

The
“Golden Rule”

The Best Way
To Live!

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Second Edition

The Prelude

One day as I thought of how those 11 words of The Golden Rule could change my life and the lives of people I love, my mind went back to that day, so long ago, when the only perfect man and direct spokesman for God, Jesus of Nazareth, brought this unique command to the human family. It would be for our guidance for all time to come.

In my imagination, I was there that day. It was a day and a speech never to be forgotten. Through the wonder of imagination, you too, could be with me that day. Come along. You will never forget it.

There was a huge crowd of people, including children, and from many different places. I could smell their warm bodies as we all pushed closer to hear every word.

Jesus's voice commanded our complete attention. His voice was riveting! Every word counted! He spoke with absolute authority! He came to announce The Kingdom or Rule of God—here! On Earth! Repent! We needed to live differently! Everybody seemed anxious and ready to hear his message and what God's rule would mean for us (Matthew 4:17–5:1).

You may want to read His Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapters 5, 6, and 7, before I comment on it as—in our imagination—you and I politely pushed through the crowd so as to hear every word.

I noted how powerful were his introductory statements. We all could actually become citizens of God's society if we were "poor in spirit," if we were conscious of our spiritual poverty! He promised us that *we* could be truly happy and blessed! He was reaching out to meet and teach us. The crowd was electrified. This man from God was talking to us, *about us!* Our lives would change!

I could hear him weave in the need for a sense of personal responsibility. Be a "peacemaker." Even be "persecuted!" "Be a light to the world! By your good works" (Matthew 5:1–16). What a way to start a speech!

His next words caused real concern to us all. “Do not think that I have come to destroy The Law and The Prophets, I have not come to destroy, but to fulfill.”

Why would anyone think He had come to destroy it? The Law and The Prophets was their name for what we today call the Old Testament. It was the biggest and most important thing in the lives of Jewish people. It’s hundreds of rules, commandments and laws governed every aspect of life; marriage, raising a family, their workday, rest time, business dealings, worship—yes in a nutshell, everything in life!

What could he mean—not destroy it but fulfill it? What could that possibly mean? Did it mean a change so big that some would think he had come to destroy it? A few serious-faced men stood next to us, silent, shocked and shaken. Others started talking excitedly, questioning one another. Something big was now in the air, you could feel it. I think we all felt a shiver of anticipation!

Then Jesus gave 6 tiny sermonettes. Each time he started by saying, “You have heard it said” and then 5 times he quoted directly from Exodus, Leviticus, or Deuteronomy from The Law and The Prophets and then said—“*But I say unto you ...*”

Then in each case he went beyond the simple Old Testament “Do not do,” to discuss motives, consequences, and our conscience in making a decision to act. I said to myself, I think He is giving us some examples of how the Old Testament is the basis but is “fulfilled” by taking a person to a new level of responsible living and thinking.

Then Jesus went on to tell of a better way to live as he discussed charity, prayer, forgiveness, generosity, worry, anxiety, and the judgement of others.

By the time he was finished with all that, I know for myself and others standing near me, we were wondering: how do I keep all this in my head? Is there a single key to all this? I know we would all need God’s personal help to live that way.

I think Jesus knew the questions in our minds. He then told us how to go to God for a personal relationship. “Keep on asking! Keep on seeking! Keep knocking, *for everyone who asks, will receive!*” I think everyone there wanted to be a child of our great heavenly Father!

So now Jesus continued (at Matthew 7:12), therefore (in view of what we had just been taught) consequently, in everything, “*do unto others as you would have them do unto you!*”

In a plain but never before spoken phrase, Jesus had given us the key to a new way to live! An overriding principle to guide us in every decision for all time to come! In 11 words!

He was telling us that to be a citizen of the Kingdom of God, we must grow up and ask ourselves, “How would I want to be treated?” *That* is the new way to treat all others! This 11 word commandment was the “fulfillment” of the old Law and The Prophets; use your *conscience!*

How important was this newly-coined command? He said that this is *now*, today, The Law and The Prophets! He said it to us as plain as words can say it “*This is* The Law and the Prophets!” Those 11 words!

Those 11 words had now replaced the hundreds of laws, commandments, and rules of the Old Testament. We now had an unforgettable, nutshell principle to guide us in all the affairs of our lives. “Treat others as we want to be treated!”

If we are to be everlastingly right with God, first we must be right with fellow humans. And now we know how to do it! It is the way of peace, love, forgiveness, kindness, joy, and a clear conscience. And, it works!

Every person who heard Jesus that day knew they had experienced a day to compare with the day when Moses came down from the mountain with the 10 commandments!

And this commandment, that 11 word command which had never been spoken before, came directly from the lips of God's own Son! It would change human life today and forever. Truly *The Golden Rule*.

And you and I were there! On that never-to-be-forgotten day; so long ago. Thanks for joining me in our imagination.

Now, back to today's world.

The Golden Rule, The Best Way To Live!

“In everything do to others what you would have them do to you, for this is the law and the prophets.” — Jesus -
Matthew 7:12

I now tell you the most important thing I ever learned about successful living. I am excited about this opportunity to share—with God’s help—this message with you.

Please relax and enjoy my story of discovery. I speak of what is called “The Golden Rule.” You may already understand and live by this message. If you haven’t discovered it yet, this may be one of the most important days in your life.

But first, I need to clear up an issue about the Golden Rule. A while back, I heard Rush Limbaugh say his father told him that the author of the Golden Rule was King Hammurabi, the first king of ancient Babylon, nearly 2,000 years before Jesus. Then I learned that Dear Abby said great philosophers in the past have repeated the Golden Rule and that Jesus was not the author of it.

William Barclay, a world renowned Bible scholar at the University of Glasgow, Scotland, researched history on this matter. He learned that what all those ancient philosophers throughout history had said was indeed very good but that it was not the Golden Rule. They all said basically the same thing: “What is hateful, hurtful or harmful to you, *don’t do that* to others.” That’s fine. That’s a great rule, but that is not the Golden Rule. The Golden Rule goes way beyond that.

As for me personally, I need to tell you that for a long time, I thought of the Golden Rule as an isolated verse in the Scriptures, a good thought that belonged in a conversation about courtesy and manners. I thought it belonged together with statements such as “honesty is the best policy” or “when in doubt, be a little kinder.” Maybe you have thought that way too?

But now, I ask you to see the Golden Rule in a very different way. Come with me to make a discovery that changed my life. It may change your life! Let me read to you what Professor Barclay says about it because now I think he nails what I have come to believe. Here is what he said:

This is probably the most universally famous thing that Jesus ever said. This is something that had never been said before. It is a new teaching. A new view of life and of life's obligations.

Then Barclay quotes all those ancient philosophers: the Chinese, the Romans, the Greeks, the Jews, all the people who quote the rule of "doing no harm." Professor Barclay then explains that this rule in its negative form is in fact the basis of ethical teaching. But, he continues,

No one but Jesus has ever put it in a positive form. Many voices have said, "Do not do to others what you wouldn't want done to you," but no voice ever said, "do to others what you would want them to do unto you."

There is a world of difference between *not* doing something harmful to somebody and actively doing good for them.

Professor Barclay sums it up this way:

To obey this commandment, a man must become a new man, with a new center to his life, and if the world was composed of people who sought to obey this rule, it would be a new world.

That's the position I take. It's that big. Yes, it is life changing. World changing.

My story of discovery began at the 22nd chapter of Matthew, verse 36. Come with me!

“Teacher, what is *the* Great Commandment in the law?” Jesus said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the First and Great Commandment. The second is like it. You shall love your neighbor, as you do yourself. On these two commandments, hang all of the law and the prophets.”

The “law” he is talking about, of course, originated when God Himself was dealing with the nation of Israel and establishing His approved worship.

God is commanding His people to love Him! When you think about it, it strikes you that He must really, really want us to love Him! I believe Jesus was thinking, “I don’t know whether my listeners realize how important this is,” so he applied the most supreme accolade or honor he ever used when he said, “On these two commandments hang the Holy Scriptures!” Imagine that. Two things. Just these two things. Loving God with all of your heart and loving other people as you love yourself. On these two commandments alone, the Holy Scriptures hang!

