his letter to the church in Rome.
 - i. In Rom. 13:9, he said, "For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."
3. And so, we want to look at the golden rule and:
 - a. How we are obligated to it.
 - b. How it compares to our society we live in.
 - c. Where the golden rule makes a difference.
 - d. How it is broken.
 - e. And, why we break the golden rule.

DISCUSSION:

- I. THERE IS OBLIGATION INVOLVED IN THE GOLDEN RULE
 - A. Let all your dealings with men be conducted in the same spirit in which you would desire them to deal with you.
 - B. The "golden rule" says, "do," which involves action on my part.
 1. This action is not a "reaction" to the way others treat me.
 2. This action is something I must do to bring about a desired reaction from

others.

- a. Thus, the responsibility of the “golden rule” is placed squarely on my shoulders.

C. There is an obligation of love.

- 1. In Jn. 13:34-35, “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all *men* know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”
 - a. Now, that doesn’t mean that if you love me then I will return the favor.
 - b. We love first, like our God loved us first.
- 2. In 1 Cor. 13:1-8, “If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends . . .” (ESV).
 - a. That’s loving neighbor as yourself.
 - b. But, love is not the only part of the golden rule.

D. There is also an obligation of mercy.

- 1. “Blessed *are* the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy” (Matt. 5:7).
 - a. The merciful show mercy to the bodies of men, to those that are poor, poverty-stricken, and miserable, in their outward circumstances; by both sympathizing with them, and distributing unto them; not only making use of expressions of pity and concern; but communicating with readiness and cheerfulness, with affection and tenderness, and with a view to the glory of God: who also show mercy to the souls of men, by instructing such as are ignorant, giving them good counsel and advice: reproofing them for sin, praying for them, forgiving injuries done by them, and by comforting those that are cast down.
 - b. To show mercy is very delightful to, and desirable by God; it is what he requires; it is very ornamental to a child of God, and what makes him more like to his heavenly Father.
- 2. Therefore, without mercy, we cannot expect to receive mercy.
 - a. James 2:13, “For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.”

E. But, then part of the golden rule is an obligation of kindness.

- 1. Ephesians 4:32, “be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.”

2. Christianity does not make one rough, crabby, or sour; nor does it dispose its followers to violate the proper rules of social contact.
 3. We are to be tenderhearted, to be as wonderful friends who, when they see you, we should want to put our arms around them.
- F. You see, as part of the golden rule, there is an obligation of compassion.
1. 1 Peter 3:8, “Finally, *be ye* all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, *be* pitiful, *be* courteous:”
 - a. Consider other’s feelings.
 - b. Consider how you would want to be treated, and then treat them better.
 2. Jesus said, “When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (Matthew 9:36)
 - a. No one took compassion on them and they were swept under the rug of society and of “so called” Godly people.
 - b. But, Jesus’ heart was moved with passion for them, he was touched with a feeling of their infirmities because he knew they were burdened and weary.
- G. And, as part of the golden rule, there is an obligation of humility
1. Luke 14:11, “**For every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.**” (ASV)
 2. James 4:10, “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.”
 3. Philippians 2:5-8, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”
 - a. Humility my friends, is what Jesus showed us whether it was in subjection to his parents, working at the trade of a carpenter, conversing with the meanest of men, washing his disciples' feet, his compliance with his Father's will.
 - b. And, his behaviour towards his enemies, his forbearance of his disciples, showed him to be of a meek and humble spirit.
 - c. He humbled himself both to God and to man as we are also to do.
- H. But in addition, there is an obligation of gentleness as part of the golden rule.

1. 2 Timothy 2:24, “And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all *men*, apt to teach, patient.”
 2. Be gentle when dealing with troubled minds or wounded consciences by supplying them with the precious promises and truths of the Gospel.
 - a. Supply the backsliden by restoring them in a spirit of meekness.
 - b. Even to those who contradict the truth, and themselves, there is no need to whop them over the head with truth.
 - c. But, by mild and kind instructions.
- I. And, with the golden rule, there is an obligation of forgiveness.
1. “And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you” (Eph. 4:32).
 2. Matthew 6:14-15, “For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”
 - a. And, without forgiveness, we will not be forgiven.
 3. But, we do not forgive blindly because forgiveness includes the necessity of repentance and without repentance, there can be no forgiveness.
 - a. For the Scriptures state, “Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him” (Luke 17:3).
 - b. Thus, if Jesus on the cross, could pray, “Father, forgive,” surely we can forgive petty wrongs done to us.
- II. THE GOLDEN RULE SET FORTH BY JESUS IS IN SHARP CONTRAST TO THE GENERAL RULES BY WHICH THE MAJORITY OF SOCIETY LIVES
- A. Consider the following rules of society.
 - B. The “vandal rule” is really of no profit to anyone, but finds its satisfaction in creating misery for others.
 - C. The “pleasure rule” or “playboy rule” leads its followers into the pleasure of sin, which is but for a season (Heb. 11:25).
 - D. The “iron rule” is followed by those who get what they want simply because of their might.
 - E. The “it's legal” rule is applied by those who stay within the law, but show no mercy.
 - F. A “non-involvement” rule is all too prevalent in our society, as it was with the

priest and Levite in Luke 10.

