

The Kingdom Ethic

Matthew 7:12

Main Idea: Do to others what you would have them do to you!

I would like to begin today by talking about my family. This is one of the perks of being up here, right? You can talk about the things you love, you can brag about your kids, grandkids, etc.

My wife, Christine, and I are incredibly blessed to be parents to Everett and Gregory. Everett just turned 6 at the beginning of this month and Gregory turned 4 at the beginning of January. They are wonderful boys and Christine and I consider it an incredible privilege to be their parents.

For the most part, Everett and Gregory get along really well. They are kind and considerate toward each other. They frequently tell each other how much they love one another. They ferociously defend one another when I start teasing or wrestling them.

However, as kind and considerate as Everett and Gregory are, it would be grossly inaccurate to paint a picture of perfect harmony. Frequently, Christine or I are called (or step in) to referee a dispute.

We often begin by asking the offender if his actions were nice or kind. I'm not sure why we waste our time on this question because the answer is almost always a hesitant, "Uh...I think so?" or "Um...I'm not sure". Which leads us to the second question, "Would you like it if someone did this to you?" This is almost always met with, "Oh"!

It is amazing the clarity that this question brings. It cuts through any denial, self-deception, and lies leaving the actions exposed for what they really are.

It's an effective test of kindness; an effective test of consideration; an effective test of love! AND... It's a test that Jesus tells us (as Kingdom People) to constantly use in order to demonstrate the Kingdom Ethic of love in all of our interactions.

If you have been with us this last year, you know that we are studying the Gospel of Matthew and we have spent most of the year in the Sermon on the Mount.

Today we are nearing the end of this Sermon and are looking at verse twelve of chapter seven.

Matthew 7:12

So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

Pastor Brad Dettwyler
February 24, 2019

This is a pretty straightforward, well known verse. It is frequently referred to as the Golden Rule, and yet I'm pretty sure we don't actually recognize the value of this "rule". My goal today is to dust off this important instruction from Jesus, seek to understand it better in its context, and let the Holy Spirit have His way in any changes that are needed in our hearts, minds, and lives.

Let's begin by briefly considering the main portion of this verse and the main idea for the message today, "do to others what you would have them do to you".

I believe the reason Jesus calls us to, "do for others what we would have them do for us" is because He knows that all of us LOVE ourselves. Thus when Jesus tells us to do for others what we would have them do to us, He is ultimately telling us to LOVE OTHERS. This is a call to LOVE. It is a call to love others as we love ourselves.

The Golden Rule is VERY closely related to what Jesus says, later on in Matthew. In chapter 22, He is asked, "Which is the greatest commandment?" and He responds by saying...

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸ This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

"Do to others what you would have them do to you", is a call to love others as we love ourselves. It is a call to put ourselves in another's shoes in order to understand how to practically demonstrate love to them.

Also, notice how often we are to do this...

Jesus says IN EVERYTHING! "In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you"! Loving others; doing to others what you would have them do to you, is the way Kingdom People are to constantly relate to everyone. This is not a call to demonstrate love occasionally, when convenient, once a week, once a day, or even... more often than not... This is a call to love everyone as we love ourselves; in every situation; at all the times!

One final note before we look at the context... Notice that this is a call to proactive love. Jesus is not just telling us to REFRAIN from doing to others what we don't like done to us. (Most religious systems have some version of "don't do to others what you wouldn't want done to you".) But Jesus' call is more than that. It is not just "don't do" but also "do". It is proactive! "DO to others what you would have them do to you."

Pastor Brad Dettwyler
February 24, 2019

Before you get overwhelmed, give up, or tune out, let me encourage you to stick with me because all of the motivation; all of the enablement; everything that we need, in order to be able to love like this, is found in the context surrounding this passage.

The very first word of this verse (“So”) directs us to look at the context. We are going to begin by looking at the broader context (which elevates the importance of this instruction) and then we will look at the immediate context (which gives an incredible amount of encouragement, motivation, and enablement to put this into practice).

First, we should note that, “do to others what you would have them do to you”, is really a summation of most of the Sermon on the Mount. As Jesus comes to the close of this magnificent sermon, He summarizes everything He has been saying about who Kingdom People are, and how they are to live, by saying, “do to others what you would have them do to you”. In other words, this verse is a really important summation of the Sermon on the Mount!

But it is more than just a summation of the Sermon on the Mount... Look at what the last part of the verse says...

“...for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.”

This is not just a summation of the Sermon on the Mount, this is a summation of the Old Testament!