That statement would have astonished those Jewish listeners. It should astonish us too (Matthew 5:17).

It almost seems Jesus understood that people were going to be uneasy with that priority (I was). Again, in Mark 12: 28–31, Jesus talks about the Great Commandment. This time he makes a crystal clear statement. He says, “*There is no commandment greater than these!*” This is it! *Nothing is greater than that in God’s communications with humans!* Think about that.

And that is not all Jesus has to say about its supreme importance!

But still, we wonder—“Can these two commands *really* be that important?”

Consider now the account in Luke 10. Somebody asked Jesus a different question, but the answer was the same. Here is the question. “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” What is more important to us than that? And here is the answer: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength and with all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself.” There can be no doubt about it. These two commandments are supremely important to you and me. Do you agree?

Let’s examine the Great Commandment a little more. God commands us to love Him. Someone might say, “Well, Peter, I love God.” But, He didn’t say love God. He said, Love God with *all* of your heart, *all* your soul, *all* your strength, *all* your mind. Now, who does that? I don’t know anybody who does. So, to me, He is, at least, saying “I, God, want you, to love me more, and more, and more.”

Furthermore, God is not commanding us to possess thoughts of love *about God*, but rather, *to love* him, and here love is *a verb* denoting action on our part. Each one of us must have a personal relationship with God.

Question: How *do* you and I grow to love God more and more? I read somewhere that a lawyer or a counselor was talking about people who had trouble in their marriage, and he said a fellow will sometimes insist, “Well, I love my wife, but I don’t love her as much as I should. I can’t help it, I just don’t love her as much as I would like to.” And what the counselor said was instructive. He said, “Take a pad of paper and number 1 to 20 on it. Then *write* down a numbered list of what you do admire, what you do like, and what you do appreciate about her.” He said a man sometimes will say, “I can’t think of a single thing.” But when he puts his mind to it and starts thinking about it, he changes his mind. He finds much to write down. Those written thoughts of appreciation can help us act in love to one another.

I think we could do that with God—think expectantly and be confident in our search. If we are really looking for reasons to love Him, we could love God more tomorrow than we do today, *if we put*

our mind to it. I think that is what God is telling us. It's almost as if He is saying to us, "Love me more and more. Keep looking for reasons to love me. Your happiness depends on it. Your success in life depends on it. I know what is best for you. It is most important."

I think of Albert Einstein once saying there are two kinds of people in the world. People who say they never have seen a miracle, and people like Einstein who say, "I see miracles everywhere." So if we start looking for the goodness of God, we will find reasons for loving God more tomorrow than we do today. And remember, God really, really, wants that from us. He made it the First and Greatest Command to His people!

But, that is not what we want to talk about today. We want to talk about the second part—"loving others *as you love yourself.*" Honestly, somehow, that's a problem. I've listened to hundreds of sermons on television and in real life. I've seldom heard anyone preach about the Great Commandment. And I think part of the reason is that the average person has a problem with the word "love" and "loving all others." To begin with, I personally didn't like to think of loving myself. When I thought of love, I thought of romance or my family or my good friends. But, *love myself? Love everybody?* I could see why people would have a hard time with that. Don't you agree?

The answer proved to be with the Greek language, the language of the New Testament. They say the Greeks have a word for everything. They have four words, all translated by our one ambiguous English word "love!" Four kinds of love! They have *eros* for sex, *storge* for family love, *philia* for comrade and special love, but they also had another word for love: *agape*. It's not like any of the other three terms, but it *is* a certain kind of love. It is an attitude, not just an emotion, a mindset of deeply wanting to do good and acting to do good. Agape love can simply mean to want and to do what is good for others.

As I thought about this, I said to myself, "If that is a form of love, then I could honestly say that 'I love myself' because the truth is, I want what is good for me. I don't want less for anyone else; I just want what is good for me, and I want that attitude toward me from others."

Now, if I applied that agape to other people, then I could say that I could *love* others! I could possibly “love everybody,” even people who are enemies, if I, as a Christian, sincerely want what is good for them and that they will change. “Agape love” is something I think a person can develop if he or she thinks about it, *with God’s help!* It is a very powerful attitude of wanting what is good and right for others, as well as for myself. (see “Agape, the Greatest of the Virtues,” pages 17–23, *New Testament Words*, William Barclay).

That is what Jesus was saying, that we must love others, care about them, be deeply and honestly concerned and act for their best interest, *just as we want for ourselves.*

Understanding this attitude began to develop in my mind like a beautiful flower in bud that then started to flower out. It all began when I began thinking about loving others *the way I love myself.* So just as I want good for myself, “loving myself,” I want that “good” for others too.

Then came these brilliantly mind-illuminating words of the Golden Rule from Matthew 7:12: “*therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, you also do to them, for this is the law and the prophets.*” I asked myself, “Just how *would I* want others to do to me?” I know I want to be respected. I want to be dealt with honestly. I want their genuine goodwill for me. I want people to have high expectations of me. I want them to say, “Peter may be different, but if I had gone through his life, maybe I would feel the same way he does.” And, now, *I need to think that same way about them!* This is agape love in action!

When I started thinking of “love” as having this “agape” attitude, looking for the good in others and asking how can I do good for them. Finally, it struck me! *The Golden Rule is exactly the same thing as the second part of the Great Commandment!*

Compare the Great Commandment “love others, *as you love yourself,*” with the Golden Rule, “treat others *the way you want to be treated.*”

They are the same! I got it!

Both commands require each individual to use his own conscience— “as *you* yourself would want to be treated!” or “as you love yourself.”

For me, a great truth had finally sunk into my heart. The Golden Rule is the same as the Great Commandment! No commandment is greater! And it is the way to eternal life!

And now—this is exciting!—here is the one thing that absolutely knits the two together, that absolutely welds them together as one and the same thing! As you remember, Jesus used that Supreme Accolade in referring to the Great Commandment by saying, “on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

Now, listen: the only other time, in all his preaching that Jesus ever used that same Supreme Accolade was when he described the Golden Rule! He said, “for *this is* the law and the prophets!” Jesus gave that same supreme honor for both!

Finally, as I prayed about it, the Golden Rule—the Great Commandment—became the supreme guide in my life. Directly from the lips of Jesus to me.

Have I carried you too far, too fast? Someone might say, “Peter, I am trying to think along with you on this, but honestly, I have a problem. I can’t quite think of it that way. I wasn’t raised that way. For me, when I think about the true Christian religion, I think about worshiping God and Jesus Christ, glorifying them, singing, worshiping, and praising them.” I interrupt to explain, “What you are saying is fine. That’s appropriate, but just keep in mind that it is not a matter of just going through some religious routine because God wants us to love him more and more.”

My friend replies, “Peter, that’s not my problem. It is about making my everyday dealing with people so supremely important to God. I just don’t see how my everyday dealings with people could be

that important to God. I try to be honest and truthful and upright with people, but I don't think of how I treat all the people in my life as being at the very center of my worship for God and Jesus." I understand his comment.

I tell him, "I know how much you want to please God and Jesus, so think about it this way: When God was setting up His approved worship with the Jews, at the base of it all were the Ten Commandments. Three Commandments were about dealing with God. One was about rest. But six out of the ten were about how you deal with people!

"Six out of ten! The majority of the cornerstones of approved worship were about how to deal with people: 'Honor your parents. Don't commit adultery or steal or kill or lie or covet.'

"These six commands about how to deal with others are the majority of the basics of *the* approved worship, *as prescribed by God himself!* What does that say to you?"

My friend says, "Okay Peter, I've got that, and it's a great point, but I also think when Jesus came along, He spiritualized everything more, so maybe it isn't quite that way now for Christians?"

"Well, think through this with me. Jesus came as the founder of true and pure worship, and the Sermon on the Mount is regarded by Bible scholars everywhere as the way Christians are to live under God's rule. As to its critical importance, you can read the writings of Tertullian, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Calvin, Luther, Billy Graham, it doesn't matter, all these authority people regard the Sermon on the Mount as the description of the way Christians are expected to live in worship of God and Jesus Christ.

