

22.

## The Golden Rule

### (How We Must Treat Others)

How many caterpillars does it take to change a lightbulb? The answer is irrelevant; caterpillars aren't suitable for changing lightbulbs, that's not their function. Now most people follow the principle of force. Even many who consider themselves spiritually regenerated as caterpillars transformed into butterflies, abuse others nonetheless. These selfish "butterflies" are merely winged adult caterpillars.

#### The Right Path

Countering the aforementioned principle of "might makes right" is the ethic of reciprocity (often called the "Golden Rule") which is absolutely necessary for humanity to coalesce. The great philosopher K'ung Ch'iu, known as Confucius (551-479 BC) taught "do not to others what you would not wish done to yourself" (Confucian Analects Book XII, section 2). This teaching crystallized a core principle of justice. Confucius explained this precept with examples of misconduct to be avoided, and completed it with various examples of kindness, such as treating others as honored guests, constituting a Golden Rule.<sup>1</sup>

If there was no God, people would do well to be moral without religion. In that case basic morality would be an evolutionary advantage. We should recognize the palpable inherent value of our fellow sentients regardless. Besides, reciprocal kindness and consideration has proven to be beneficial in our natural world. If you only act moral because you believe in a God who will reward and punish, you would not exude morality; you would be a bootlicker. However, faith in God can certainly help cultivate true morality.

Although "Christians" often fail to practice the Golden Rule, Jesus of Nazareth exemplified this principle perfectly. In his Sermon on the Mount he taught "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them" (Matthew 7:12). This teaching crystallized a principle of charity. Jesus explained this precept with numerous examples of kindness, and completed it with numerous examples of prohibited conduct, noted in Christian scripture, constituting a Golden Rule.

When it's said that we must treat others the way we want to be treated, that is true in a general sense, not in an absolute sense. It is treating others with kindness and consideration whenever warranted. Common sense tells us to take other people's varying personalities, needs and desires into consideration and adjust accordingly.

Treating our kinsfolk in ways that we would hate to be treated denies Christ's ethical teaching. Since Christ preached fairness, ostracizing others and showing contempt (without justification) can not be Christian since we would hate to be ostracized or viewed contemptuously. Neither can judgmental condemnation be justified.

Everyone following the golden rule would eradicate hatred, warfare, unfair competition, and every form of ugliness and evil manifested towards anyone. For those who hate being lied to or deceived, logically, we must be consistently truthful. If we desire love, mercy, compassion, and understanding, we should be merciful, loving, compassionate, and understanding. If we were destitute or helpless, we'd welcome benevolence and help; true Christians offer assistance to the needy. Following the golden rule requires putting others first, being mindful of how we impact others, recognizing our errors, and making amends. Treating others as we'd like being treated may require mentally reversing positions with them, putting ourselves in their place, and imagining that they were acting and we were receiving. Christ lived life according to this rule, expecting that His disciples follow him.<sup>2</sup>

## Brass Rules

Most ancient philosophers had a limited understanding or “brass rule” not a golden rule. Their philosophies denounced treating others in ways you would dislike being treated (negative, passive prohibitions) while neglecting to address treating others in ways you’d welcome (positive, active affirmations). Judaism’s “brass rule” was not like Jesus’ rule; the Levitical command “Love thy neighbor as thyself” was limited to fellow Israelites. Christ’s parable of the good Samaritan introduced universal kindness. This also contrasts with what Islamic theologians promoted, which was limited to treating others of equal social class the way you’d want to be treated. Their idea of what constituted distinct social classes was often unjust.

Also, this golden principle is often misunderstood as: Treating others how they treat you (another Brass Rule). Even if we’re being treated badly (minor offenses), two wrongs don’t make a right; we can choose a different path. Treating others \*better\* than they treat you is light shining in darkness. However, because anyone may follow the Iron Rule (might makes right, and whatever I can take is mine) we must guard against manipulative people. ....be therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves (Matthew 10:16).

Unfortunately, people often misconstrue other’s motives, imagining that they’re being ill-treated, then purposely respond negatively. Many people label me as having bad intentions shortly after meeting me. Consequently, I’m often mistreated and negated, although I’m a loving person with good intentions. People who think badly about others create a self-fulfilling prophecy, eventually provoking and upsetting the person until they fulfill the bad expectation. Analyzing others often fails miserably; see 25.Communication Fails.

Also, Christ taught his followers that God sends one way love to everyone, treating many far better than they would treat Him. This is called grace (unmerited favor). So Christ’s disciples must not demand reciprocal love. They must treat others better than they are treated to honestly represent Christ. However, this in no way necessitates being abused or taken advantage of. There are many whom we must stay far away from, and respect their being a fellow sentient creature at a distance. Others must be severely punished, as the aspect of life that requires our greatest love is Justice.

