

The Code of the Kingdom (aka The Golden Rule)

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[0:00] Everybody's got a motto they're living by. Think of a motto as a flag that you raise every morning. Maybe it's Carpe Diem, seize the day.

Maybe it's just do it. Maybe it's Semper Fidelis, always faithful, U.S. Marine Corps.

Well, today, Jesus is going to say, Oh, dear citizen of my kingdom, every morning you raise the banner of the golden rule.

You live according to this one rule which summarizes all I've taught you. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

This is the banner that flies over us as a church. This is a banner that flies over us individually as followers of Jesus. This is what compels us in our interactions with the people God brings across our path.

[1:09] So the golden rule is Jesus Christ's all-encompassing command to seek the good of everyone. And we do that by putting ourselves in their place, seeking their good.

So brothers and sisters, as citizens of the kingdom, the golden rule must govern all your relationships.

That's the claim Jesus is making on us this morning. In order to help you see that, I want to point to four clarifiers of the golden rule.

The golden rule is a conclusion. The golden rule is a command. The golden rule is a call to use your sanctified imagination.

And the golden rule completes, fulfills the law and the prophets. And so let me read it for us.

[2:17] Jesus says, So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the law and the prophets. This rule governs all of our relationships as Christians.

And so let's get into this first clarifying point. The golden rule is a conclusion. Do you see the word so in verse 12?

It's the first word of the sentence. The first word of the golden rule. So. So whatever in the ESV. So in everything, says the NIV. So.

And so you may be sitting there like, Hey, yo, hey, so. So what? So, so what? So what's the big deal about so? Well, insert here that wonderful after school special conjunction junction.

You know what? Conjunction junction. What's your function? Hooking up words, phrases, and clauses.

[3:25] So that word so is a conjunction. It's connecting two things. What are, what's that word connecting? It's connecting all of the body on the Sermon on the Mount, what Jesus has been talking about, with this one sentence in verse 12.

It's connecting them. It's making a conclusion. That's why that so is there. It's a conjunction.

It's a conjunction. This conclusion that Jesus draws from his sermon. He's saying, So whatever you do, whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the law and the prophets.

This conclusion is a summary of the entire sermon. And so here's what this means for us. It's, it's, think about the golden rule as a cliff notes for the Sermon on the Mount.

You can just bring it wherever you want. And so let's just say that you're tempted, you're really ticked off at somebody, and you want to, you're like murderous intent in your heart towards them, and you just want to cut them to pieces with your words, and something in the back of your mind says, you know what, I probably shouldn't do that as a citizen of the kingdom.

[4:38] In fact, I think that Jesus said something about that in the Sermon on the Mount, but I don't know where. Go golden at that point. Go golden. Be thinking, okay, if, if someone were angry with me, how would I want to be treated by that person?

And then I'm going to treat them that way. That's how you go golden. It summarizes the entire sermon. It's, it's this, this little sentence that gets a ton done for a citizen of the kingdom. Someone does you wrong, and you want to retaliate. You want an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. And you start thinking, oh, you know what, Jesus probably said something in Matthew. I don't remember where he said that, but I can go golden. I can apply the golden rule, because it summarizes everything he said. So how would I want to be treated? If someone wronged me, if I wronged someone, how would I want to be treated at that point? And I'm going to do that unto this person.

[5:49] If you're tempted to judge another believer, another person, if you can't remember what Jesus said in Matthew chapter 7, go golden. Do unto that person what you would want them to do, unto you are on safe, golden ground.

Jesus is giving us a summary of the entire Sermon on the Mount. It's his, it's a conclusion he's drawing. And what he's basically saying is, put yourself in another person's place, and then ask yourself how you would want to be treated, and then you go and treat that person that way. So the golden rule of the kingdom is this versatile summary that Jesus gives us that we can really apply in any situation with any other person.

It's absolutely brilliant. Jesus is setting us up to live for the kingdom. You can call this a kingdom code of ethics in one sentence.

J.C. Ryle, a pastor from a bygone area. I think he was English, and I would try to use my English accent, which ends up coming off as an Australian accent, so I won't do it.

[7:08] He says this, the golden rule, it settles a hundred difficult points, which in a world like this are continually arising between man and man.

It prevents the necessity of laying down endless little rules for our conduct in specific cases. It frees us. We can bring the golden rule into any relationship.