"Now, if I read the Sermon on the Mount to you, it takes 13 minutes. If I take a little time with it, it takes 15 minutes. The Sermon contains things about worship of God, but this short 15-minute message has 25 instructions about how to deal with people—25 instructions about dealing with people in a 15-minute speech! In the greatest speech

ever recorded and from the lips of Jesus Christ himself!”

We need to rethink the question: What *is* Christianity about?

Just how important *to God* is the way we deal with one another? The Sermon on the Mount by Jesus Christ answers that question as shown above. 25 in 15! An instruction every 36 seconds to emphasize the importance of human relations!

Also, please remember how, in that sermon, Jesus himself gave us a specific example to show the correct priority a Christian must have. This example by Jesus proved once and for all how important agape love and the Golden Rule are to Christianity! Don't miss this!

In Matthew 5, Jesus tells how important it is to not judge others or insult them or smear their reputation. Then he says at Matthew 5:22, “Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar and then remember that your brother has something against you...”

Stop! What do you think that man should do? This is a great day for that man as he brings a special gift to God. A great and special day in his religious relationship with God. Then he remembers that some person has something against him.

Here is Jesus's astonishing answer, “Leave your gift there before the altar and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother and then come and offer your gift to God.”

What!?!? What is Jesus telling us? How important are our relations with people? What *is* our priority? Here it is. ***WE CANNOT BE RIGHT WITH GOD UNTIL WE ARE RIGHT WITH PEOPLE!*** “*First*, go and be reconciled, *then* come with your worship to God!” That is how important our Great Commandment and our agape love for other people is!

Here, Jesus forever opens our minds to a fuller understanding of what true Christianity is: more and more love of God and love of

others. Two things.

That is what Christianity is about, according to Jesus Christ.
From his lips.

Let us pause for a minute as I tell you now about a conversation I had with a young person in our family. We talked about how we must come to God, not through accepting church creeds, but fervently, optimistically, and confidently, praying for a personal relationship with God. Real faith! I talked about that way back in the introduction of my autobiography . Jesus absolutely promises that God will respond with his blessings of good for us!

Now, after promising that God would respond and begin His good for us, Jesus's very next word is "therefore" (Matthew 7:12). What does the word "therefore" mean? As you know, it means "consequently" or "because of that" or "in return for that" (*Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th ed.). So what is Jesus Christ telling that young family member and all of us? "*In return* for God's answer to our plea for a relationship with Him, yes, because of His loving goodness to us, we, therefore, consequently, must do good to others! The kind of good we would want done to ourselves!" Read it for yourself at Matthew 7:7–12 and feel the impact of our Lord's words to us. Repeat the word "therefore" when you read it aloud.

What am I saying? That in return for *God's goodness to you*, you *must* love and *do good* for others! Yes, *you are to live the Golden Rule, as a consequence* of having been blessed by God's love and goodness to you! Truly, a life-changing idea! Truly, a life changer!

The Golden Rule. The Great Commandment. The Supreme Way to live! And the way to "inherit eternal life!" I am glad to say my young family member saw her life ahead in a new way!

Now, can I add one more critically important piece of evidence for the Golden Rule? This goes to the heart of the central questions we all must answer: Does the Golden Rule really and truly belong alongside our love of God as one of the two ways to please God and the

way to inherit eternal life? Does it really? Listen.

One day at the county jail, an inmate told me, “Mr. Gregerson, I keep trying, but I don’t feel that I am getting through to God in my prayers. Look at the ceiling in this room. See the clouds painted on the ceiling? I think my prayers don’t get past those clouds.” I replied to him, “Let me read you the words of Jesus and see if He helps you!” I read Matthew 6:14 and 15.

For if you forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will forgive you. But, if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive you your trespasses.

“My friend, there are no ‘ifs’, ‘ands’, or ‘buts’ allowed here by God. Either we forgive others or God will not forgive us. Period.”

I read it to him again. He sat as if stunned. *That* was his problem! He told me later that he then prayed and prayed and prayed, forgiving. And at last he was clean! He finally was able to forgive others, and he was forgiven by God! His prayers were being answered! He knew God was dealing with him.

We all want forgiveness from God and others, so we must forgive others. It is a crucially important part of living the Golden Rule. Again, from the lips of Jesus Christ. I am sure you feel as I do. No feeling quite matches the liberating joy of forgiveness! It can be a life changer.

So when we stop to think about living the Golden Rule, the Great Commandment, we see that it obviously includes forgiveness. And so much more. So many issues face us personally, such as dealing with thoughtless or stupid drivers or bad attitudes in stores. Then think of problems in the family, with children, relatives or neighbors, and business problems. All that and so much more at a personal level. Golden Rule living surely requires a life-changing attitude on our part, a new way to live our lives. Agree?

For me, it starts with empathy, putting myself in the other person’s shoes and looking at life through that person’s eyes.

Remembering that their attitude has been shaped by their life experiences and by the influence of their parents, teachers, friends, and television. *Then* I can *connect* and understand why we are so different—politically, religiously, economically, and on and on.

I then ask myself, “If I were that person, how would I want to be dealt with by someone different?” For her long-term good? I need to figure that out, in my conscience. What would be good for me if I were her? Thank God for the Golden Rule! It makes all the difference in coping with life.

As I stopped to think about all that we have discussed, I asked myself: “What could possibly be better for all of us humans on planet earth than that each one of us would pull up the best in ourselves to think and act sincerely for the good of each other?” It would be “God’s will done on earth as it is done in heaven!”

I asked God to please help me live by the Golden Rule. It is my “why” to live for.

Now, it’s also true that Jesus left the door open for us to stop and get away from certain people if they are truly evil and trample the pearls of the Golden Rule under their feet in the mud. Here is what He said in Matthew 7:6: “Do not give what is holy to the dogs, nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet and turn and tear you to pieces.”

That is good advice. As a boy working on a farm in the summer at Maquoketa, Iowa, I was told to go “slop the hogs” but with the warning “be careful.” A small boy in the area had earlier been bitten and mauled by some huge hogs. When someone actually “tramples” the Golden Rule under his or her feet in the mud, so to speak, you might get badly hurt. In a word, Jesus is saying that there are evil people. Use your head. It may be that the Golden Rule isn’t working at this time on such a person. Get away from such a person.

On the other hand, I can tell you of people who did respond—after a long time. Over time, the Golden Rule can have nearly miraculous results. People are different. We are not judges. Our job is

to plant the seed. God can make it grow. As you plan to treat others according to the Golden Rule, you may think: “All right, people are all different. They have so many different attitudes and problems. How can such a simple rule—treat others the way you would want to be treated—possibly be the answer?”

I understand the concern. The first thing is to recognize that the Golden Rule certainly does not give any specific applications. A principle or great truth is not intended to do that. Also, we must remind ourselves that this is love that seeks the benefit and good of the other person. Ask yourself, “What do I need to know about this person in order to really help? What have I learned that could be of long-term benefit to this person? What do I possess that could really help this person?” No one has unlimited finances or wisdom. We do the best we can. Our love of God and truth always helps us.

But Life Can Get Complicated

This may help. The U.S. military at West Point faced a problem in the 1980s. Although unforeseen events occur in most wars, in the world of the 1980s, it was even more so. The West Point people have a saying: “No plan survives contact with the enemy.” So they devised an interesting concept called “The Commander’s Intent.” Every officer in a battle would have his specific instructions for his limited part. But at the top of his page of plans, The Commander’s Intent was set forth.

So now, even if everything developed differently than expected in a certain action, the officer knew the overall objective. With that in mind, he could take alternative actions to help the effort succeed. When soldiers knew the desired destination, they were free to improvise ways to reach that destination.

Chip and Don Heath, the authors of the book, *Made to Stick*, add: “No sales program survives contact with all customers; no plan survives contact with all teenagers.” A ready-made Biblical solution for every conceivable problem is out of the question. But we don’t need multiple north stars. Only one is needed to guide us—the Golden Rule. Applying it is up to us because now we know it is our Commander’s Intent.