Again, this is parallel to what Jesus says in Matthew 22 when talking about the Great Commandment. After sharing the greatest commands, “love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” and “love your neighbor as yourself”, he says...

On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

So the broader context of this passage (and the last words of the verse) tells us that these words summarize the Sermon on the Mount and the entire Old Testament. This is a really important verse; it is a very valuable verse; it has been appropriately labeled, “The GOLDEN RULE”!

As we move in on the immediate context, notice the contrast between judging others (the problem that Jesus is addressing at the beginning of the chapter) and “do to others what you would have them do to you”.

Pastor Brad Dettwyler
February 24, 2019

You may remember what Pastor Stan said while preaching on these verses just a couple weeks ago...

He clarified that this verse is NOT saying that all judging is wrong or that it means we should no longer call sin "sin". He said that the judging Jesus is talking about here is...

"a destructive kind of judging. A condemning or critical spirit." "It is the intent to put someone down or put someone in a negative light."

Later, he went on to talk about how this kind of judging attempts to elevate self while pushing someone else down. Pastor Stan said,

"Remember, Jesus was addressing an audience steeped in religion, where esteem, position, and status were given on the basis of how high one had climbed on the ladder of religiosity. The belief was that if you pray enough, fast enough, or give enough, you could achieve a certain status in the community and be a rung or two above the others. Of course, as you are making the ascent to this "superior" position you'll want to make sure that you step on a few of those people below you. That way you can hinder their progress and make sure you stay on top.

How do you do that? You put people down, criticize their faults, point out their flaws, magnify their weaknesses, and exploit their failures."

Judging and putting someone else down is often done (knowingly or unknowingly) as a selfish attempt to elevate self by pushing someone else down. Do you see the contrast between judging others and the Golden Rule ("do to others what you would have them do to you")?

Judging is a selfish attempt to elevate self while the Golden Rule is a loving, selfless attempt to build up another!

And that brings us to the incredible realities that are captured in the verses immediately before today's passage...

⁷ "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. ⁹ Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰ Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? ¹¹ If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

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Pastor Brad Dettwyler
February 24, 2019

Verse 11 is key in being able to, “do to others what we would have them do to us”. On our own the Golden Rule is difficult (at best) and definitely not sustainable. However, if you have been adopted into God’s family; if you have an IN with the Creator of the universe; if you have a good Heavenly Father who has already poured out incomprehensible blessing and desperately wants you to keep bringing your requests, promising the best gifts in response...

YOU HAVE IT MADE!

YOU DON’T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT YOURSELF ANYMORE!

Your blessing barrels are full and overflowing. You are completely free from the need to worry about yourself and enabled to selflessly love others!

This is a really important part of the message today and I would like to attempt to emphasize it with an illustration...

Join me for a moment in thinking about some of the perks that are enjoyed by United States presidents. As a country, we go to great lengths to make sure that our president is freed from personal concerns and able to focus on their responsibilities.

For example, the White House is an incredibly comfortable place full of amenities and staff to ensure that all of the needs and wants of the first family are met. The White House and surrounding grounds contain a movie-screening room, a bowling alley, a swimming pool, tennis and basketball courts, a jogging track, a state of the art golf simulator, and a putting green, just to name a few.

Its staff includes janitors, groundskeepers, florists, valets, butlers, chefs, pastry chefs, 24-hour cooking staff, physicians, etc... As well as staff that are prepared to run any errand and meet any need the first family encounters.

When it comes to transportation, the president has a number of options...

For ground transportation a fleet of custom designed and manufactured limousines are provided. “The Beast” as the car is nicknamed has its own oxygen supply, a firefighting system, a blood bank of the president’s blood type, infrared video for driving in bad conditions, the ability to shoot tear-gas and smoke grenades if necessary, and I would assume it is comfortable 😊

When it comes to air travel, Marine One is available for short trips and Air Force One for the longer journeys.

Pastor Brad Dettwyler
February 24, 2019

The President of the United States receives a \$400,000 salary, plus a number of other expense accounts and benefits.

Also, their future is very well taken care of. After leaving office they still receive a reduced Salary of \$191,300 (along with other expense accounts and benefits), funds for staff, funds for office space, Secret Service protection, etc...

The point that I want to make is that presidents of the United States are taken care of. They are free from the need to worry about themselves and can direct all of their attention toward their responsibilities.