## Cooperation or Competition

Most people won’t heed the Golden Rule, supposing that the rule of competition or “Survival of the Fittest” benefits them. Yet research shows that cooperation is much more important than competition for survival in the wild. The survival of species often depends on the animal’s majority decision instead of on an Alpha male. Even Charles Darwin saw this. However, leading atheist Aldous Huxley used Darwin’s survival of the fittest idea but spat out the cooperative elements.

Most people on Earth are combative not cooperative. This isn’t necessarily physical violence, it’s often a matter of people trying to best or dominate others in every aspect of life. Perhaps those who act like they’re better than others can go through the motions of following some semblance of the Golden Rule for their own benefit. Perhaps by doing that it may eventually become heartfelt.

## The Hippie Rule

The way some people would like to be treated includes everyone giving them money. Some people want you to share your vehicle and then wreck your car. Others might want to share spouses. Children want to be rewarded instead of punished when they misbehave. Some criminals want to imagine that they are victims of racial prejudice instead of admitting guilt and accepting punishment. However, this hippy version of the golden rule is illegitimate since the golden rule is designed to strengthen the fabric of society, not rip it apart.

Although both Confucius and Jesus of Nazareth promoted systems of universal fairness, neither promoted a system of universal equality or Communism. Although everyone may have a spirit of equal value, our variegated biology, temperaments, talents, and life choices must be taken into consideration. Immediate gratification must be sacrificed when it conflicts with greater long term benefit. Individual whims must be sacrificed when they conflict with the greater good of society.

### Prerequisites for Following this Rule

**The Golden Rule is a universal denominator which is absolutely essential for human rights.** However, without truly loving one's fellows, such proposals consistently fail, like broken peace treaties.(3) The love I'm referring to is ag-ah'-pay, a Greek word translated into charity or love in Corinthians chapter 13 of Christian scripture. Apathy would quash the passions which cloud our judgment and prevent us from following the Golden Rule, instead of fooling ourselves into thinking that we are exemplary examples when we're not.

The principle "Lay not up your treasures upon earth"....(Matthew 6:19-21) is also essential. Let's say you're driving a luxury car, and someone hits it. If your heart is on wealth and worldly status, you'll be outraged and charge the person an exorbitant sum to repair your vehicle. This would greatly harm a poor person. However, if your heart is on others, you'll overlook the accident, and instead drive a dented up vehicle. Since if you hit someone else you would want them to overlook it, you must do likewise.

### Four General Types of People

While attempting to identify personality types from limited contact with people is neither wise nor justifiable, we can certainly identify people from ongoing and consistent behavior patterns. From a lifetime of experience I have identified four distinct behavioral types: predators, bullies, "apathetics" (a word I coined), and followers of the Golden Rule. Predators are those who are dedicated to destroying, brutalizing, tormenting, or robbing others by force or subterfuge. Only a small percentage of people in North America are overt predators since our society disapproves of blatant predators and punishes them with imprisonment or stiff fines. Numerous countries have or had overt predators as their leaders or prominent citizens, such as tyrants who unapologetically follow the Iron Rule. Here's an illustration:

A lion and a cheetah made an agreement to hunt wild beasts together. The lion was to use his strength, while the cheetah was to use his greater speed. After taking numerous animals, the lion divided the spoils into three portions. "I'll take the first share because I am king" he said. "The second share will be mine because I was your partner in the chase" he said. "As for the third share" he said to the cheetah, "this share will be a great source of harm to you, believe me, if you do not yield it to me. And, by the way, get lost!"-----paraphrased from Aesop's fable The Lion and the Wild Ass.(4)

\*Covert\* predators unequivocally follow the Iron Rule as well although they won't admit it. Many are skilled in presenting themselves as pillars of the community, while the socially awkward who follow the golden rule are sometimes perceived as the undesirables. Another term for predators is sociopaths. Predators are certainly bullies, but bullies herein refers to non-predators who try to dominate others. Street gang membership is a prime example of something that cultivates predators.

Bullies comprise a large percentage of people and come in every size, race, sex, religion, orientation, background, age, and social standing. Besides physical force and intimidation, bullying is verbal domination and manipulation. People don't stop being bullies because they age or after they become parents, and may even become worse. The tactics simply change from mostly physical force, intimidation, and simple taunts or insults to more sophisticated forms of bullying. Bullies are also easily identifiable; they're usually in a position of power over the ones they bully. Bullies can be quite vocal, opinionated, and loud. Some talk so relentlessly that you cannot get one word in, or are overbearing in

other ways. Others overuse leaf-blowers, hammers, chainsaws, or vacuums (perhaps subconsciously as a grotesque phallic symbol) which trumpets their presence to the world while drowning others out.