The Golden Rule is not spiritual pablum or just a nice “thought for the day.” Jesus vested us with a Spirit-led conscience. He commands us “use it!” Nor is it just an incidental principle. Rather, it is at the very center of Christianity.

Certainly, your experiences in life might cause you to apply the Golden Rule in a different manner than I would. Jesus knew that. God is the one who made each human unique. Treat others the way *you* want to be treated. The Commander’s Intent—simple, but not easy. *No leader ever commanded more.* We can do it with God’s help—every day—guided by the teachings of Jesus Christ. He gave us many examples and illustrations to show us how to live the Golden Rule.

Let us now turn to Jesus’s other teachings to learn more about how the Golden Rule works. Of course, He used first-century examples, but the principles remain the same. We should have no problem applying them to our lives today. The following discussion is not intended to be a commentary on the verses. I simply want to select a few passages that show how the Golden Rule undergirds the teachings of Jesus.

The Sermon on the Mount

The Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapters 5 through 7 should be regarded as the constitution of God’s Kingdom on earth. It is a masterpiece. The Christians of the first three centuries loved it and lived by it. In fact, one historian, W. S. Kissinger, states: “*Matthew 5, 6, and 7 appear more frequently than any other three chapters in the entire Bible in the ante-Nicene writings!*”

Augustine also viewed the Sermon on the Mount “*as the perfect measure of the Christian life, filled with all the precepts by which a Christian life is formed.*” A full in-depth examination of the Sermon on the Mount can be a life-changing experience.

In the introductory section of the Sermon on the Mount, often called the Beatitudes, Jesus invites people with various needs and perspectives into God’s Rule. Then, surprising to me, the first thing He does is to command their involvement. He lets them know at the very start that they need to listen well because He expects them to take

action on His words. Think of that! One of the main points in the body of the Sermon is given near the very beginning:

You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men (salt makes food pleasing, even delicious).

You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven... For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of Heaven. (Matthew 5:13–16, 20)

Jesus doesn't dilly dally or wait till the end of the speech to ask His hearers to act. He makes it clear that the good things they are about to learn *must* be shared. Their righteousness, their righteous actions, must *exceed* that of their religious leaders!

Let's take a minute to go to the term "righteous" or "righteousness." Righteousness can be interpreted by some as a super holy, ethereal, otherworldly condition. But a little study brings its real meaning down to earth in an everyday way. The Greek word translated as "righteous" is *dikaios*. This word is translated as "righteous" 41 times in the New Testament and as "just" 33 times. So a righteous man is a "just" man who loves God and is guided in his life by truth, reason, fairness, and justice. In other words, he lives the Golden Rule.

The word "righteousness" has to do with being just, morally upright, and obedient to God's laws. Jesus expects His followers to be righteous people practicing justice and fairness to all.

Anger and How to Prevent Trouble in Your Life

Next, Jesus turns his attention to the subject of anger:

You have heard that it was said to those of old. “You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.” But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, “Raca!” shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, “You fool!” shall be in danger of hell fire (Gehenna).¹ (Matthew 4:21, 22)

Can you really see both sides of an issue if you are angry? Angry people don’t think well. Some wise man once said that anger is “brief insanity.”

Jesus gives us an example of His new standard for life. Yes, He says: “Do not murder,” but He goes on to say you should not even want to murder or hurt the other person’s *reputation*. At the first blush of our anger, we should spell out the “D” word: D-A-N-G-E-R! And we should end it with an exclamation point. If anger isn’t stopped *at the very beginning* by you, it will escalate almost without your knowing it. It is serious to hurt another’s reputation once, then again and then again! A lifetime habit! It can ruin your life! Gehenna!

Can you fairly discuss an issue and reach a just decision when you are angry? The thoughts you put into words are as important as your deeds. What you say probably affects more people than any other action you take. Words can do unforgettable damage. You can’t seek the good of the other person while challenging his good name and character in anger.

Look at your life and the lives of those you love. How much unnecessary trouble and heartache has resulted from anger? Cultivate and practice self-control. Be mild-tempered. Be a peacemaker. Live the Golden Rule. Think of what good you can do for others by your good example in controlling anger.

¹ The actual word used by Jesus was Gehenna. Gehenna was the city dump and incinerator in Jerusalem. It was a symbol of a shameful end of life for your dead body to be cast into the public crematorium, without family, friends or hope. Mark 9:43-48; Isaiah 66:24

I know I am about to repeat myself, but, please, I want you never to forget this. In verses 23 and 24, Jesus teaches a lesson so profound that, as for me, I scarce can take it in:

Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. (Matthew 5:23–24)

Please let me ask you one more time. Just how important is it to God that you work at having a good relationship with others? In these verses, Jesus is imagining that you are about to offer God a special gift at His temple—for a special occasion. Then you remember that someone has a troublesome issue with you. What do you do? Remember, this is not some big problem you have with that other person but one that the person has with you. That would make it his or her problem and not yours—right? No! Stop, *before* you go to God. First seek to be reconciled with that person. First! What a story! What a message for you and me! You take the initiative. To your brother you say, “I am concerned: have I offended you in some way? Let’s talk about it.”

You are the Christian living by the Golden Rule. Think of the problems in your life that would have been solved if you had followed the Golden Rule and this example by Jesus! Consider verses 25 and 26:

Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him. Lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny. (Matthew 5:25, 26)

Again, Jesus in essence says, “Look at the other person’s point of view. **Really listen!** Negotiate fairly and justly while the problem is still in your hands. When it can be settled between just the two of you, take the initiative! Do it now. Before it gets out of your hands and into the judge’s hands.” What a lesson for us! Prevent problems.

How many ugly divorces with endless bitterness could have been avoided? How many lawsuits could have been averted? How many friendships could have been saved by controlling anger, taking the initiative, even if it seemed the other person was to blame? Negotiate with the person in the spirit of the Golden Rule. Then experience that wonderful feeling of peace when would-be enemies are reconciled and love is restored. The Golden Rule. What a satisfying, meaningful way to live!

Lust, Divorce, and How to Prevent Heartache

Jesus goes on to discuss lust and divorce:

You have heard that it was said to those of old, “You shall not commit adultery.” But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell* (Gehenna). And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell* (Gehenna).

Furthermore it has been said, “Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce. But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.” (Matthew 5:27–32)

Divorce is so often a breakdown of the Golden Rule. As with anger, little things are important—for example, the roving eye. Sexual lust starts small, but if not stopped, it will grow in stages till sin, hurt, and pain result, especially to traumatized children. Where is the Golden Rule in divorce? Where is the respect and honor for one another and for promises made? Where is forgiveness? On both sides?

Jesus often used hyperboles to emphasize important matters: Rip out that offending eye and avoid Gehenna! He is saying to get rid of

that lust *while it is still small, or it will grow!* The best way to dispel evil thoughts is by doing good—yes, by actively working at helping others. That action has amazing power. Good actions do not feed wrong desires. The test is always the same with marriage problems: How would I want to be treated if I were the other person? And we need to look inside ourselves for that small beginning of sin—and root it out of our lives.

Earning Respect, Admiration, “A Good Life”

If signing a legal paper makes you feel more responsible than when you give your oral word, then you need the Golden Rule. That’s one of the things Jesus’s next words say to me:

Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, “You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.” But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your “yes” be “yes,” and your “no,” “no.” For whatever is more than these is from the evil one. (Matthew 5:33–37)

Do you want others to deal with you punctually and honorably so that their “yes” means yes and their “no” means no? This is so important in marriage, in business, and, actually, in all human affairs. The kind of human being you are is at issue. Your word, your promise, is a part of you—a direct reflection of you, your punctuality, your honesty, and your sense of justice. Your word can earn you respect, honor, and admiration if you are a person of the Golden Rule. Deal with others the way you want them to deal with you. Let your “yes” mean yes and your “no” mean no. It means living the Golden Rule.