- G. The “brass rule” suggests that we do unto others just as they do unto us.
 - 1. Vengeance belongs only to the Lord (Rom. 12:19).
- H. The “silver rule” is a live-and-let-live philosophy.
 - 1. A negative rule that would not hurt anyone, but would not do good either.
 - 2. So, “do not do unto others what you would not want them to do to you.”
- I. The rule our Lord gave is the “golden rule.”

III. CONSIDER SOME OF THE MANY AREAS OF LIFE WHERE “LIVING THE GOLDEN RULE” WOULD MAKE A DIFFERENCE

- A. If the “golden rule” were followed, divorce court would be canceled.
 - 1. God has told men how to treat their wives in Ephesians 5.
 - a. “Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with *them* according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered” (1 Peter 3:7).
 - b. I’ll tell you this, every divorce that is or has happened is because someone did not give honor to whom honor was due.
 - 2. God has told women how to treat their husbands in Ephesians 5 and 1 Peter 3.
 - a. Titus 2:4, “That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children.”
 - b. The older women are to teach the younger women to love their husbands and to seek their honour and interest; to endeavour to please them in all things; to secure peace, harmony, and union and sympathize with them in all afflictions and distresses and to not defile the marriage bed.
 - (1) To love.
- B. If the golden rule were followed, “child abuse” and “parental abuse” would be obsolete ideas.
 - 1. “Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:1-4).

- a. Again, when honor is lacking, there is either disobedient children or disobedient parents who throw life and godliness in the Bible right out the window.
- C. If the golden rule were followed, there would be no need for unions nor legislation to demand fair labor practices.
 - 1. There would be no jails, electric chairs, locks on doors, and bars on windows.
 - 2. There would be no more unfaithful church members to be restored and other Christians who have just been “written off.”
- D. If the golden rule were followed, arguments, hurt feelings and frustration would seldom be a problem.
 - 1. Friendships would remain solid instead of being broken by gossip.
 - 2. Our relationship with God would be as strong as humanly possible.
- E. If the golden rule were followed, more warmth and friendliness would welcome each person entering a business establishment.
 - 1. The number of people being taught the truth would increase.
- F. If the golden rule were followed, the educational director would not have to use a last-minute, unprepared teacher because someone did not show up without notifying him.
 - 1. The same would apply to the one having to arrange for someone to assist in public worship because one never showed up.
- G. Any number of other everyday situations could be listed.

IV. THERE ARE MANY WAYS BY WHICH THE GOLDEN RULE IS BROKEN

- A. The golden rule is too often broken by a simple matter of neglect.
 - 1. Parents neglect their children because too many other things take the place of priority that the children should have.
 - 2. Children neglect their parents because they are too busy with their own lives.
 - 3. Husbands neglect their wives because they are work-a-holics, spend too much time with their buddies or are more interested in recreational activities.
 - 4. Wives neglect husbands because they are more “career-oriented,” devote all their time to the children, or any number of other reasons.
- B. The golden rule is broken because we neglect to see the needs of others.

1. Look at: Matthew 25:31-46.
 2. Galatians 6:1-2,10, “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore (kat-art-izo: to make complete again) such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all *men*, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”
 3. We too often neglect to teach the lost.
 - a. Romans 10:1, “Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved . . . For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a (Kerusso-a proclaimer of the Gospel)? And how shall they preach, except they be (apostello-sent out (Matt. 28:19-20))? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!” (vs. 13-15).
- C. The golden rule is broken when we ignore others because we think we are better than they are.
1. Consider what Jesus said in Luke 14:7-11, “And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them, When thou art bidden of any *man* to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; And he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”
 2. “There was a man who thought he was better than me, and he was, until he thought he was!”
 - a. We need some serious lessons on humility, even among brethren.
- D. The golden rule is broken by sarcastic remarks spoken with sharp words, which may involve nothing more than the tone of the voice used.
- E. The golden rule is broken by the use of gossip and slander.
1. This is cannibalism of the worst kind.
 - a. And, many have not read that, “if ye bite and devour one another,

take heed that ye be not consumed one of another” (Galatians 5:15).

2. The tongue must be guarded.
 - a. In James 3:5-10, “Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue *is* a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: But the tongue can no man tame; *it is* an unruly evil, full of deadly poison . . . (vs 10) Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing.”

V. WHY DO WE BREAK THE GOLDEN RULE?

- A. Our own sins cause us to treat others as we do.
 1. Many people take comfort in the faults of others.
 2. We are not made better by destroying others, but by adhering to the Word of God.
- B. Jealousy and envy is often the cause of wrong treatment of others.
- C. Ignorance is a source of breaking the golden rule.
 1. We need to understand the facts and circumstances before reacting.
 2. Because, harsh judgments come too often by jumping to conclusions which causes the other side to just claim up and even lie for fear of more harsh judgments.
- D. Perhaps the bottom line is a lack of love.
 1. In John 13:34-35, states, “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

CONCLUSION:

1. Probably nothing could go farther in changing life in general for the better than “living the golden rule.”
2. Consider your own life as a Christian, a leader, a teacher, a companion, a neighbor – or whatever your role in life is – and how it could be improved by simply “living the golden rule.”

