Does The Golden Rule Still Work?

July 17, 2016

Matthew 7:1-14

Have you ever heard of anyone putting the entire Bible into one simple sentence? Is it even possible? Let’s narrow it down to just the Old Testament. Has anyone ever heard of putting the entire Bible into one concise and condensed line? That would take some work, to be sure.

Well, someone has. I was read this week the words of a man who framed the entire Old Testament so succinctly into one simple line that It will astound you as it did me.

Would you like to know who that Person was? I’ll put His sentence up on the screen. And likely you’ll be able to recognize the Speaker. Here it is. *“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.”* It comes from the Gospel of Matthew chapter seven. And it was spoken by the LORD Jesus.

Notice the final eight words of this one sentence sermon “for *this* is the law and the prophets.” “This” refers to the line “All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.”

The LORD says that this is the summation of the entire thirty-nine Books of the OT; everything from Genesis through Malachi. “This is the law and the prophets.”

In the LORD’s day, if you wanted to know anything, you would ask a scribe or a Pharisee or a Sadducee because they were the ones who read and studied the Scriptures. But if you wanted to know the essence of those 526 chapters we call the OT, they and we would have to turn to Jesus. “LORD, what would you have me to do?” His answer “This is what I’m telling you to do.”

*“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.”*

It’s almost as if Jesus wants us see that everything in our lives has to do with our relationships with the people around you; how you treat them and how you want them to treat you. The commands, the principles, illustration after illustration is given from the lives of real people. Every OT character is pointing you to you. *You* are to do the things to others that you would want them to do to you.

I’ve titled today’s sermon “Does the Golden Rule Still Work? Shall we pray?

Now please open your Bible with me to Matthew 7. As I’m sure you know, Jesus said more things that people comment on than any great individual who has ever lived. As a matter of fact, sermons are being preached all day long and books are constantly being written on the LORD’s words more now than ever before.

And the reason so much is spoken or written on what Jesus has said is one, because of Who He is; two, because His words are alive; and one more thing; it’s because everything that men try to accomplish apart from Him doesn’t work. Just look at American society today. Every-where the people of our country are looking for answers. But, in almost every case, they neglect the one Book that has the exact answers.

Do you really think that removing prayer and Bible study from the public education of America has given us answers? Do you really think that abortion on demand has benefited anybody? Do you really think that we’d be living in a moral cesspool if the standards for society were taken from the pages of your Bible? Would we seek the chaos in the streets of our major cities if we had ears turned towards the Son of God? I don’t think so.

Look with me at Matthew 7:12 *“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.”*

First, look at the LORD’s reasoning. Some very good scholars have written dissertations on Matthew 7:12. There are sermons by the thousands. Entire books have been written on it. Today, to be simply frank about it, I’m adding to the many hundreds of thousands of words others have said after they’ve read these words of Jesus.

Have you ever said “I wish people would just \_\_\_\_\_\_\_?” (You fill in the blank). That’s because you want other people to act differently or to act better or to act more wisely or some such thing. But can you see that that’s just the opposite of what Jesus is telling you to do? Here’s the way He wants you to reason. “All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to *you* …” Then act like this. Do this. *“Do ye even so to them.”*

There’s the “reasoning” behind the “way”. This is how the Son of God commands you to treat people. And why? Because you’d like *others* to act that way towards you. Yes, it sounds a bit psychological. And it is. But that’s not being selfish.

What you are doing is you are paving the way for people in your life to see what the Bible looks like with skin on it – your skin.

Some of you might read or heard the story of Josephine. The date was September 11, 2001 and a team of NY firefighters from Ladder Company 6. They were climbing World Trade Center Building One. They were there to rescue people. At the 24th floor, they got the news on their radios that Tower Two had fallen.

They began in earnest to move people down the stairs as quickly as possible. When they got to the fifteenth floor, they found sixty-year old Josephine. Josephine worked on the 73rd floor. She’d already climbed down sixty floors through heat and smoke and was completely exhausted.

She refused to go down the stairs. Each of the men had upwards to 100 pounds of equipment on his back. They too were exhausted. But they would not leave Josephine.

They cajoled and encouraged and nudged and prodded her. Finally, slowly, tiredly Josephine made it down all the way to the fourth floor. Then, she’d had enough. “I can’t do it and I won’t do it. I’m done walking.”

The firefighters began a search for a chair to put her in to carry her down. But, as they were searching, they heard a huge explosion. Each fireman began praying and calling on the LORD for forgiveness and to make their deaths quick. The entire 110 floors of Tower Two collapsed upon them.

Somehow Captain Jay Jonas, Sal D’Agostino, Bill Butler, Tom Falco, Mike Meldrum, Matt Komorowski, and Josephine were in a stairwell that did not fully collapse. They were thrown and scattered under the debris. All seven were buried – but all were alive. Yet, even while trapped and waiting for rescue, they helped Josephine.