Jesus next teaches us how to deal with insults, aggressive behavior, and violence:

You have heard that it was said, “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your

tunic, let him have your cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away. (Matthew 5:38–42)

The secret is to not think too much of ourselves. Please read the entire Sermon on the Mount. The underlying message is clear: Honor—really honor one another. Don't be so sure that you are always right. *Really look at the other person's point of view.* God didn't vest you and me with perfection and total wisdom. But He has charged us with being peacemakers. Be the bigger person.

If you were foolish enough to fall into the trap of pride and become angry, wouldn't you appreciate the person who could bring the situation under control so that reason and the Golden Rule would work to benefit both of you? Be a peacemaker!

I can't leave the Sermon without pointing you to one of the great principles of Christianity—forgiveness. Just listen again to what Jesus says after He tells us to pray to the Father to “forgive us our debts *as* we forgive our debtors”:

For if you forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. (Matthew 6:14, 15)

This is not optional. Forgiveness is absolutely crucial to the Golden Rule working in your life. And what a power for peace of mind! I bring it to your attention a second time because it may, just may—be the thing that brings your life serenity and happiness.

I think we have examined enough of Jesus's teachings to see that the Golden Rule is not some nice idle saying, but rather the law of the Kingdom of God. It is truly what no other leader ever commanded of His followers. It prepares us to do God's will here on earth so that when Jesus's prayer is completely answered and “God's will is done on earth as it is done in heaven,” then we will fit into God's eternal and unchangeable purpose for creating this earth and mankind on it (Isaiah 45:18).

In a word, *love*—the Golden Rule—The Great Commandment—*prepares us* for eternal life in the earth-wide Kingdom of God. With what result to you personally? There are two beautiful destinations that you can anticipate for your future. One is outlined at the end of the Sermon on the Mount:

Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. (Matthew 7:24, 25)

Wouldn't it be great if that described your life? You have built a fine life on a bedrock foundation. Your life will have its storms, but you will calmly handle these now with grace and faith. You are now wise. You know how to live a good life of active love for others and of being loved in return. A life of sweet peace. A life of enduring friendships and a clear, clean conscience!

You will find the Golden Rule is the way of success in business as well as in life. Every day you experience a life of joy, satisfaction, and friends—an abundant life. And then when the big “end-time storm” is over, Jesus promises that you will be spared alive to enjoy life in His Kingdom.

Although much more could be said about salvation for Christians, I now call your attention to what Jesus briefly tells us about the end times in Matthew 13. He says the sons of the Kingdom will live alongside the sons of the wicked one until the harvest time. Then He tells us what will happen when He returns:

Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send out His angels and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear! (Matthew 13:40–43)

What a prospect! Those of us who are alive as Sons of the Kingdom will be spared alive through Christ's return. The wicked will be gone from the earth. Then only the righteous—those living by the Golden Rule—will be left as *meek* survivors to “*inherit the earth*,” just as Jesus promised in the Sermon on the Mount! (Matthew 5:5). The Lord's Prayer will have come true and we will be there!

One of the most respected leaders in the Christian world, Billy Graham, describes that time in his book, *Storm Warning*:

From time immemorial, mankind has longed for a combination of true law and order, of peace and prosperity, of freedom and fulfillment, of health and happiness, of godliness and longevity, *on this Earth*. It will happen when Christ comes again to establish His Kingdom. (p. 276)

These words touched my heart. Please read them slowly again and feel God's love for us.

Mr. Graham has other interesting comments on that time when the Kingdom comes and “God's will is done on earth as it is done in heaven.”

I feel in a small way the feelings Jesus must have had on His last day with His beloved friends. John chapters 13 to 17 describe the time they had together. This was His last opportunity to make sure they had caught that one great central truth: *what it means to live the true Christian life!* He had told them that God's greatest command to them, out of all God's communications, was to “love God and to love others as they loved themselves.”

He had devised a supreme accolade so that this truth stood out above all others. He had said, “On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.” And then to help them understand how love works, He had coined a saying that expressed the same thing in different but clearly understood words: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” Then He welded the two commandments together by again using the supreme accolade, “This is the Law and the Prophets.” There could be no misunderstanding about their paramount importance. No other teaching ever received this supreme honor!

Yet in these final hours with His friends, He wanted to make so sure they understood. He told them:

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; *as I have loved you*, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another. (John 13:34, 35)

There is one way to identify true Christians—not by their doctrinal opinions, nor by where they worship. In one and only one way can they be identified—by their love for God and others. Again, Jesus said, “As I have loved you.”

And just minutes before saying that, He had given them one last great example of His love! Jesus knew that He soon would give His life for others, but the example He had just given them minutes before was one that they could do for one another!

What was that one example that would capture the true spirit of that love? An act that could be remembered through all future generations? He washed their dirty feet! A humble, menial job. Their feet could have been really grimy. Bare feet in sandals pick up lots of dirt on dusty dirt roads littered by the droppings of work animals. His actions are graphically described in John:

[He] rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. . .

So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.” (John 13:4, 5, 12–17)

What a lesson for us on pride, meekness, and gentleness. Test yourself. Do you see yourself following Jesus's example? And doing it happily? In love? If so, you are not far from the Kingdom of God. What a powerful example! I don't know how many of His followers actually did this for others, but what a mind-stretching, love-stretching example that was!

What if you had been one of those who actually felt the Son of God run His fingers between your toes to clean them and then carefully wipe your feet with His towel! Would you ever forget the lesson it taught you?

Would you now feel too proud to go to another person and say, "I'm sorry if you and I have a problem, could we discuss it by the light of the Golden Rule?"

Would you be able to *take the initiative* and seek—yes, really seek—peace, with that foot-washing example in your mind?

For me, the one person who comes closest to having that loving spirit is my dear wife, Janet. It has been the joy of my life and my great reward to live with her and learn from her lifelong example of Christ's love. I hope you have someone in your life who provides such an example and encouragement.

More than that, pray that you can be such an example for others.

So now, dear friend, if you have caught a bit of that fire, that love, that meekness, draw it to your heart. Hold it. Cherish it. Grow it. Live it. For in that love, you have found the one called Jesus, the Authentic Son of God!

You have found Him who is the Author of the Golden Rule, that under-appreciated key to our lives and to our destiny. The best way for

you and I to live happily and successfully.

Praise God.

Now in these next few pages, we turn to a most exciting part of the Golden Rule story; the astonishing power of the Golden Rule on a global scale!

It is a thrilling story that gives hope for the survival and success of humanity!

And you and I are a part of this never-to-be repeated story!

Yes, for anyone of us who searches for great meaning to life, whose heart longs for a cause greater than self, whose soul aches for justice and righteousness and for an opportunity to help change this world for good, here it is!

As this account unfolds, your heart may fill with joy. This is what you were born to do!

Are my words extravagantly overstating the truth? When you finish this message, come back and ask that question. And you will surely agree that you were not told the half of it!

In the past, there were great thinkers who intuitively felt the great possibilities of Jesus's teaching and foretold its future influence. For example, U.S. founding father, Benjamin Franklin:

As to Jesus of Nazareth, my opinion of whom you particularly desire, I think the system of morals and religion, *as He left them to us, the best the world ever saw*, or is likely to see. He who shall introduce into public affairs the principles of primitive Christianity will *revolutionize the world!*

And U.S. President Thomas Jefferson:

Of all the systems of morality, ancient or modern, which have come under my observation, *none* appears to me *so pure as that of Jesus*. Had the doctrines of Jesus been preached always *as pure as they come from His lips, the whole civilized world would now have been Christian!*

Let us face the question, “If the Great Commandment and the Golden Rule are from the lips of Jesus and are the essence and meaning of Christianity, how could they be able to accomplish what Ben Franklin and Thomas Jefferson predicted and to revolutionize the world?”

Someone might add, “Peter, I think anyone would agree that Christianity has affected art, architecture, literature, and music, but you are suggesting that everyday life, how we deal with one another, the ‘real world’ of everyday living is changing because of Jesus Christ?” How?

How? How could Jesus’s words—from his lips—accomplish that?

