



# Mid-Week

**Bible Study and Prayer  
Wednesdays 6:45pm – 8pm**



led by: Pastor Josh Franklin, Good Hope Baptist Church ([www.goodhopechurch.org](http://www.goodhopechurch.org) and [www.joshfranklin.org](http://www.joshfranklin.org))

## The Golden Rule that Guides (How To Treat Everyone)

**Matthew 7:12 (NKJV) - Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.**

**(CEV) - Treat others as you want them to treat you. This is what the Law and the Prophets are all about.**

**(TLB) - ...This is the teaching of the laws of Moses in a nutshell.**

**(MSG) - Here is a simple, rule-of-thumb guide for behavior: Ask yourself what you want people to do for you, then grab the initiative and do it for them. Add up God's Law and Prophets and this is what you get.**

There is no problem in finding parallels to this statement from a negative approach. In the fourth century b.c. an Athenian wrote, "Whatever angers you when you suffer at the hands of others, do not do to others."<sup>27</sup> And Rabbi Hillel said, "Whatever is displeasing to you do not do to your neighbor." Or, in the book of Tobit, we read, "What thou thyself hatest, to no man do" (Tob. 4:16). This negative aspect can be found in other religions as Buddhism and Confucianism. Confucius said, "What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others." But Jesus placed this ethical principle in the positive form. He made it a model for action, a marching order for the disciple: "Whatever you want men to do to you, you also do to them." This, He said, "is the Law and the Prophets," which is to say, that this is the fulfillment of the will of God as revealed in the Old Testament Scriptures.<sup>a</sup>

When the other fellow takes a long time, he's slow.  
 When I take a long time, I'm thorough  
 When the other fellow doesn't do it, he's lazy.  
 When I don't do it, I'm busy.  
 When the other fellow does something without being told,  
 he's overstepping his bounds.  
 When I do it, that's initiative.  
 When the other fellow overlooks a rule of etiquette, he's rude.  
 But when I skip a few rules, I'm original.  
 When the other fellow pleases the boss, he's kissing up.  
 But when I please the boss, I'm doing my best.  
 When the other fellow succeeds, it's b/c he's lucky.  
 But when I succeed, that's just the reward for hard work.

<sup>27</sup> Eduard Schweizer, *The Good News According to Matthew*, p. 175.

<sup>a</sup> Myron S. Augsburger and Lloyd J. Ogilvie, vol. 24, *The Preacher's Commentary Series, Volume 24 : Matthew* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Inc, 1982), 18.

**SOMETIMES WE PRAY SOMETHING LIKE THIS IRISH PRAYER:**

*May those that love us, love us.  
And those that don't love us,  
May God turn their hearts.  
And if He doesn't turn their hearts,  
May He turn their ankles  
So we will know them by their limping.  
~Irish Blessing*

Questions: If you took a public opinion poll on the meaning of the Golden Rule, what would you expect to hear?  
How would the world be different if we all lived by the Golden Rule?  
Why is treating others as you wish to be treated called the Golden Rule?

This is the so-called "Golden Rule," one of the most misunderstood statements in the Bible. This statement is not the sum total of Christian truth, nor is it God's plan of redemption. This great truth is a principle that ought to govern our attitudes toward others. It only applies to believers, and it must be practiced in every area of life. The person who practices the Golden Rule refuses to say or do anything that would harm himself or others. If our judging of others is not governed by this principle, we will become proud and critical, and our own spiritual character will degenerate. Practicing the Golden Rule releases the love of God in our lives and enables us to help others, even those who want to hurt us. - Warren W. Wiersbe

**The perfect love of the heavenly Father is most reflected in His children when they treat others as they themselves wish to be treated.**

**There is no capacity within an unbeliever to love in the way that Jesus commands here. Unbelievers can do many ethical things, and every once in a while they might even approach the level of this highest of ethical standards. But they cannot sustain such selflessness, because they do not have the divine resource necessary for regular, habitual living on that plane.**

However you want people to treat you sums up the sermon to this point, and so treat them is a summary of the Law and the Prophets. It is also a paraphrase of the second great commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 22:39; cf. Lev. 19:18). The golden rule instructs us as to how we are to love other people, "especially," as Paul points out, "those of the household of the faith" (Gal. 6:10). And "he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law" (Rom. 13:8; cf. v. 10; Gal. 5:14).

"Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you" could be construed as a sort of "ten commandments" of Jesus:

1. You will not commit "verbal murder" (5:21-26). You will make reconciliation with fellow disciples your first religious priority.
2. You will not commit "mental adultery" (5:27-30). You will deal decisively with your sinful thoughts.
3. You will not divorce, except when infidelity has occurred (5:31-32). You will make every effort to remain with your spouse.
4. You will not make vows (5:33-37). You will always tell the truth.
5. You will not seek personal retribution (5:38-42). You will be generous even to those who injure you.
6. You will not hate your enemies (5:43-48). You will love and pray for your persecutors.
7. You will not perform religious duties to gain temporary human approval (6:1-18). You will perform religious duties only to gain eternal divine reward.
8. You will not be anxious over things (6:19-34). You will be exclusively loyal to God's Kingdom and righteous standards.
9. You will not be judgmental or naive in your estimate of fellow humans (7:1-6). You will examine your own life before making judgments about others.
10. You will not avoid prayer because you doubt God's goodness (7:7-11). You will believe that God is good and rest in his answers to prayer.

C. S. Lewis' paraphrase is just seven words: Do as you would be done by. [C. S. Lewis, Mere Christianity, p.64.]  
FUNNY: GOLDEN RULE: "Do to others before they do to you."

### **James Cash "Golden Rule" Penney**

September 16, 1875—February 12, 1971

Founder of the chain of department stores in America and Europe that bears his name. By the time of his death, the firm had 1,660 stores, making it the country's fifth largest merchandising corporation.

#### **Penney Learns Golden Rule From Dad**

As a boy, J. C. Penney began his first business by raising hogs on his father's farm. The neighbors offered him scraps from their kitchens for his hogs. When he sold the first hog and made a profit, he bought more hogs and made more profit. But his father was soon to teach him the Golden Rule that was to guide him the rest of his life. The neighbors began to complain about the smell and noise coming from Jim's pigpen. Mr. Penney ordered him to sell the pigs. He was stunned. He reasoned with his father that all pigpens smelled and all pigs were noisy. And besides, the neighbors had no business telling them what to do.

Mr. Penney listened and then said, **"You have no right to make money if by so doing you are taking advantage of other people."**

Jim sold the pigs, much to his regret. But his godly father taught him a lesson that day—one of the most important he ever learned.

#### **J.C. Penney Keeps Golden Rule**

One of the many successful men who have used the Golden Rule principle was James Cash Penney. The fabulous Mr. Penney, starting with a small general merchandise store in Kemmerer, Wyoming, in 1902, built a multimillion-dollar business empire on one simple principle: the Golden Rule.

For years the Penney stores were called **The Golden Rule Stores**. And it was Mr. Penney's faith in that principle—**always treating a customer as he himself would want to be treated**—that made them grow and prosper.

But perhaps even more important was Mr. Penney's attitude toward his employees. In the first place, he did not like the word employee, preferring to treat everyone as a partner—associates, he called them. And he devoted himself to treating them as he would want to be treated were the situations reversed. Most of all, he knew that by helping them make money, his own success would be assured.

**Fake Monologue about a true event in the life of J.C. Penney** - *When I finished high school, Father knew I would make a good salesman. In 1895 he marched me into Mr. J. M. Hale's store in our hometown, Hamilton, Missouri. Mr. Hale didn't need any help, but agreed to let me work and learn for \$2.27 a month. The second year Mr. Hale increased my pay to \$18.00 a month. The long hours in that dark, musty old store, however, had given me a bronchial cold I just couldn't shake. The doctor recommend I move to Denver. I made the move and obtained a job with a merchant there. I soon found that this man was not as honest as Mr. Hale. He had two prices for most everything in the store. For instance, he would mark one box of socks 25 cents a pair and an identical box, two for 25 cents. If the customer said 25 cents a pair was too much to pay, we were to direct them to the "cheaper" kind. When I objected to this method of business, I was given the choice of doing it that way or quitting—I quit.*

**Danger of a Little Learning** An astronomer who was on his way to give a lecture discovered that his seatmate on the airplane was a preacher. Early in the conversation he assured the clergyman that he knew everything about religion he needed to know. The preacher expressed delight and asked where the scientist had studied religion and how much he had read the Bible.