It's a versatile summary command that can be applied to any relationship you are encountering right now. It also goes beyond.

Let's say that you're having an interaction with somebody, and nowhere in the Bible does it address this particular kind of interaction. Go golden.

Do unto that person as you would want them to do to you. What this means is that because this is a conclusion, we cannot snip it from the rest of the Sermon on the Mount.

[8:21] We can't take the golden rule in isolation. It's vitally connected to the rest of the Sermon on the Mount. Tell me, do you recognize these words from our nation's history?

Four score and seven years ago, our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Remember where that's from? The Gettysburg Address. Abraham Lincoln. Four-minute speech, and here's how he ended it. Now, if we just took that last concluding remark by President Lincoln in isolation, it would be somewhat silly because that concluding remark is driven by, it is empowered by, there's force behind it from the rest of the speech.

The rest of the speech drives that last sentence that President Lincoln made. You cannot take the golden rule in isolation because the entirety of the Sermon on the Mount drives with force the golden rule which concludes it.

So the golden rule provides a very potent summary of kingdom ethics and we are to live every day according to the golden rule.

[10:06] So we can put it this way. Do you want to live in light of the Sermon on the Mount? Live according to the golden rule. That's what Jesus is giving us here.

Now at this point, I want to ask you a probing question. Do you have a relationship right now with someone that needs the golden rule applied?

Are you in relationship with someone that's just waiting for you to think about them in a kingdom way?

I do. I'm guessing everyone in the room does. So the golden rule is a concluding summary of this greatest sermon ever preached by the greatest man that ever walked the face of the earth, Jesus. Point two. The golden rule is a command. It's a command from the lips of our king. So what we see happening in verse 12 is that Jesus, our king, commands us, his 21st century disciples, to relate to others in a certain way.

[11:33] To do to others what we would want them to do to us. He commands us to live according to the golden rule.

Now, I realize that the golden rule gets thrown around a lot. It can sometimes be thought of as a golden recommendation or a golden suggestion or a golden idea.

But for citizens of the kingdom, it is a golden rule, a golden command. I mean, just think of the one speaking the words. Jesus has a unique authority.

He's God's anointed one, the Messiah, the one of whom the Old Testament law and prophets pointed to who would come and establish God's kingdom, God's saving reign on earth.

He is Emmanuel. He is God with us. And as God in the flesh, Jesus speaks with an authority unlike any other.

[12:41] Just look down to verses 28 and 29 of chapter 7. If you were there when Jesus was preaching this sermon on the hillside, you would be surrounded by people doing this.

And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching for he was teaching them as one who had authority and not as their scribes.

This is the guy that spoke of like this in Matthew 6. You've heard that it was said, but I say. Jesus speaks with the force of divine authority.

He spoke that way then and he's speaking that way this morning here to us. the golden rule is a command.

Now, if you look back at 7:12, here's where the command actually shows up. So whatever you wish that others would do to you, we haven't hit the command yet. So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them.

[13:50] The command is that word do. Do also to them for this is the law and the prophets. Do to them. You've got to see that do. You've got to feel it as packing a punch of the Messiah.

Authority right there. Do this. It's not a recommendation. It's not a suggestion. It's a command. A command from the lips of our king.

And this command from the lips of our king concerns others. Do also to them. So here's what's going on so far.

Jesus, our king, is commanding us as disciples to do something to them. He doesn't elaborate on who they are.

He just calls them them. So he's talking about people. But if you look at the beginning of 7:12, we get a little bit more clarity. So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them.

[14:59] So it's people we're in relationship with. And that word others comes from a word that we get the word anthropology from. Just a general word meaning mankind, all men.

He's not very specific. He's purposefully generic. Because Jesus is being hypothetical. He's saying anyone anyone, anyone, whatever you wish that others, whoever, anyone that crosses your path, whatever you wish that they would do to you, do also to them.

And I know what you may be kind of experiencing right now when you encounter a general word like them or others, it lacks some specificity.

and what that means, what can happen then is it's possible for us to be all, okay, that's a good general rule to live by. And we don't take it the next step.

We just live and are content with the general kind of vague word them and others. And what I want to help you do right now is go from them and others to concrete people.

[16:16] So I haven't, I realize I haven't yet fully unpacked what we are to do to them, but I want to just take a minute here and linger a little bit more on them.