The answer starts with Jesus asking the question recorded in Luke 13: “What is the Kingdom of God like?” If Jesus had asked you that question, what would you answer? What is the Kingdom of God like? Would your answer be, “like a bit of yeast in a glob of bread dough”?

Again, Jesus asked: “What illustration can I use to make it plain to you?” He explained, It’s like a bit of yeast that a woman put into a glob of bread dough. Till it was all leavened (Matthew 13:33; Luke 13:20, 21).

Note: The other illustration Jesus used in Matthew 13 and Luke 13 is as follows:

The Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed—which indeed is the least of all seeds, but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches.

Jesus’s reference to a tree with birds in its branches reminds us of Ezekiel 31:2–6 and Daniel 4:14–22. Such a tree symbolized a great earthly government and reminds us of the thrilling promises of Isaiah 2:2–4 and Micah 4:1–4.

I guess we could sit and look at a glob of bread dough being leavened and ask, what is going to happen? Nothing apparently. You can sit and look at bread dough being leavened and it doesn’t look like anything is happening, but inside, the yeast is working. It actually is changing the bread! The yeast or leaven produces no big historical headlines, but marvelous change is occurring! That bread dough, *without* the yeast, is going to end up being a flat, tough bread, but because of the yeast, the *very character* of the bread dough is changing! It’s going to be soft and fluffy. The character of the glob will change. The yeast of our Christlike lives will change the world! “Till it all was leavened!” What a perfect illustration!

You may ask yourself, “But in the real world, how does that work? How does God’s Golden Rule Kingdom work in the real world?” A great historian has the answer. His name is Paul Johnson. He has written 50 books. One of his books, *History of Christianity*, is recognized by many as the finest one volume ever written about Christianity. Johnson says something that is absolutely stunning:

- ∞ **Christianity’s outstanding moral merit is to invest the individual with a conscience and bid him follow it.**

- ∞ **Political and economic freedom—both spring from the workings of the Christian conscience as a historical force.**
- ∞ **It's no accident that all of the implantations of freedom throughout the world have ultimately a Christian origin.**
(p. 516)

I read that, and I read it again. Then I read it some more.
Stunning!
Breathtaking!

My question is, *when* and *how* did Christ invest every Christian, every one of us, with a conscience and command us to follow it? And with the glob—the globe—being affected as a result? Again, what one idea would trigger the human conscience for good?

Answer: It happened that day when Jesus illuminated the Great Commandment by saying for the first time, “*You must do unto others as you would have them do unto you.*” No more a list of “do this” and “do not do this” to be obeyed automatically. Rather, “You figure it out. Do to others, according to *your conscience*, according to the way *you would want to be treated.*”

No rule for every issue of life, but depend on your Christian conscience and the Golden Rule. And as Jesus said, the Christian conscience guided by the Great Commandment, love, the Golden Rule, would *affect people around the world!* Even as that bit of yeast would leaven the whole glob of bread dough!

That day was the day the world started to change. Wouldn't you love to have been there? Maybe feeling a breeze off the Sea of Galilee on your back, with you standing in the crowd facing the son of God. And as your eyes meet, He tells you emphatically, “*You must now do to others as you want them to do to you.*” Unforgettable words. Life-changing words. Yeast words.

True, many in history would fight those words and try to forget them and ignore their conscience. But Oliver Wendell Holmes knew this unchangeable psychological truth:

Man's mind, once stretched by a new idea, never regains its original dimensions.

Victor Hugo also knew that an idea might take time to work its power through the ossified thinking of completely self-centered people, but as he announced:

There is one thing stronger than the world and that is an idea whose time has come.

An idea! Stronger than the world!

I believe the 11 words of the Golden Rule encapsulate the love and wisdom of the Creator for the human race, and He correspondingly had created specific receptors for it in the human heart.

So when any sincere human hears and thinks of it, he or she will never be the same. In our hearts we know—*we just know!*— that this is the right and good way for us to live successful human lives. Many resist it, but it is *always there*, an idea that unconsciously inspires our acts of goodness, fairness, and peace between us and among us. I know of no other thought of such power, so straight from the heart of God—to us! To you and to me. The bit of yeast that affects the glob of dough.

Someday historians will go back through history and attempt to track the Golden Rule and all its effect on history. Impossible. It will be impossible to show how those best-known words of Jesus changed the way people thought and acted. Some were even unaware of that influence. But that idea was forever in their subconscious minds.

Some snippets of recorded history remind us of that power. Historian A. Rendle Short reminds us that the first asylum for the blind was founded by Thalasius, a Christian monk. The first free dispensary was founded by Apollonius, a Christian merchant. The first hospital

was founded by Fabiola, a Christian lady. Christianity radically transformed life for the aged. The story of the Golden Rule never ends, although most times it is never given credit.

Chris Hodges, head of the Church of the Highlands, announced that his research showed more people becoming Christians in the last 20 years than in the previous 200 years! The yeast is working in the globe!

The great historian, Paul Johnson, thought in terms of human freedoms, so when I think about freedom, I first think of slavery. Some people think slavery is 200 years old, involving white and black people. Truth is, slavery was a part of the most ancient civilizations. There wouldn't have been any great civilizations without slavery. When they had wars, they didn't kill the losers, they made slaves of them, and those slaves built their great empires. So it went on for thousands and thousands of years. Slavery was absolutely woven into the essential fabric of human life. It was thought to be an unchangeable fact and that nothing was more essential to civilization (and no practice more horrible).

I started doing some research on it in encyclopedias and historical philosophers' writings. I went back looking for the word "conscience." Almost nothing was to be found. The word was not there. Nobody talked about it, and for sure, nobody talked about freedom for slaves. It would then have been like saying today, "We have got to stop eating eggs." Today, we would say, "What? People have been eating eggs since the beginning of the world." That is the way people responded when they first heard of freedom for slaves and the Golden Rule. Accepting slavery was just the way people lived. No one thought anyone could ever change slavery, and the truth is, it didn't get changed for many, many years.

This may be a good place to draw an important distinction between the "lips-of-Jesus" Christianity and what I call "historical Christendom," with a record that deviates from the pure and sweet teachings from the lips of Jesus Christ. The great William James put this in a nutshell when he said:

I myself believe that the evidence for God lies *primarily in inner personal experiences*.

Enough said. Now back to the hidden, tiny, personal yeast of the Golden Rule and its surprising power to make change for good.

Slavery was seemingly untouchable, impossible to change. Then came these words, “Not Greek or Jew, not male or female, *not slave or free man*, all are one in Christ.”

Historians tell us that during the first century when Christians were meeting only in their houses, they invited slaves into their homes! Incredible! Christians were thinking, “If I were a slave, would I want to hear about Jesus Christ, would I want that inspiration, would I want that comfort?” So they invited slaves to come into their homes for Bible studies and meals, and that was the beginning.

Now, God knows, it took a long, long time—almost 2,000 years—for that yeast to work its way into the glob. But finally, there was a time when William Wilberforce, Tom Clarkson, and William Pitt determined, as Christians, to eradicate slavery in the great British Empire. Wilberforce was sick and dying the day the others came and excitedly announced, “We did it! Today our parliament has acted! Today slavery is eradicated forever from the great British Empire.” End of slavery! An awesome change for humanity! It was 30 to 40 years later when we got rid of it in the United States. Slavery was ended here too led by committed Christians who lived the Golden Rule and asked in their conscience, “Would I want to be a slave?”

Without contradiction or doubt, slavery was eradicated finally because of Christians and their Golden Rule. Christians said, “I can’t get it out of my mind. It’s so good, so pure, just so right that people should treat other people the way they themselves want to be treated.” And finally, slavery was on its way out of the human race. And with it went a terrible world of cruelty, pain, shame, and heartache.

In my mind, knowing the enormous, selfish benefits of slavery, this was truly an astonishing achievement! The power of the yeast!

And the Golden Rule wasn't just about slavery. It was about babies too.

