

## GETTING STARTED

**We are better together!/Opening question:** Welcome to LIFEgroup, as always someone please share a God story from the past few days. Can we review some Scripture memory verses from *Matthew 7*? Who can quote: 7:1; 7:7; and 7:14?

**Our Subject Today:** We are going to study *Matthew 7:12; 28-29* about the Golden Rule and the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount. What is the Golden Rule?

## VIDEO NOTES/QUESTIONS

Share any thoughts from the Video:

## INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY

**OBSERVATION:** Matthew emphasized Jesus' authority to set the standard for members of the kingdom of God.

**INTERPRETATION:** Please see the commentary on pages 5-6.

**APPLICATION QUESTIONS:** Please see the following 6 application questions. (You do not have to cover all 6, choose the best ones for your group)

### Read *Matthew 7:12*

1) Most religions and many people say they appreciate the "Golden Rule."

- Confucianism: "Do not do to others what you do not want them to do to you"
- Hinduism: "This is the sum of duty: do not do to others what would cause pain if done to you"
- Buddhism: "Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful"

What's the key difference between Jesus' Golden Rule and others?

**POSSIBLE ANSWERS:** These sayings are similar to the Golden Rule but are stated negatively and rely on passivity. Jesus' Golden Rule is a positive command to show love proactively. The Eastern religions say, "Refrain from doing"; Jesus says, "Do!" The Eastern religions say it is enough to hold your negative behavior in check; Jesus says to look for ways to act positively. Because of the "inverted" nature of the non-Christian sayings, they have been described as the "silver rule."

## APPLICATION QUESTIONS (cont.)

2) Why do you think Jesus' Golden Rule is a more profound challenge?

**POSSIBLE ANSWERS:** It's one thing to refrain from doing things. Avoidance is easier than engagement., ignoring someone is easier than loving someone, etc.

**DIG DEEPER:** Read *1 Peter 3:8-9*. How does this passage describe how we are to respond even when treated poorly by others.

How does sharing the Gospel with others a good application of the Golden Rule?

3) How could you as individual bring the Golden Rule into your home in practical ways? How could our LIFEgroup live out the Golden Rule this Christmas Season? What are some of your traditions you do at Thanksgiving to show a thankful heart?

**POSSIBLE ANSWERS:** Do positive things for family members and guests. Take time to be with others. Put down the phones and turn off the television.

**DIG DEEPER:** Read *Phil 2:1-4*. What is the source of encouragement, comfort, and affection in the Christian home? What kind of behavior is triggered by an awareness of these blessings?

What are the basic attitudes husbands and wives are to have for each other according to *1 Peter 3: 1-4*?

4) When someone asks us, "How was your day?", how do we generally answer?

**POSSIBLE ANSWERS:** Often times, we talk about how people treat us. Jesus turns that on its head. Instead, we should view how our day was through how we loved others. What a transformative thought!

**DIG DEEPER:** Would obeying the command in *Phil 2:14* make a drastic difference in your relationships? If you measure spiritual maturity by how little you complained, how mature are you?

**APPLICATION QUESTIONS (cont.)****Read *Matthew 7:28***

5) Have you ever been amazed at Jesus' teaching? Can someone share how you have experienced that when you were reading the Bible?

**POSSIBLE ANSWERS:** Jesus' words are truly amazing. He is unpredictable. He used paradox, exaggeration, and parables to emphasize his thoughts. Being amazed at his teaching can lead to curiosity about Jesus and, hopefully, faith in him.

**DIG DEEPER:** According to the context of *verse 28*, (look at *7:21-27*), is interest or amazement enough to protect us from the storms of life?

**Read *Matthew 7:29***

6) Just as the multitude felt that Jesus' taught as one having authority, what does it mean for God's Word to have authority in your life? How has this study on the Sermon on the Mount affected you and your life?

**POSSIBLE ANSWERS:** God's Word is authoritative when we believe and obey it. We acknowledge it as true. It accurately reveals God.

**DIG DEEPER:** What do these verses teach us about Jesus' authority: *Matt 11:27; John 3:35-36; Rom 14:8-9; Col 1: 15-18; and Rev 1:4-6*. Which of these Scriptures is most amazing to you? According to *Matt 28:18-20*, what is one commandment that Jesus directly connected to his authority?

