

The Golden Rule | Matthew 7:12 Sermon Discussion Guide

Purpose of Discussion: To reflect on the ways we fail to treat others the way we would want to be treated and then consider how we can change to follow the Golden Rule better.

Sermon Refresher: Dave took apart the Golden Rule, one of the most often cited teachings of Jesus even in a culture that is largely Biblically illiterate. He focused on how the Golden Rule summarizes the Old Testament, the importance of understanding the love and coming kingdom of God in being able to practice it, and how practically we can love others with more kindness, acceptance, and empathy.

Icebreaker: When was the last time you can remember getting really worked up about something on social media? What was it about and why do you think it made you so angry?

Transition: Today's world, whether social media or traditional media, doesn't really encourage us to be patient, kind, forgiving towards those different than us. In others words, media of all kinds rarely helps us practice the Golden Rule. Read Matthew 7:12 together and then continue the discussion.

Discussion:

1. Dave claimed that the Golden Rule is one of the most memorable phrases Jesus ever uttered, both for Christians and the broader culture. Why do you think non-Christians know and like this teaching so much? And why do you think other quotes/teachings of Jesus are less known and sometimes often quite unpopular?
2. Here's a line from the sermon (paraphrased): "the stereotype of **holy** is either a kind of social separation or an angry, judging, disapproving demeanor." Where have you run up against this type of misunderstanding/stereotype being practiced by Christians? And what have you seen that do to non-Christian's views of Christianity?

THE **crossing** **small groups**

3. However, the Hebrew (Old Testament) word for “holy” means “other”, “set apart”, to be “separate” but there’s a way that is abused and does damage both to the Christian as well as others. Can you distinguish ways that we, as Christians, are to be “separate” and ways that we are not to be? How would confusing these two damage you as a Christian and non-Christians?

4. What do you think the difference is between “accepting” and “approving”?

5. Think of “yesterday’s church world”, i.e. your parents’ generation. How did they tend to view the acceptance/approval distinction and how have you seen that do unintentional damage? Think of “today’s church world”. How could we possibly make a different, but maybe equal, error as we think about acceptance/approval and what do you think that could cause?

6. Without naming names (that would be awkward), what are the types of people you have the hardest time practicing the Golden Rule with? Why? In what ways do you slip in to becoming easily offended, quick to point out error, lacking forgiveness, patience, or kindness? Is it politics? Relationships? Theology?

7. Which of Dave’s final specific applications do you want to work on this week and how can you do that?

- Giving the benefit of the doubt (“listening to what people are trying to say, meaning to say, rather than trying to trap them in their words”).
- In conflict, talking **to** people rather than **about** them.
- Genuinely listening to, seeking to understand, and respecting those who aren’t “like you”. Whether religious, political, theological, racial, moral. Yes, this includes social media.
- Fighting to practice empathy rather than antipathy (taking offense at someone).

Sharing and Prayer: How can you encourage and challenge each other to become the type of Christians who love and treat others well? Pray for each other, and pray for the broader church, that all of us would practice these things more faithfully that more might be attracted to Christ.