In the Roman world, when a woman had a baby, she took it to the husband and he might say, "yes, keep it," or "no, get rid of it." If he said no, she had no choice. She would leave with the baby. There were a couple of big curbinges in Rome. She would take the baby there and leave it to die unless someone came along and looked at it and said, "Now there is a strong little boy, I will raise him as a gladiator" and they took the baby. Or someone might say, "There is a cute little girl. I will raise her as a whore." According to William Barclay, some others would take a girl and jerk her limbs apart so she was horribly disfigured, making a heart-breaking beggar out of her. A beggar chief could drag her around and use her to raise money. Magicians would take the marrow out of the baby's bones or brain for some of the things they wanted to do. Professor Barclay said that "nobody owes more to Christianity than babies do." The yeast—the power — of the Golden Rule is changing the world of babies even today.

For women, it was the same thing. For example, even a Jew, the first thing in the morning, would pray, "Great Jehovah, thank you so much that I am not a Gentile. Thank you so much that I am not a slave. Thank you Lord ever so much that I am not a woman!" Women were treated as a whole lot less important than men. She was degraded and considered second rate in every way.

Some Christians asked, "How would I want to be treated if I were a woman?" And from then till even today, the Golden Rule has been changing the world of girls and women. Thank God.

The Golden Rule has been changing the world of workers. Again, the question was simply this: “How would I want to be treated if I were a worker?” That question was now in the conscience of powerful people, whereas once that thought had never occurred to them. Thank God for the change.

Everywhere, people of conscience, touched by the Golden Rule, are changing our globe, the glob. That yeast has transforming power!

I think many times of the way people were treated in the past if they were mentally disabled, insane, or in prison. The treatment was horrible beyond words. Sometimes, people even went to prisons to be entertained by watching the prison-keeper torture or make fun of people who weren't wired right in their heads. Some way to spend an afternoon.

But finally, Christians said, “If I had some wiring wrong in *my* head, *how would I want to be treated?*” A new thought, completely foreign to ancients. The Golden Rule, the Great Commandment, says love others, treat others as you would yourself would want to be treated. That yeast is changing our world. The glob—globe of bread dough—is being leavened, person by person, by that incredible, tiny bit of yeast—11 words! Recently, I came across a book, *The World is Learning Compassion*, by Frank Lauderback. I want to read you just a bit of what he says,

It's a new thing. A wonderful thing. A world transforming thing. It's that the compassionate Jesus has broken all bounds. He is now revolutionizing all attitudes of the whole world. The fact that two-thirds of the human race live in miserable poverty isn't new. It's as old as the human race. The new thing is that both the people who have and the people who have not are really trying to do something to wipe out that poverty and misery. This is new. It's the most amazing fact of our era. It's reaching out to change the whole planet.

This book tells how. End.

Somehow, I feel that I have yet to make plain this awesome change in mankind. So I now reach back to almost forgotten voices that made a great impression on me some years ago.

Consider the words of Phillip Schaff in his eight-volume *History of the Christian Church*, a work recognized as one of the very finest histories. Schaff says,

The transforming spiritual power of Christianity appears first in the lives of individuals. The apostles and primitive Christians rose to a morality and piety far above that of the heroes of heathen virtue and even that of the Jewish saints. Their daily walk was a living union with Christ, ever seeking the glory of God and the salvation of men. *Many of the cardinal virtues, humility, for example, and love for enemies, were unknown before the Christian day.* [This is also true of the human conscience.]

Christianity raises woman from the slavish position, which she held both in Judaism and in heathendom, to her true moral dignity and importance... Thus raising the female sex to its true freedom and dignity, Christianity transforms and sanctifies the entire family life. It abolishes polygamy, and makes monogamy the proper form of marriage; it condemns concubinage with all forms of unchastity and impurity. It presents the mutual duties of husband and wife, and of parents and children, in their true light, and exhibits marriage as a copy of the mystical union of Christ with His bride, the church.

To Christianity we owe the gradual extinction of slavery. This evil has rested as a curse on all nations, and at the time of Christ the greater part of the existing race was bound in beastly degradation—even in civilized Greece and Rome, the slaves *being more numerous than the free-born* and the freed-men. The greatest philosophers of antiquity vindicated slavery as a natural and necessary institution; and Aristotle declared all barbarians to be slaves by birth, fit for nothing but obedience. According to the Roman law, “slaves had no head in the State, no name, no title, no register”; they had no rights of matrimony, and no protection

against adultery; they could be bought and sold, or given away, as personal property; they might be tortured for evidence, or even put to death, at the discretion of their master. In the language of a distinguished writer on civil law, the slaves in the Roman empire “were in a much worse state than any cattle whatsoever.”

Schaff continues,

Christianity enters with its *leaven-like virtue*, the whole civil and social life of a people, and leads it on the path of progress in all genuine civilization.

Listen now to what the world historian J. M. Roberts says in his *History of the World*. He discusses the influence of Christian rulers, then says on page 251,

All these monarchs would behave differently because they saw themselves as Christian, yet, important though it was, this is *only a tiny part* of the difference *Christianity has made to history*. Until the coming of industrial society, in fact, it is the *only historical phenomenon* we have to consider whose implications, creative power and impact are comparable with the great determinants of prehistory in shaping the world we live in... Often disguised or muted, its influence runs through all the great creative processes of the last fifteen hundred years.

I especially like what President Reagan once wrote in *Stories in His Own Hand, the Everyday Wisdom of Ronald Reagan*, pp. 17–18:

Meaning no disrespect to the religious convictions of others, I still can't help wondering how we can explain away what to me is *the greatest miracle of all and which is recorded in history*. No one denies there was such a man, that he lived and that he was put to death by crucifixion.

Where then you may ask is the miracle I spoke of? Well consider this and let your imagination, if you will, translate the story into our own time— possibly to your own home town. A young man

whose father is a carpenter grows up working in his father's shop. He has no formal education. He owns no property of any kind. One day he puts down his tools and walks out of his father's shop. He starts preaching on street corners and in the nearby countryside. Walking from place to place preaching all the while even though he is in no way an ordained minister, he never gets farther than an area perhaps 100 miles wide at the most.

He does this for three years. Then he is arrested, tried and convicted. There is no court of appeal so he is executed at age 33 along with two common thieves. Those in charge of his execution roll dice to see who gets his clothing—the only possession he has. His family cannot afford a burial place so he is interred in a borrowed tomb.

End of story? No this uneducated, propertyless young man who preached on street corners for only three years, who left no written word has for 2000 years had a *greater effect on the entire world* than all the rulers, kings and emperors, all the conquerors, the generals and admirals, all the scholars, scientist and philosophers who ever lived—*all put together*.

How do we explain that miracle?—Unless he really was what he said he was. End.

Please think again—deeply—of the truly awesome power of Jesus's words, especially the most universally famous thing Jesus ever said—those 11 words that are changing the bread glob, our globe.

It's the way that the Golden Rule yeast works. It's the way that the Great Commandment of love works, guiding us to love others the way that we want to be loved and treated. Again, this is *not* a side issue. It's *the central issue in Christianity*, along with loving God more every day. All according to Jesus Christ himself! I know that we are limited in our resources and our energy, so individually, we can't do everything. *But we can do something!* Every day. With God's help.

Just take a minute and remember what you know about ancient history and appreciate what that one slogan—one idea—one thought—

The Golden Rule—has done for mankind. It is an 11-word condensation of the genuine love of Jesus Christ. From His own lips. And never forget the following words of Jesus:

I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me gave me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, *whatever I speak, just as the Father said to me, so I speak.* (John 12:49, 50)

So the real author of the Golden Rule is God himself!

Now, what does all this mean to you and me and the way we spend the remaining days of our lives?

Matthew 25 truly is a special chapter in the Bible for me. It contains two relevant stories. I will restrict myself to just a few points, which I hope you will never forget.

In the parable starting with verse 14, Jesus describes a master is going away and saying, “I am going to give one servant five talents, another servant two talents, and a final servant one talent.”