Who is them? Well, we are to live out the golden rule to real people in real time. Husbands, you are to live according to the golden rule with your wives and wives with your husbands. Parents, you are to live out the golden rule with your children. And children, you are to live out the golden rule with your parents. Brothers and sisters, Jesus is calling you to live the golden rule with each other. Miracles do happen. Extended family, in-laws, even exes, we are to live the golden rule towards. Classmates and teachers, governing authorities, supervisors at work, people you oversee, workmates, teammates, coaches, fellow performers, orchestra, thespians, anyone.

[17:34] Specific people. Your neighbor next door to you. What is to govern your relationship with them? The golden rule. It's the code of the kingdom.

With all of his authority, Jesus is saying, you do to others as you would want them to do to you. This is a hallmark of my kingdom. I want you to advance my kingdom one golden rule opportunity at a time.

now, here's what I'd like you to do this morning. Pick somebody. Pick someone. A person in your life who you know God would want you to pursue the golden rule with.

Pick someone. Now, don't make the mistake of thinking that the golden rule, because it concerns others, is just to be limited to kind of a horizontal relationship.

We treat others according to the golden rule because Jesus commands it. We love others this way because we love our king and seek to obey all that he commanded.

[18:52] And so, if I were to ask you, well, why would you want to pursue the golden rule with your, this person? And you say, well, you know what? I really would like peace in our relationship. I would say, me too.

I hope that's the case, but are there any other reasons why you would pursue the golden rule? And if you were to say something to the extent that, well, ultimately, the reason why I'm going to live according to the golden rule with this person is to please my king, is to obey what he requires, is to do what's good and pleasing in his sight because he commands it out to me, you're in a good spot. Ultimately, the golden rule is something that we obey. We live the golden rule with others in order to obey our king.

It's all ultimately about Jesus. These aren't suggestions. This is not a recommendation. This is not a good idea.

idea. This is a command. We are to do this to them. We are to treat them as we would want them to treat us.

[20:09] Okay, so I've sought to establish so far that the golden rule is a summary conclusion and that it's a command. It's all about Jesus, but right now you may be asking a question like this.

Okay, I buy it, like, okay, I buy it. But come on, let's get down to the nitty-gritty. How am I supposed to do this? Well, the golden rule is a call to use your imagination for the good of others.

It's how we do it. The golden rule is technically what's called a conditional clause, which means this. Remember that command, do also to them? It doesn't mean much until you realize what Jesus says right in front of it gives it its meaning. So let's look at verse 12 again.

So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them. Do that. Whatever you wish that others would do to you, you do to them.

[21:21] That's what we do. So what does Jesus say? Treat others the way you would want to be treated. Jesus is wanting to use us to bless those people he has placed us among.

He wants us to advance his kingdom one relationship at a time by living out the golden rule. Let's take a little bit closer look at what Jesus is saying here.

Jesus is saying put yourself in the shoes of other people. Now, you need to realize that in order to do that, people need a reversing of their natural way of thinking.

The kingdom of God is all about people. The saving reign of Jesus is all about people. And so it makes, it should not be a surprise to you that the command above all is a command of how we relate to others.

Jesus is calling us to a certain way of thinking. A reversing of the natural flow of thinking in a sinner's mind.

[22:45] Naturally, we approach relationships with a kind of earthly thinking that goes like this. Well, what can I get from that? What can I get from her?

What can I get from him? What can I get from this situation? But Jesus is commanding a new kingdom approach to relationships that requires a new kingdom way of thinking.

And it's not what can I get? It is what can I give? What can I give? I remember my dad telling me when I was a young man, Mike, there are two kinds of people in the world.

There are takers and there are givers. You be a giver, Mike. Jesus is saying on a grander scale, as my citizens of my kingdom, we seek to do good to others.

We give. Now, in order for this reversing of thinking to take place, it requires a miraculous feat of divine engineering.

[23:52] I'm not sure if you guys know this, but up until 1900, the Chicago River ran through Chicago and emptied into Lake Michigan.

And it was causing all sorts of problems for the city of Chicago. And so someone got the great idea, well, why don't we just reverse the flow of the river? So in 1900, through a real miraculous feat of civil engineering, the flow of the Chicago River was reversed.

Instead of flowing flowing into Lake Michigan, it flowed out of Lake Michigan. And it had quite the effect.

All of us have a default thought flow. A default thought flow that falls into this what can I get kind of thinking.

