

The Golden Rule

Lesson 3: Spiritual Applications



Discovering God's Word
Bible Study Series

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Lesson 3: Spiritual Applications

Introduction

A. Our first two studies have focused on establishing what the “Golden Rule” is, how it is contrasted with some other “rules” people live by, and how it will completely transform the way you interact with others. The “Golden Rule” requires you to treat others as you would want them to treat you (Matthew 7:12)!

B. The physical responsibilities you have toward someone are just one small part of how you must show love. Although Jesus did this for others, He did not come for this purpose. Rather, His purpose in loving others was focused on a spiritual level (Luke 19:10).

C. Immediately following the “Golden Rule,” is Jesus’s teaching about the need to enter by the narrow gate and warning that most will take the wide gate that leads to destruction (vv. 13-14), the warning about false prophets who are working to deceive people (vv. 15-20), the warning that not everyone who professes Jesus as Lord will be saved (vv. 21-23), and the warning that people need to be like a wise man and do the will of God rather than just hear it (vv. 24-27).

D. If you are going to follow Jesus’s example and truly live by the “Golden Rule,” you should love the souls of others and want to do as much good for their souls as possible, just as you would want others to do for your soul!

E. Purpose: To learn how to apply the "Golden Rule" to your spiritual responsibilities of teaching the lost, edifying the saved, and correcting the erring.

1. Teach The Lost

A. The need to teach the lost

1. The need to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ to the lost can be demonstrated by considering four passages in the book of Romans (Romans 1:16; Romans 3:23; Romans 6:23).

- These verses show us the gospel is God’s power to save those who have sinned, everyone has sinned, and those who have

sinned deserve to spend eternity separated from God in Hell. Therefore, everyone needs to hear the gospel so they can be saved!

2. The fourth passage is Romans 10:13-15. Everyone needs to call on the name of the Lord to be saved (which involves obeying His commandments, Acts 22:16). Before someone can do this, he/she must first believe in Jesus. But, a person cannot believe without hearing the gospel preached. And, a preacher must be sent.

3. At one time, you had sinned and deserved eternal torment in Hell. You needed to call on the name of the Lord – but could not do that without believing, could not believe without hearing, and could not hear unless a preacher was sent and preached the gospel to you! Since you are glad someone helped you in this way, you must work to do the same for others!

B. Who to teach

1. The Bible helps you see the lost in the way God sees them. In Matthew 9:35-38, Jesus saw the lost like sheep without a shepherd who were weak and tired spiritually and did not know which way to go. Because of this, Jesus had compassion on the people and taught them.

- Is there anyone you know who is lost and wandering, like a sheep without a shepherd?

2. In 2 Timothy 2:24-26, Paul pictures those who are lost in sin as being in opposition to the Almighty God and as needing to know the truth and come to repentance. They have been ensnared by the devil and taken captive to do his will.

- Is there anyone you know who does not know the truth, is caught in one of Satan's many traps, and is a slave to Satan?

3. In 2 Peter 2:1-3, Peter shows that many are preaching false gospels that do not lead to salvation and deceiving many. These people believe they are saved and following the way of truth but are actually heading for eternal destruction.

- Is there anyone you know who is teaching a false gospel or thinks he/she is saved while following one of these false gospels?

4. You surely know someone in these situations. There is no lack of opportunity to teach the gospel, as most people in this world are not following Jesus Christ!

C. How to teach

1. The “Golden Rule” should help you teach as you would desire others to teach you. And, Jesus’s “Great Commission” (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16) gives a four-step process of making disciples.

- Step #1: Go. You must go to people who need to hear the gospel. You can invite them to attend church services, invite them to study the Bible, give them a Bible and/or material that will help them learn and apply God’s teachings, utilize many different ways of contacting people (i.e. phone, email, social media, face-to-face, letters), etc.
- Step #2: Preach. Whenever you have an opportunity, preach Jesus to the individual(s). Maybe he/she attends services and hears a gospel lesson, studies the Bible with you, you follow up with that person about the study material you had given him/her, publish a gospel message on your social media, etc. There can be no reaping if you do not plant the seed of God’s word through preaching. But, you must only preach Jesus (2 Timothy 4:2) – not a false gospel, your opinions, your traditions, etc.
- Step #3: Baptize. Whenever someone accepts God’s teachings and is willing to obey it, you must make sure he/she is baptized. Since there is no salvation without baptism (Acts 2:38; 1 Peter 3:20-21), you must make sure the baptism happens as quickly as the individual is ready to be baptized.
- Step #4: Continued Teaching. Discipleship only begins whenever an individual obeys God’s plan of salvation. Satan will be working to trap this person again. So, you will need to continue using opportunities to teach those who have decided to follow Christ and help them grow stronger in their faiths.

2. The “Golden Rule” should help you consider your demeanor when you teach (Matthew 10:16). You can actually harm someone in preaching if you do not do it with wisdom.

- You must teach with love (Ephesians 4:15). You would want someone to teach you in a way that considered you and would be in your best interest; not in a mean-spirited way.

- You must be gentle, patient, and humble in your teaching (2 Timothy 2:24-26). Just as you would want others to do, you must be patient with them (2 Timothy 4:2), gentle in how you respond, and humbly recognize you need God's grace and mercy.
- You must speak with grace (Colossians 4:5-6). Just as you would want from others, you should speak in a way that reflects the grace of God and is palatable (seasoned with salt) to those who hear, while also not compromising what is said.
- God wants you to consider others in how you teach them (Jude 1:22-23). Some will need you to take a more forceful approach in teaching than others.