"Oh, no," the astronomer replied, "I've never studied theology, and I don't read the Bible, but I know the Golden Rule, and I figure that's enough religion for me."

"Well, on that basis," declared the preacher, "I guess I know all about astronomy."

The scientist scoffed and asked the pastor what he knew about the cosmos, to which the man of the cloth replied gravely, "Twinkle, twinkle little star; how I wonder what you are."

**Business as Usual** - A young man left his employer, a lumber merchant, and began business in competition with him. For a while he prospered greatly and got many orders that would have gone to the firm he had left. But just when his business seemed to be most flourishing, and he had more orders than he could supply, a huge fire in his yard destroyed all his lumber. The day after the fire he saw his old employer coming toward his office. He said later, "I could have hated him, for I thought he was coming to gloat over my misfortune. But he came to me as a friend in need and said, 'I know you have agreed to supply lumber to your customers by certain dates, and this unfortunate fire makes it impossible for you to do it. My lumber yard is at your disposal. You can have what you need and pay me at your own convenience. Your business may go on as usual.' " The young man was overwhelmed by this embodiment of the Golden Rule; the rivalry and hatred that he had felt gave place to love.

John MacArthur - For many years the basic instrument of music was the harpsichord. As its keys are depressed, a given string is plucked to create the desired note, much as a guitar string is plucked with a pick. But the tone made in that way is not pure, and the mechanism is relatively slow and limiting. Sometime during the last quarter of the eighteenth century, during Beethoven's lifetime, an unknown musician modified the harpsichord so that the keys activated hammers that struck, rather than plucked, the strings. With that minor change, a major improvement was made that would henceforth radically enhance the entire musical world, giving a grandeur and breadth never before known.

That is the sort of revolutionary change Jesus gives in the golden rule. Every other form of this basic principle had been given in purely negative terms, and is found in the literature of almost every major religion and philosophical system. The Jewish rabbi Hillel said, "What is hateful to yourself do not to someone else." The book of Tobit in the Apocrypha teaches, "What thou thyself hatest, to no man do." The Jewish scholars in Alexandria who translated the Septuagint (Greek Old Testament) advised in a certain piece of correspondence, "As you wish that no evil befall you, but to be a partaker of all good things, so you should act on the same principle toward your subjects and offenders." Confucius taught, "What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others." An ancient Greek king named Nicocles wrote, "Do not do to others the things which make you angry when you experience them at the hands of other people." The Greek philosopher Epictetus said, "What you avoid suffering yourself, do not afflict on others." The Stoics promoted the principle, "What you do not want to be done to you, do not do to anyone else." In every case the emphasis is negative. The principle is an important part of right human relations, but it falls short—far short—of God's perfect standard.

**Those expressions go only as far as sinful man can go, and are essentially expressions not of love but of self-interest. The motivation is basically selfish—refraining from harming others in order that they will not harm us.** Those negative forms of the rule are not golden, because they are primarily utilitarian and motivated by fear and self-preservation. As Scripture repeatedly tells us of fallen mankind, "There is none who does good, there is not even one" (Rom. 3:12; cf. Ps. 14:3); "each of us has turned to his own way" (Isa. 53:6).

**Man's basic problem is preoccupation with self.** He is innately beset with narcissism, a condition named after the Greek mythological character Narcissus, who spent his life admiring his reflection in a pool of water. In the final analysis, every sin results from preoccupation with self. We sin because we are totally selfish, totally devoted to ourselves, rather than to God and to others. Unregenerate man can never come up to the standard of selfless love—the love that loves others as oneself and that treats others in the same way that one wants to be treated.

Only Jesus gives the fullness of the truth, which encompasses both the positive and the negative. And only Jesus can give the power to live by that full truth. The dynamic for living this supreme ethic must come from outside our fallen nature. It can come only from the indwelling Holy Spirit, whose first fruit is love (Gal. 5:22). In Jesus Christ, "the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us" (Rom. 5:5). Only Christ's own Spirit can empower us to love each other as He loves us (John 13:34). We can only love in a divine way because God Himself has first loved us divinely (1 John 4:19).