But when a sinner comes to Christ in repentance and faith, God begins a miraculous feat of divine engineering. He begins to reverse the flow of our thoughts from what can I get to what can I give.

[25:01] He radically reorientates our heart from ourselves to Him. And when our hearts are living for Him, we are going to want to do good to our neighbors.

When we love God, we will want to love our neighbors. Matthew 22. And that's what Jesus is getting at here. Jesus is calling us to a kingdom way of thinking.

This way of thinking begins at our conversions, but then is strengthened day after day, morning after morning, as we seep our minds in God's Word and pray and pray and pray.

Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done. Oh, Father, I'm asking, I'm seeking, I'm praying, I'm knocking, I'm coming after You, I'm pursuing this.

I want to think like a kingdom citizen. I want to love others as You would call me to. Help me, Father, with this. And as we seek Him and trust Him, He strengthens the flow.

[26:15] He gives us the grace we need to live the way He's calling us to live. And so this divine engineering of changing the flow of our thoughts is a work of God radically changes us.

Let's take this another step. Now that we've talked about this reversal of our thinking, that we move from thinking of ourselves to thinking of others, then what?

How are we to live out the golden rule with others? How are we to do whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them?

How do we do that? Well, this is where you employ your sanctified imagination. You've got to think different. You've got to think about people different.

And here's how it works. When there's this reversing of heart from me to others, we employ our sanctified imagination to put ourselves in the shoes of others.

[27:34] white guy living in Kenosha.

It doesn't really take a lot of imagination to do that because it's built into me. But when I'm confronted with someone who's unlike me, who's not a white middle class male, then I'm challenged in my imagination.

But I want to imagine. I want to imagine what it's like to grow up in Frank neighborhood as a black male. I want to put myself in his shoes.

do unto others as you would have them do unto you. I want to understand.

I want to imagine what it is like to live to live under the poverty level.

[28:46] I want to understand what it's like to live as a homeless woman in Kenosha when it's December and the temperature's dropping.

I want to understand what it's like to live as a white 30 year old mom of three. I want to understand that.

I want to put myself in her shoes. That's where your imagination comes in. It is potent.

Because when you start putting yourself in the shoes of others, do you know what happens? You begin to dignify that person. You begin to realize, oh, this person is of tremendous worth in God's eyes.

They are an image bearer of God regardless of their gender, regardless of their race, their sexual orientation, regardless of their socioeconomic status.

[29:44] They are an image bearer and therefore they have intrinsic worth. And I will dignify them because of that. And so when I start thinking that way and you start thinking that way, we're going golden.

Golden. but it doesn't end there. You move from dignifying someone through your imagination to then identifying with someone in your imagination.

Oh, what would it be like to grow up in the Wilson neighborhood if I was a 13-year-old black young man? What would that be like? What is it like during the summertime when I'm hanging out with my friends and black and whites are just cruising around our neighborhood all the time?

What effect would that have on me? I start to identify. And when I start to identify with someone, I begin to empathize with them.

I start to feel for them. I'm moved by that. Dignify. Identify.

[30:57] Empathize. D-I-E. Dignify. Identify. Empathize. In order for me to get outside of myself, I've got to die to myself.

I've got to dignify. I've got to identify. I've got to empathize. And when that falls into place, that compassion compels me to do also to them.

It drives me. This just doesn't happen when you're eating your cereal in the morning. You've got to give this stuff time.

You've got to actually let yourself enter into somebody's else experience. You've got to be thoughtful, intentional. You may not want to feel what you will feel, but you step in.

You, by faith, Lord Jesus, help me to identify. Jesus isn't calling us to something here something here that he himself didn't do.

[32:14] If there's anybody that lived the golden rule, it's him. He dignified us. Were we sinners? Oh, yeah. Would that stop him from doing something?

No. We were valuable in his eyes because we are his image bearers. God's eyes. He and he actually stepped into our shoes by becoming a man.

Dignified. He identified with us. He walked this planet for 33 years. He knows everything that we've experienced firsthand.

He is a sympathetic high priest. priest. He empathizes with us. Remember at the end of Matthew 9, Jesus is walking around and he sees these people who are harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd and he out of compassion moves.

He had compassion on them. Where did that go? Oh, he died. He went all the way for us.

[33:24] He lived out the golden rule on a blood red cross for us. We've got a king who's walked it.