2. Edify The Saved

A. The need to edify the saved

1. Hebrews 3:12-13. The devil is working every day to lure Christians back into sin, so they develop an evil, unbelieving heart and turn away from the living God through sin's deception, wanting Christians to be more concerned with the cares of this life, the pursuit of earthly wealth, enjoying physical pleasures, etc. more than following the Lord. Therefore, Christians need to be encouraging each other every day to combat this threat!

2. Hebrews 10:24-25. Although some people give up serving the Lord completely, others do not love or do the good works God desires throughout their daily lives. We need to consider one another to stir each other up to do more in God's service!

3. 1 Thessalonians 5:11, 14. Jesus's return will be the Day those who have faithfully lived for Jesus will go with Christ and live eternally in Heaven, putting all the sufferings and trials of this earth behind us! We should be strengthening and upholding one another in patience and love to help each other remain faithful till that Day.

B. Who to edify

1. The answer to who you must edify was found in Hebrews 3:12-13. Christians must encourage each other daily. This is a responsibility Christians have toward others who are Christians.

2. Remember that your neighbor is anyone you have the opportunity and ability to help (Luke 10:25-37). You must use any

opportunity you have to edify Christian brothers and sisters (not just your Christian family members or those you get along with best).

C. How to edify

1. The “Golden Rule” (along with other passages) will help you accomplish the work. Surely, you want others to do something that *actually* edifies you.

- Just spending time together with another person, just speaking with another, and just having a good and positive feeling is not the same as true spiritual edification.
- The source of all true edification is the word of God (Acts 20:32). Although there are many ways we can build people up physically, spiritual edification only happens when the word of God is involved!

2. Christians must consider the spiritual aspects of the responsibilities we have toward one another (i.e. bear one another’s burdens, rejoice with the rejoicing, weep with the weeping, show hospitality toward one another, etc.) and not just the physical components of them.

- For example, although hospitality may provide for a physical need, it also provides an opportunity for Christians to get close on a spiritual level and help one another grow in the faith, stand strong against the devil, and accomplish more in the service of God.
- You accomplish this by hoping together in the promises that are made by God in the pages of His word and helping each other develop a greater understanding of God’s word. And, whenever there are difficulties experienced by your brethren, you should be encouraging them to hold on to the anchor of hope and respond in ways that would please God. For, preaching God’s word results in teaching, rebuking, correcting, and encouraging those who hear you (2 Timothy 4:2).
- If your goal is living in Heaven, this is exactly how you want other Christians to edify you! You would not want them focused on telling you things that have no real spiritual benefit, making you feel good about yourself even if it does no spiritual good, or giving you solutions to your problems that go against God’s word. Rather, you want them to encourage you through the word of God that is able to build you up and give you an inheritance in Heaven – which is what you must do for others!

3. Correct The Erring

A. The need to correct the erring

1. Hebrews 10:26-39 should help you recognize the great danger for Christians who have gone back into sin. These who have sinned deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth will experience the vengeance of God and eternal destruction. They have cast away their reward of eternal life in Heaven and God will have no pleasure in them.

2. How sad it is when someone considers some physical treasure and pleasure to be more important than eternal salvation in Heaven through Jesus Christ! Yet, this is something we all do at times (1 John 1:8). So, you need to consider what you want your brethren to do for you when you go back into sin – and do the same to them!

B. Who to correct

1. This point is not about those who are lost and need taught the gospel for the first time. Instead, it is about those who have become Christians and have gone back into sin.

2. James 5:19-20. If any Christian among you (who you are in contact with) wanders from the truth, you have the responsibility to turn him/her back. If you do, you will save his/her soul from spiritual death in Hell and cover the sins that have been committed, through the blood of Jesus! Isn't this exactly what you would want others to do for you?

3. Galatians 6:1. It may be that there is a brother or sister who is focused on serving the Lord but slips in some way so as to sin. God says this is your concern and responsibility. For, just as you should want a brother or sister to work to restore you to the Lord, you should do the same for him/her.

C. How to correct

1. Applying the “Golden Rule” and some other passages will help you know how to correct Christians who stray from the truth and sin against God.

- Telling someone he/she is living in sin and headed for eternal punishment in Hell is a hard truth to get many people to accept. So, for the good of the one who is in sin, you must consider how you would want to be told. For, I am afraid there are many

Christians (even with good intentions) who speak in ways they would not like spoken to.

2. Galatians 6:1. Just as you would not want someone to act morally superior and self-righteous in correcting your sin, you must not do this either. And, the kind of rebuke you offer must be loving, kind, and considerate of the one you are rebuking.

3. Matthew 18:15-17. First, you would not want a brother or sister to know of your sin and not say anything to you. Second, you would want that brother or sister to come to you privately about the sin (if it is a private sin) rather than broadcasting it to others or gossiping about it. Third, if you refused to make the necessary corrections, you would not want your brethren to give up on your salvation. Fourth, if you still refused to repent, you would not want your brethren to act like everything is okay and to withdraw from you (1 Corinthians 5; 2 Thessalonians 3).

- This is how you should want your brethren to respond to your sin – if you are interested in being saved eternally. Although you may not appreciate it while you are in sin, you would appreciate it one day! So, you should treat others in this same way and follow these same steps in correcting them whenever they have committed sin.

Conclusion

A. Jesus's "Golden Rule" is simple, yet powerful (Matthew 7:12). This is exactly how you should treat other people.

B. Not only will this transform how you treat them physically, but it will also transform how you treat them spiritually.

C. In everything you do, you will be acting according to their best interests and love them as much as you love yourself!

Study Questions

How is the “Golden Rule” applicable to the spiritual conditions of others?

1. Teach The Lost

What is the need to teach the lost?

Who should you teach?

How should you teach?

2. Edify The Saved

What is the need to edify others?

Who should you edify?

How should you edify?

3. Correct The Erring

What is the need to correct the erring?

Who should you correct?

How should you correct?