And the same is true of the child of God. Our Heavenly Father who feeds the birds of the air and clothes the lilies of the field has promised to take care of our needs. He has told us not to worry. He has told us to bring our request to Him and we will receive the best gifts in return! We are the recipients of every spiritual blessing in Christ! Our barrels of blessing are overflowing!

We don't have to worry about ourselves, we don't need to try to elevate ourselves. We are already children of the King and are thus free to love selflessly!

So, as we move into application and spend a few minutes thinking more practically about how we can "do to others what we would have them do to us", we have to start with God as our Heavenly Father!

If you don't know God as your Heavenly Father, I would encourage you and even plead with you to consider the incredible offer that is before you.

John 3:16 says...

¹⁶ "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

John 1:10-13 says...

¹⁰ He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him. ¹¹ He came to his own people, and even they rejected him. ¹² But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. ¹³ They are reborn—not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God.

Pastor Brad Dettwyler
February 24, 2019

Though each of us has sinned and turned away from our Creator, He responded by sending His Son (Jesus) who lived a life completely free from sin, died our death/took our punishment, and then rose from the dead three days later (soundly defeating sin and death).

He did it so that we could be forgiven. He did it so that we could be transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light; from the kingdom of death to the kingdom of life! He did it so that, though we had made ourselves His enemies, we could be adopted into His family and receive all of the blessings that come with being His sons and daughters; with being co-heirs with Christ!

But this adoption and all of the blessings that come with it are not forced upon us. He leaves it to us to decide whether we want to continue as His enemies (headed for destruction) or receive the free gift of eternal life, through Jesus.

We receive it simply by looking to Jesus and putting our trust in Him. Naturally we put our trust in ourselves but to receive this incredible gift we have to understand we can't do this or fix this, we need Jesus!

And when we do... When we look to Jesus for salvation, we are immediately forgiven, clothed in Christ's righteousness, and adopted into His Family! We are taken care of, our barrels of blessings overflow, and we are freed and enabled to love selflessly.

Others of you have been a child of God for a while but you may have forgotten (or not fully realized) who you are and everything you have in Christ. We consistently need to be reminded of the goodness of our Heavenly Father and of everything we are and have because of our adoption through Jesus.

And so, maybe an important application for you is to review the generosity of your Heavenly Father, consider the blessings He has lavished on you, and thus be reminded that you are taken care of and are freed to selflessly love others!

Now that we have talked about the most important piece of application, I would like to spend a few minutes brainstorming a bit and considering some practical scenarios where we might apply this call to "do to others what you would have them do to you".

First, how about when we are tempted to judge and respond to someone with a condemning or critical spirit? In this scenario, how might we "do to others what we would have them do to us"?

Let's put ourselves in their shoes... Is that something we would want others to do to us? How do we feel when someone puts us down? Do we like it when others make assumptions and fail to give us the benefit of the doubt? Of course not!

Pastor Brad Dettwyler
February 24, 2019

See, the golden rule clears the fog of our selfishness and shows us what real love looks like.

What about when we have been wronged? How might we apply this passage in response to those who have irritated us; hurt us; sinned against us? This is the context that we find surrounding the Golden Rule in Luke 6...

²⁷ "But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸ bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. ²⁹ To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either. ³⁰ Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back. ³¹ And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.

The love Jesus calls us to demonstrate is a love that extends to everyone. It is not natural. It is supernatural and only possible through connection with our Heavenly Father, through Jesus, and by the enablement of the Holy Spirit within us. This is Kingdom Love... It's the Kingdom Ethic!

Another place for application is the area of hospitality. We have been talking frequently about hospitality for a couple of years at EBC. We have understood God to be calling us to grow in this area and have considered and implemented various ways of being more hospitable. We have understood that we need to put ourselves in the shoes of our guests and consider what it would be like to be new. Ultimately to express the radical love and hospitality of our Heavenly Father.

I want to let you know that we have recently received a number of wonderful praise reports from guests who have been shown hospitality and warmly received! We are actually receiving these reports pretty regularly and we rejoice in what God is doing in us!

But, let's not let off the gas. There are still occasional reports of someone being met in a cold, unloving, or even critical/judgmental way. All of us have been called as Kingdom People; as children of God, to constantly be considering how we can "do to others as we would have them do to us"! And that includes, constantly putting ourselves in the shoes of guests and seeking to love them and look out for their interests.

Let me quickly throw out a couple other scenarios to consider. How might this passage apply to the way we respond to those in need, to those who are different, to those who are yet to put their trust in Jesus, to those who are wrestling with sin, to unborn babies who are being killed, or to those who are killing unborn babies?