He's calling us to something he himself has done. He knows the golden rule firsthand. In fact, you are here this morning because he lived the golden rule towards you.

Another way you can sum up the golden rule to do unto others as you would have them do unto you is to love your neighbor as yourself. Now, we talked about this call to use our imagination for the good of others.

It is a God glorifying good. But I've got to be honest with you about something. There's no promise of reciprocity.

There's no promise when you move towards someone out of a heart to obey the golden rule that it's going to come back at you in the same way. Jesus isn't saying here, hey, you scratch their back, they'll scratch yours.

[34:48] He's not saying that. This isn't some kind of utilitarian social engineering Jesus has got going on here. No, he says this.

He says, you love these people, you put yourself in their shoes, you feel what they're feeling, and you move to them, you do good to them, without expecting anything back.
let me ask you a question.

When you start using your imagination this way out of obedience to your king, you start approaching people this way in order to advance his kingdom, why would you do this? Why would you put yourself in someone else's shoes if you have no personal gain from it? Why would you pursue someone without any promise of benefit?

[35:53] it? Well, earlier I made the case, well, it's a command, you obey Jesus, that's enough. But Jesus doesn't limit it there.

Look what he says. So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them for, means reason, for this is the law and the prophets.

prophets. The golden rule fulfills the law and the prophets. It completes the law and the prophets. Not only does the golden rule conclude the sermon, not only is it a command, not only is it a call to use our sanctified imaginations for other people's goods, it fulfills the law and the prophets. prophets. In other words, it's a summary of all of God's will revealed in the Old Testament. Let me remind you of Jesus' opening words at the body of his sermon in Matthew 5, 17.

[36:59] Would you turn there with me? Jesus says, Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them.

For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Jesus came to fulfill the law and the prophets.

And we can ask the question, well how did you do that, Jesus? And there are three ways he did it. First one is this. He fulfilled the prophecies in the prophets about the coming Messiah. This child born to us, whose government would be on his shoulders, that his reign would never end, he would sit on the throne of David.

Isaiah 9, 6, and 7, that's talking about Jesus. And he fulfilled it. He fulfilled the law and the prophets by being the Messiah. That's one way.

Another way that he fulfilled the law and the prophets is in his teaching. He clarified the true meaning of the law and the prophets. That's what Matthew 6, you've heard that I would said, but I say to you six times over again.

[38:12] He is fulfilling the true meaning of the law and the prophets. And finally, he fulfilled all the requirements of the law and the prophets by living a perfect, sinless life.

He lived out what he laid out in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus fulfilled the law and the prophets by obeying the true meaning of the law and prophets every moment of every day, of every week, of every year of his 33 years.

Perfectly. Here's what this means. Jesus is the golden rule incarnate. That's what that means. He lived it out. Jesus not just commanded it. He did. He didn't just model it.

He did that. Jesus, by dying on the cross, the golden rule on the blood red cross, by dying on the cross for us, he makes the golden rule possible for us to actually live.

[39:26] As new creations, born of the spirit, we are now able to live out the golden rule. and not only are we able to, he commands it.

He calls us to it. So, Jesus, the Messiah, fulfills the law and the prophets. Jesus, the teacher, fulfills the law and the prophets.

And Jesus, the perfect human, fulfills the law and the prophets. prophets. And he did it all so that we could live out the golden rule with others.

And when we do, God's kingdom is advanced. This morning, I sought to show you that the golden rule is the conclusion of the body of the Sermon on the Mount.

that the golden rule is a command from the lips of our king. That the golden rule is a call to use our imagination for the good of others. It's a call to die, to dignify, to identify, to empathize with others.

[40:43] And then finally, the golden rule completes the law and the prophets. prophets. When we live out the golden rule, we please our heavenly father and the kingdom of Jesus is advanced.

So this morning, we've lifted up a banner over our church. The banner of the golden rule. And I just want to let you know that banner flies.

It flies off the blood red cross of Jesus. He made it possible. And he calls us to it.

Let's pray. God in heaven, Father, we just confess that we do not live the golden rule day to day, hour by hour, but we want to.

God, would you give us the grace for the balance of this day to do unto others as we would have them do to us. That we would love our neighbors as ourselves. And God, we would ask that through our humble, broken steps of obedience that you would advance your kingdom.

[42:09] Let your kingdom come. Let your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus' name, amen.

Amen. Amen. Thank you.