Those men did to Josephine what they would have wanted done unto them. And, miraculously, they were all saved; including their new friend Josephine.

First, look at the LORD’s reasoning. Matthew 7:12 *“Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: …”*

Second, the thirty-seven books of the OT can be summed up with these words “*“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.”*

How is it possible to narrow the entire OT down to one concern; one specific thing? Jesus did it. This is a truly magnificent statement.

How do you treat people? Helping hand or criticism? Kind words about them or complaining? Being ambitious to offer your assistance or “let somebody else do it”?

You see, Jesus exalts your relationships to a very high level. The way you would like others to deal with and treat you is the way you should treat them.

Fifty-six year old Los Angeles County Deputy Sheriff Elton Simmons made upwards to 25,000 traffic stops on his motorcycle. And he cited many of those people with traffic violations. And unlike many other officers, Mr. Simmons, in all those 25,000 never had one person complain about him either for being stopped or for getting a ticket.

A news crew followed Deputy Simmons around for just one day. He was on the front page of the Los Angeles Times. Here’s their conclusion. “Simmons has a perfect mix of authority with diplomacy; with no hint of superiority or arrogance.”

Officer Simmons says it this way. “I’m here with you; not up here. I follow a golden rule I learned from a Pastor in Louisiana.” Elton Simmons applied Matthew 7:12 to his job.

[Show video of Mr. Simmons].

Next, please turn with me to the 22nd chapter of Matthew. Look with me at verse thirty-five. Matthew 22:35 *“Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, (36) Master, which is the great commandment in the law? (37) 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. (40) On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”*

To “hang” means “to completely depend upon.” The entire OT depends solely on an understanding of and an obedience to two basic laws: love God with all your heart and love people like you love yourself.

Here Jesus is saying that the entire OT hangs together on one hook, so-to-speak. If you love the LORD with all your heart and soul and mind and if you love your neighbor as you love yourself, you’ll come as close to obeying the OT as anyone ever has.

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Third, Jesus came here to do the following. He came into this world to make your walk with Him simple. The LORD didn’t come here to complicate your life. Actually God is the essence of simplicity. He is able to take the big things and make them understandably simple. There are a lot of complicated things in this world. But walking with God is not one of them. Since when is a child walking with his father a complicated thing? Jesus can take the entire OT and summarize it into one single sentence.

Now let’s ask the question “Does the Golden Rule still work?”

If so, where?

You can apply the Golden Rule with strangers, at home, at work, at school, in your neighborhood, online, etc. and etc.

And, if you are understanding and applying the entire OT to your life, this is how to do it. Can you see how the LORD is truly concerned about your attitude in your relationships? He’s right now observing your attitudes towards the people around you.

And further, Jesus presumes that you aren’t doing this when you deal with people. Look back again at Matthew 7:12. *“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.”*

The One Person Who knows you inside and out is the Son of God. He knows that your basic nature is to stand back and judge others while at the same time wanting them to do things differently. He also knows that you’re wrong and He wants to set you right.

If there was one basic reason for life, it has to be this – that we understand that our best life is lived when we utterly trust whatever Jesus Christ says as the whole truth and nothing but the truth and then do only what He says.

Folks, let’s be honest. The best we human beings can do with Matthew 7:12 is to talk about it. Is there anyone here who really wants to *do* this?

Imagine for just a moment that Jesus is applying this passage to His own life. Does He do things in His relation-ship to others so that they’ll do the same things to Him? He’s got to. And, when it comes right down to it, by nature *we* can’t. But, by nature, He can. The only way we can is when we utterly trust Him to do it through us.

So don’t think this is just a nice thing to say. You can do this – but not in your own strength.

First, look at the LORD’s reasoning.

Second, the entire OT can be summed in the Golden Rule.

Third, Jesus came here to make your walk with Him simple.

Fourth, consider being reciprocal.

Do you see the emphasis here? By that I mean, do you see the word order? In our normal word order we’d say “Do to others what you would want them to do to you.” But is that what Jesus is telling us to do?

Look again. *“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.”*

He’s putting the emphasis not on, not the things in someone else’s life. It on the things in *your* life. *“…All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you…”* In other words, keep your eyes upon what you’d want people to do to you. Do *those* things to others.

For example, do you want others to love you? Do you want them to respect you? Do you want them to give you their time? Do you want them to be honest with you? Do you want them to be forgiving towards you? Don’t put the emphasis on them; especially on their failure to do so. Put it on you and on what you do.

According to Jesus, there’s a reciprocal agreement that is continually going on between you and the other people in your life. But He puts the responsibility on you. Reciprocal means “you do what you do so that others will benefit.”

In other words, stop expecting other people to *be* a certain way or *act* a certain way. Instead, treat them the way you’d like to be treated. Show by the way you deal with them that that’s what you anticipate they’ll do towards you.