Besides overt threats, some use relentless prodding, nagging, or shouting. Some will cause a major nuisance, while demanding that something minor that you do is a nuisance. Others lock people in rooms or lock away access to something important. Food is sometimes used as a talisman, by someone either withholding it, or demanding that you eat something you dislike or eating more than you'd like. Some constantly criticize, find fault, or offer unsolicited advice with unwanted solutions. Incorporating lying, flattery, and bait and switch tactics are also bullying, since that's using people through manipulation. If you rebel against these behaviors, bullies may threaten to remove you from their home, apartment complex, job, or club, or simply suggest that you leave.

The operative word to describe bullying is CONTROL. If it was possible, bullies might open up someone's head, remove their brain, jump in, and install a steering wheel. Others would hook up cables to someone's limbs to operate them like a marionette. When confronted about their behavior, bullies usually justify themselves, often ridicule the complainant as being overly sensitive, exaggerate the complainant's faults, and bring up their past mistakes, redirect focus on other people's misbehavior, or use twisted logic to explain themselves. Sometimes bullies apologize for their words and behavior but keep repeating the same things. Most bullies are in complete denial; they consider themselves nicer than others.

Bullies usually go unpunished and are occasionally rewarded, unlike overt predators. Yet society can advance to where nice people are rewarded and bullies are rejected instead of the other way around. Instead, people take the easy way out and fold before the immediate whims of others instead of making the extra effort to correct inappropriateness. No bully is a Christian, since Christians are likened to lambs. The competitive business world certainly cultivates bullies.

Apathetics are calm and non-disruptive, mind their own business, and are usually nice. An apathetic can become a bully when the opportunity arises, and sometimes bullies become apathetic, blasé, or subject to other bullies. Apathetics are usually pleasant to be around but won't help you when you're in need. That contrasts with bullies, who often support others. However, having dependents is enjoyable if it feeds your superior attitude. Besides, bullies make decisions on behalf of their dependents against their wishes or without consulting them. Prime examples of something that cultivates apathy is being a barfly or television junky. The fourth group follows some semblance of the golden rule. This requires practice, practice, practice.

#### Parody of the Golden Rule

Some mock the Golden Rule with "Whoever has the gold makes the rules;" today's version of the Iron Rule. Whereas in ancient times physical force or blatant barbarism ruled, in technologically advanced societies, the wealthy, who often acquire financial strength through manipulation and subterfuge, temporarily rule. Actually, whoever has the gold does make the rules; God has all the gold and temporarily loans it to various people. Those whom He loans it to, who thus declare that they themselves rule, by parodying the Golden Rule, will be destroyed.

#### Follow the Yellow Brick Road

We may be ethical on the micro-scale; being loving towards immediate family members, feeding a hungry acquaintance, or using jumper cables on a fellow employee's car that doesn't start. However, we may be unethical on the macro-scale by opposing socialized healthcare, supporting foreign wars, and upholding other policies that result in various injustices.

In other words, those who acknowledge the Golden Rule are on varying gradations on this pathway. Some act nice to gain people's favor and avoid harming others in order to avoid retaliation.

Many people stop right there. Others possess a spiritual concept of impending Judgment, or at least “What goes around comes around.” Some sense of justice and moral uprightness usually accompanies this thinking. Thankfully, quite a few people embrace these ideas. However, there’s much to be desired.

Then there are those who, in addition to understanding the justice concept of an all-seeing Eye, or karma, often act out of love instead of the need for “fire insurance.” These sympathetic people are exhibiting behavior that is universally considered Christian. However, loving those like yourself is relatively easy. For many with special needs, treating them how you would prefer being treated, yet purblind to their situation could be woefully insufficient or inappropriate. What’s good for one person can actually harm another.

Finally, there is the extremely rare individual who has a wellspring of empathy for everyone around. As mentioned before, an exemplary example of following the Golden Rule would be allowing someone who hit your car in traffic to go without paying for it. And instead of paying for minor damage yourself, you can drive a beat up car and donate that extra money to charitable causes, instead of worshipping something that pollutes our environment. Besides, the Lord Jesus Christ was plenty beat up on the cross; He expended His entire life for others.

Moreover, following the Golden Rule should be a lifetime growth process. Furthermore, we cannot be Christians and yet hold on to the world’s values, we must choose. By following Christ and applying agape, we can effect change and restructure society to where people are rewarded for being equitable.