Doing for others as we would want them to do for us does NOT mean we hold back from sharing truth, that we refrain from confronting sin, or compromise in any way. But it does

Pastor Brad Dettwyler
February 24, 2019

change the way we do those things. It means we put ourselves in the others person's shoes and show empathy. It means that when we share truth, it is saturated in love and completely void of self-righteous condemnation. It means we share truth to build up... Not to tear down.

Jesus' words are clearly a call to **think** and to **consider** how we can demonstrate love in all of our interactions. It is a call to be proactive; to pursue opportunities to build up others! **It is the way of our King** and **the ethic of the Kingdom** into which we have been adopted!

As we come to the end of this message, I would like to invite you to sit back and listen to an excerpt from a sermon, given in London on January 29, 1792, by a Baptist preacher named Abraham Booth. I am jumping in the middle of the sermon. It is a sermon on slavery, from Exodus 21:16. As I read, please be encouraged by the example of Abraham Booth as he calls his listeners to join him in putting themselves in the shoes of those who are being grossly mistreated.

"It follows, therefore, that if the lawfulness of purchasing innocent persons for the most degrading and cruel slavery exists among men, it must be a common right, and equally possessed by all nations: nor can the exercise of it have any limitations from principles of a moral nature. No limits can be here assigned, except those of power, of policy, or of inclination.

It would, consequently, be quite as equitable, benevolent, and humane, for the Africans, laden with produce of their own country, annually to visit our English ports, as we do theirs, and for familiar purposes. Yes, they might, if it were in their power, with equal justice and with less dishonor, fit out a hundred and eighty, or two hundred ships, for the port of London, of Bristol, and of Liverpool---ships adapted to the stowage of man, and furnished with a frightful apparatus to render the confinement of Britons completely miserable, as well as perfectly secure.

When this commercial, this man-trading fleet arrived, if cargoes of men, women, and children were not prepared; the officers belonging to each vessel might practice all their arts, to excite a spirit of covetousness and of cruelty in our governors and fellow subjects: in order that, by an armed force, the peaceable inhabitants of the whole villages might be captured---that, in our courts of justice, innocent persons, for the advantage of their judges, might be convicted---that private individuals might kidnap whomsoever they could, and thought saleable---that, by all these infamous means, the ships might be freighted, at every returning season, with forty thousand Britons---and, finally, that all who survive their miserable confinement while on board, might be taken to the best market for the human species; exposed in the most indecent manner, to

Pastor Brad Dettwyler
February 24, 2019

public sale; handled and examined, like so many head of cattle, by their purchasers; consigned over, with their unborn posterity, to the most abject and cruel slavery, from generation to generation; and all for – what?

Here let humanity blush, let mercy weep, and let justice be roused into indignation: but let not Britons forget, that this is a picture, in miniature, of their own behavior toward the Africans!”

Abraham Booth beautifully led his audience in putting themselves in the shoes of another, in pursuit of “doing to others what they would have them to do them”!

God has lovingly and graciously spoken to us through His Word this morning. How is the Holy Spirit calling you to respond? If you are a child of God then you are taken care of and free and even enabled to love selflessly. What does that look like even before we leave this room? What does that look like during the car ride home? What does it look like in all of our interactions this week?

Would you join me in prayerfully considering this and joyfully following His lead? LOVE is the way of our King and The Ethic of His Kingdom!

Matthew 7:12

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"THE KINGDOM ETHIC"

Matthew 7:12

Main Idea: Do to others what you would have them do to you!

The Golden Rule

It's a call to love

All the time ("in everything")

It's proactive ("do")

The Context

It's a summation of the Sermon on the Mount & Old Testament

The contrast with judging others

The source of this love

Application

It starts with God as our Heavenly Father

Considering various scenarios of application

Illustration: Abraham Booth sermon excerpt

Family Life Groups

“The Kingdom Ethic”

Matthew 7:12

Main Idea: Do to others what you would have them do to you!

1) What are some things that your Heavenly Father has provided that free you from needing to worry about yourself?

2) Are there any areas that you are still prone to worry about? Is this an area that you could invite a sibling in Christ or a small group to walk with you and join you in regularly taking it to your Heavenly Father?

3) Can you describe a time when someone has put themselves in your shoes (showed empathy)? Describe the impact it had on you.

4) Has the Holy Spirit brought anyone or any situations to mind where you could grow in “do(ing) to others what you would have them do to you”?