**MY TAKE-AWAY****POSSIBLE TAKE-AWAY:**

- The Sermon on the Mount has changed my life
- Now I want to dig deeper in understanding Jesus' teaching
- I have memorized Scripture in *Matthew 5,6,7*

**BE A DOER** (“...be a doer of the word, not merely a hearer...” - *James 1:20*)

- I will keep reading and studying the *Gospel of Matthew*
- I will memorize *Matthew 7:12* and review the other verses to hide God’s Word in my heart.
- I will be a doer of the Word this week and Thanksgiving

**MY NEXT STEPS** (from the weekend worship service)

1. This week, I will experiment with the Golden Rule by trying to live it out for 24 hours.
2. This week, I will begin to measure the question “How was your day?” not by how people treated me, but how I treated others.
3. This Christmas season, I will look for ways to love others around me the way I would want to be loved.

**HOW MY GROUP CAN PRAY FOR ME THIS WEEK**

> [Record Group Prayer Requests Here:](#)

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## COMMENTARY

**Matthew 7:12.** In view of God's generosity to us, treating others in the manner we would like ourselves to be treated is the least we can do. "As you would have them" does not imply "in order that they might," as some have mistakenly thought. Verse 12 embraces an impressive amount of scriptural teaching, including, as Jesus says, the "Law and the Prophets" (the Old Testament). This epigram has become known as the Golden Rule because of its central role in Christian ethics. Jesus assumes no pathological deviations in which one would desire to harm oneself, and he presupposes the perspective of disciples who seek what is God's desire rather than self-aggrandizement (Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, vol. 22, The New American Commentary [Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992]).

(More commentary on *Matthew 7:12* is available in the lesson for Nov. 9/10.)

**What is the Golden Rule?:** The Golden Rule comes from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, as recorded in *Matthew 7:12*. It is entirely true that we do not like being told what we can or cannot do. But, that is not the Golden Rule. The Golden Rule is not "keep your beliefs to yourself because you do not want others pushing their beliefs on you."

The Bible instructs us to speak the truth in love (*Ephesians 4:15*). The Word of God commands us to always be ready to give a gentle and respectful defense for what we believe (*1 Peter 3:15*). We are to preach the Word (*2 Timothy 4:2*). Jesus Himself taught people to "go and sin no more" (*John 5:14; 8:11*). So, clearly, the Golden Rule is not properly understood as "keep out of other peoples' business."

The concept of the Golden Rule is simple. We are to do to others what we would want them to do to us. Treat other people with love, dignity, and respect because you would want them to treat you with love, dignity, and respect. The Golden Rule is not a muzzle. The Golden Rule is not intended to lead us to ignore sin. The Golden Rule is not something that can be used to drastically revise or cancel other teachings in the Word of God.

No, the Golden Rule is doing to others what you would want them to do to you. If you were living a life controlled by a depraved and destructive sin, that, according to the Bible, leads to eternal separation from God—would you want people to tell you everything is okay, or tell you the truth? Before I came to faith in Christ, I was a slave to sin. I was on the path of eternal separation from God. For a time, I didn't want to hear anything related to the gospel. If this warped understanding of the Golden Rule had been applied, I would still be dead in my sin. Instead, I am now imminently and eternally grateful for those who declared the truth to me—the truth about my sin and its consequences, and the forgiveness, deliverance, and salvation that is available through Jesus Christ ("What is the Golden Rule?" [n.d.] retrieved November 19, 2019, from <https://www.gotquestions.org/what-Golden-Rule.html>).

**Matthew 7:28-29.** Jesus began the Sermon on the Mount with only his intended audience (his disciples) present, but by the time he concluded a crowd had gathered. Matthew's closing comments to the sermon emphasize that the crowds were amazed. Matthew used the Greek imperfect tense to denote an ongoing effect in Jesus' listeners. They just could not get over it. But it says nothing about their commitment. This is the only one of five discourses Matthew recorded in which he commented on the crowd's response. This does not mean that this discourse was unique, for Matthew continued to use the same word of the crowds response to Jesus' teaching in a more general way (*13:54; 19:25; 22:33*). Most likely, he wanted his readers to understand that the crowd had this kind of response to Jesus' teaching wherever he went and whatever he taught.

Both the content and manner of Jesus' teaching were overwhelming. Unlike other teachers, he taught with authority (*7:29*). Unlike them, he did not cite other authorities—only his own and his Father's. And it was he alone who decided who would enter the kingdom and on what basis they would do so—through a personal relationship with God.

Jesus' authority is one of the central themes in Matthew. Jesus anticipated the questions of his listeners, "Who is this man that he speaks with such authority?" Matthew is about to demonstrate, by his collection of miracles in *chapters 8-9*, that Jesus was precisely who he claimed to be. Matthew now transitioned from Jesus' teachings into a lengthy account of his early miracles (*chaps. 8-9*) and his delegation of authority to his disciples (*ch. 10*). Jesus' authority increased the tension between Jesus and the hypocrites that would grow throughout the remainder of the book (Stuart K. Weber, *Matthew*, vol. 1, Holman New Testament Commentary [Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000]).