It really didn’t matter how many talents each servant got. The important thing was and is “*do something!*” Like General Booth told his son in starting the Salvation Army, “*do something!*”

Please read that brief chapter 25 of Matthew. Unforgettable. What is Jesus saying to me in that one parable? “Peter, don’t make excuses.” “Do not try to figure out how *not* to do something.” “Figure out how you *can* do some good with what whatever little you may have.” That’s what Jesus tells me in that parable in Matthew 25:14–30.

In that account by Jesus, the consequences to us, either for *doing* or *not doing* good is unforgettable. Read it and never forget what the Master said to the excuse-maker. I won’t ever forget it.

Now, the last parable in Matthew 25 tells us something Jesus often talked about, more than people seem to realize. Time after time he said “*the judgment, the Judgment Day, the Judgment Day.*” He is saying that the time will come when there will be a judgment day for us all. Plan on it. Jesus tells us:

For the son of man will come, in the glory of his Father, with his angels, and then he will reward *each one according to his works.*
(Matthew 16:27)

And the same message is in II Corinthians 5:10:

For *we* must *all* appear before the judgment seat of Christ. That *each one* may receive the things done in the body, whether good or bad.

See also Romans 2:5–11, 15, 16; 14:10–13; I Peter 1:17; II Timothy 4:1; and Revelation 20:12, 13; and 22:12.

It is very important for us to read about that Judgment Day that Jesus talks about in Matthew 25 because most people mistakenly think it is only about wicked people and their end of destruction. But listen, as Jesus describes the real Judgment Day, the destruction-bound goats, he says to the goats, “I was sick. I was in prison. I needed help, and you *didn't do anything.*”

Here is the point. Jesus wants us to understand that on Judgment Day, he not only will be judging people who do really bad things, but He will be judging *sins of omission!* He will be *judging sins of omission!* The “goats” didn't do anything bad. They just *didn't do anything!* *They didn't do anything good, and the terrible road for them will be destruction.* I will never forget the first time I read this and realized what Jesus was really teaching us.

Then Jesus gives another surprising lesson. When he judges the good sheep, he uses the same scenario, he says, “I was sick. I was in prison. I was hungry, and you *did something good* for me, *you did something good.*”

They say, “No, no, wait a minute Jesus. Honestly, we didn’t see any sign of you.”

“I know that,” Jesus says. “You did it, *for the little ones!* The least of these. The helpless. The sick. The poor. The broken-hearted. They just touched your heart and you responded!”

That, to me, is the second great lesson from the Judgment Day account. The sheep are doing good to needy people, from those just needing encouragement to those needing a kidney, to the *least of these*, people who really need help. The helpless and the hopeless.

Jesus was talking to “sheep” who weren’t aware of Jesus watching. So they were not doing good because they saw Jesus in the situation. They were doing good for others simply because the Golden Rule was in their hearts, and they were doing good *instinctively, responsively*, not in a calculating way, but just because of the real needs of people. Their hearts said, “If I were in those shoes, I would want help, I will help!” *Exactly as the despised Samaritan did!* (Luke 10:25–37).

That is the big lesson here for me. The sheep were blessed because of their kindness and generosity to the least of these, those considered “unimportant.” The sheep were blessed because they helped those who could never repay them. The “little people” in life. The “least of these.”

One time, my friend, Joey Wright, and I discussed the Golden Rule. He told me what had helped him was to think—every morning while still in bed—“today I want to do one thing that is kind, or forgiving, or generous. *One thing today!*” He said that helped change his life habits. Could it do that for us?

It is not complicated. Two-letter words from the lips of Jesus. “Go! Do!”

I have tried, in my own way, to recommend living the Golden Rule. Let me sum this all up.

Imagine you asking me, “Please sum all this up in a nutshell. What are the benefits *to me* of living the Golden Rule?”

Answer: “You know how to deal with and prevent problems, troubles, and heartache in your life!

“You know how to earn the respect, the friendship and the love of those in your life!

“You know our Creator’s ‘way’ to a well-lived life with genuine happiness and God’s blessing!”

“It is Gods will—done on earth!”

rOMANS now that you are sitting with me in my corner study room. Our eyes lock I say to you, from my heart to yours. **“Do you know a better way to live?”**

I know, I know, it will not eradicate evil people or somehow solve all problems. Only Christ’s return at the end of the age will do that!

But, in the meantime, to the extent that it does work, do you know a better way for 7 billion unique individuals to live at peace with one another? Or even, in *your family*?

Yes, I know there will be differences between individual consciences. There will be some disappointments and possible material losses, but nothing compared with the benefits!

Please—really—try it on for size, for you: imagine the good that will come from it in each of the following ways:

- ∞ In *your* family and in *your* marriage.
- ∞ In *your* community.
- ∞ In *your* country.
- ∞ In *our* world.
- ∞ In *your* future, with God's blessing, actually to live when Christ is King on earth, as Billy Graham described!

Open your heart and your mind to the beauty and the unique greatness of this wonderful truth and let it fill your soul and your dreams of the future. Nothing else comes close. It *is* the best way to live! And every word of this message comes directly from the lips of Jesus Christ himself, as directed by the Creator of the universe! (John 12:49, 50). Listen now to Billy Graham:

The signs of insecurity and the shouts of revolution heard around the world are perhaps the death rattle of an era in civilization—perhaps they signal the end of civilization as we have known it. Many believe that God is silent, even perhaps that He is unmoved by the degrading acts of men, but Scripture promises that when the fullness of time comes, He will act dramatically. He will send His Son, Jesus Christ, back to earth “to rescue us from the present evil age” (Galatians 1:4). He is the Lord of history; He is the Lord of the future; and most important for those living now... *He is Lord today*. Where do you stand now with the One you will someday bow to as Judge or Savior?

The storms of change in the world are no surprise to God; nothing we see in the headlines takes Him by surprise. Events are moving rapidly toward a climax, but it will be according to God's timing. The most victorious headline one day will read:
“MY SON HAS RETURNED AS THE RIGHTFUL RULER OF THE WORLD!!”

Before that time comes, however, God wants to first rule in our hearts. “STORM WARNING.” (p. 45) Billy Graham

We know the supreme importance of the Great Commandment and the Golden Rule. Let them rule our lives today.

Today—I hope you make the joyful decision to live the Golden Rule!

For me, Golden Rule living brings meaning, purpose, and value to my life.

I am at peace *with living it* because every word of it comes from the lips of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, as he was directed by God himself! It is supreme truth.

The Golden Rule. Truly, the best way for we humans to live together!

The End

P.S. Now, apart from what I have said, please allow an old man’s dream. In one example, Jesus told me of the growing influence of the yeast or leaven in a glob of bread dough. “Till it was all leavened.” In the other example, he told of a seed which grew to the great tree as a great earthly Kingdom in which tree birds (other national groups) find shelter and rest. Both foretell (to me) the possibility of a time when not only people from “Christian” backgrounds, but also people from the non-Christians nations would come to realize that the Great Commandment—The Golden Rule—is the supreme issue before mankind. I dream that a great ecumenical unity will happen! I can only imagine!

You decide. Read these yet-to-be-fulfilled promises by God himself.

Now it shall come to pass in the latter days, *That* the mountain of the LORD’s house shall be established on the top of the

mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; And *all nations* shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, “Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will *teach us His ways*, And we *shall walk in His paths*.” For out of Zion shall go forth the law, And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, And rebuke many people; They shall beat their swords into plowshares, And their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation; *neither shall they learn war anymore*. (Isaiah 2:2–4)

Now it shall come to pass in the latter days, *That* the mountain of the LORD’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, And shall be exalted above the hills; And *peoples shall flow to it*. Many *nations* shall come and say, “Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; *He will teach us His ways*, And we shall *walk in His paths*.” For out of Zion the law shall go forth, And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between many peoples, And rebuke strong nations afar off; They shall beat their swords into plowshares, And their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation; *neither shall they learn war anymore*. But everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, And no one shall make *them* afraid; *For the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken*. (Micah 4:1–4)

I see—someday—on the façade of every government building and on the lintel of every office: “**do unto others as you would have them do unto you.**” **Jesus Christ.**

God’s will—done on earth.

The best way to live.