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Fifth, this isn’t really a rule. Actually, it’s never called a rule in the Bible. That’s our man-made way of describing it. Jesus didn’t come to add another rule to your life. As I said earlier, Jesus didn’t come into this world to complicate your life. And He certainly didn’t come here with more religious rules.

Somebody; some human body, made the LORD’s words into the Golden Rule. One wise man puts it this way “Jesus isn't as concerned that we know the Golden "rule" as much as he is that we live the “golden *life*.” (From Phil Ware [www.heartlight.org](http://www.heartlight.org)

So, what have we done with this wonderful description of the OT and how to obey God? We made it into a rule. And everybody likes the Rule. But who really goes by the Rule?

You see, Jesus isn’t interested in the fact that we’ve made a rule out of what He said. Instead, He wants you to *do* something about it. He wants you to see that this is what He’s like. And this is how He wants you to relate the people around you.

Folks, instead of making this a rule, it would be a whole lot better to simply take the lead in dealing with people in your life by treating them the way you’d like to be treated. And don’t even worry whether people notice or even if they don’t reciprocate. As one man said “Just do it.” And, by the way, applying this principle to your life will help you with the most difficult people in your life.

Now last, why? Why should you obey the quote unquote “Golden Rule”? Here’s why. Because your life is much more important than your lip when it comes to reaching a man’s heart. You may have a lot of words when attempting to reach a man for Christ. But if your life is not accomplishing what Jesus says it can, then your words may sound very hollow to those who hear them.

Knowing and applying the Golden Rule will make you live your life so that you exhibit a Christ-like spirit towards those around you. Folks, the last thing you want to convey in the way you live is that you are religious. You might be religious. But it’s a whole lot better to be Christ-like in the way you deal with people. And that’s what Jesus is after – that we deal with people in a way that’s going to make them better because of it.

So, if you are going to put the Golden Rule into practice in your life, be prepared to find it, not only difficult, but sometimes even impossible. And that will drive you to an even closer walk with the LORD.

You may not be able to put the Golden Rule into practice in every single thing you do. But, what you can do is this – you can be the kind of person to others you’d like them to be towards you.

If what you do makes you more dependent upon Jesus, then apply it to that situation. If you can’t, then go to the LORD and ask for His Spirit to work His way in you so that you can be what you ought to be.

One man put it this way. “It’s a whole lot better to not wave the Christian banner in front of someone than it is to be to them what Christ is to you.”

OK, what will you do with the Golden Rule today and this week? Will you leave today and just go back to treating people the same you always have? Or will you think through much more carefully how you’ll deal with them?

Here it is just one more time. *“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.”*

Last, here are the words that will fit every one of us today. *“Here lies the power of truth. The unstudied, unconscious influence of a holy life is the most convincing sermon that can be given in favor of Christianity. Argument, even when unanswerable, may provoke only opposition, but a godly example has a power that is impossible wholly to resist.”* (Copied E. White).

So, today you’ll make a choice on this matter of how you will deal with the people in your life. What will you do? I want to offer you a prayer that you can pray today that will enable you to walk with the LORD this week with a right attitude towards learning to put Matthew 7:12 into action. We call it the “Prayer of Surrender.”

“LORD, I submit all I am to you, my spirit, my soul, and my body. Do with me what is most pleasing to you. Work out Your will upon me today.” This one prayer will put you on the road to learning to apply the words of Jesus to your life.

If you know that the LORD wants your heart more than anything, then give Him your heart. If you know that He wants you to submit your life and everything in it to Him; then make this prayer yours.

Now, it might be that you have no interest in obeying the LORD and obeying this command because you’ve never come to the LORD and received His free gift of Eternal Life.

The greatest need in your heart and the largest problem in your life is your sin and the fact that your sin is what separates you from God. The Prophet Isaiah said this so long ago. *“But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.”*

Yet, out of love, God sent His son to become your Substitute. Jesus Christ came here for the purpose of being the LIGHT and showing us the right way.

The Apostle Paul in the Book of Romans says this. (Romans 3:23) *“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” and (Romans 6:23) “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

There’s only one way to receive God’s Salvation. It’s through God’s Son. And here’s how. The Bible says (Acts 20:21) *“… repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.”* Will you repent and exercise faith towards Him?

Today is the day of Salvation? What will you do about the condition of your heart for eternity?

* REPENT - “to change your mind about God, Christ, your sin, and God’s free gift of salvation.”
* BELIEVE - “to simply trust Jesus Christ alone as the One Who paid the entire penalty for your sins.”

Here’s a simple salvation prayer for you to pray if you’ve never trusted the LORD for His free gift of eternal life.

Salvation Prayer

“LORD, I admit that I am a sinner and in need of your grace. I believe that You sent Your Son to the Cross to die for me. Please forgive me of all my sins and make me Your child. Thank you.”

Everyone who calls upon the Name of the LORD will be saved. Now, please find with me Hymn # 670 and sing it through with me “Make Me A Blessing.”

Extend invitation.