(More commentary on *Matthew 7:28-29* is available in the lesson for Nov 16/17.)

## COMMENTARY

*Matthew 5-7.* Perhaps no portion of Scripture is as well known as Jesus' Great Sermon. It begins with the well-loved Beatitudes (5:3-12), which classically exemplify God's inversion of the world's values. In His kingdom or reign, those who are considered fortunate include the poor, sorrowing, humble, righteous, merciful, pure, peacemakers, and persecuted. These are precisely those categories of people too many of us tend to despise and ostracize.

These countercultural values could suggest that Jesus intended His followers to withdraw from the world and form separate communities. *Matthew 5:13-16* immediately belies any such notion. Disciples must be salt and light, arresting decay and providing illumination for a lost and dying world.

Such radical ideas understandably would have raised the question of the relationship between Jesus' teaching and the Old Testament. Jesus addressed this topic next (5:17-48). He had not come to abolish the law, yet neither had He come to preserve but rather to "fulfill" it—to bring to completion everything to which it originally pointed. In some cases He drastically deepened the requirements. He demanded a greater righteousness (v. 20), as with His discussion of murder, adultery, and divorce. But in other cases He actually set aside certain provisions of the Old Testament in favor of entirely new, internalized regulations, such as with oaths, retaliation, and probably love for enemy.

Throughout these illustrations Jesus used numerous hyperboles (the clearest is vv. 29-30). They were not meant to be applied literally, but we nevertheless can understand why portions of this material have been taken as a manifesto for nonviolence in the church and in the world (particularly vv. 38-47). *Matthew 5:48* closes off this section of the sermon by demonstrating that Jesus was setting forth an ideal. His disciples will never attain to these standards this side of His return, but they are not thereby excused from continuing to strive after those goals.

*Matthew 6:1-18* turns to the theme of true versus hypocritical piety. In three closely parallel examples, Jesus treated the practices of almsgiving, prayer, and fasting. In each case the motive for correct religious behavior must be to please God rather than fellow humans. In the middle of the second of these topics, on prayer, Jesus gave the classic disciples' prayer, which has come to be known as the Our Father or the Lord's Prayer (6:9-13).

*Matthew 6:19-34* is united by the themes of wealth and worry. Here Jesus contrasted transient, earthly riches with permanent, heavenly riches. If our priorities correctly reside with the latter, God through His people will take care of the former. The implementation of 6:33 presupposes Christian communities who look after the needy in their own midst as well as throughout the world. *Matthew 6:22-24* catches us up short with its bold suggestion that money may be the single biggest competitor with God for ultimate allegiance in our lives, particularly for those who are not in the poorest classes of society. Affluent individuals who call themselves Christians need to read verse 24 again and again and ask themselves who they really are serving.

*Matthew 7:1-12* rounds out the body of the sermon by discussing how to treat others. First, Jesus called His followers not to be judgmental in their relationships with others (vv. 1-5). But His illustrations also underline that once we have properly dealt with our own sins, we have the right and responsibility to evaluate others' behavior and to help them deal with their shortcomings (vv. 5-6). Second, He reminds us of God's generosity and desire to give us good gifts (7:7-11), though, after the Beatitudes we dare not define "good" in worldly terms like health and wealth. The well-known Golden Rule (7:12) brings the body of Jesus' message to a climax and epitomizes the ethic underlying it all—treat others as you would want to be treated.

*Matthew 7:14-27* forms the concluding warning. There are only two possible responses to Jesus' preaching—obedience or rejection. The narrow versus the wide roads (vv. 13-14), the good versus the bad fruit (vv. 15-23), and the wise versus the foolish builders (vv. 24-27) illustrate this warning in three parallel ways. Professions of faith without appropriate changes of life-style prove empty. But mere works by themselves do not save; a relationship with Jesus is needed. On Judgment Day many will cry, "Lord, Lord" and appeal to their deeds. Christ will reply, "I never knew you" (7:23) (David S. Dockery, ed., *Holman Bible Handbook* [Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 1992]).

Prayer: Lord, make me hunger and thirst after righteousness and after doing your will. Make the principles of your kingdom come alive in my heart, especially your exhortation to "love your neighbor" (Stuart K. Weber, *Matthew*, vol. 1, Holman New Testament Commentary [Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000]).

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