

5—The Golden Rule and Its Context

Matthew 5:38-48; 7:12; Luke 6:27-36



1. In Matthew's account, the Golden Rule is stated in Matthew 7:12. However, in the Luke context it is found in Luke 6:31 which is in a nearly identical context to Matthew 5:38-48. What is the main theme of this context?
2. The passage Jesus quotes in Matthew 5:38 is often attacked as a vengeful law. Parts of it are found in the following passages (Exodus 21:23-25; Leviticus 24:19-20; Deuteronomy 19:21). Yet, how might we view this law as an act of mercy?
3. Jesus teaches a higher level of mercy through three illustrations. First, notice Matthew 5:39. Which cheek is slapped in verse 39? How does a right-handed person slap another on the specified cheek? Which is more insulting—to get slapped with the flat of the hand or the back of the hand? What point is Jesus making in this text? How did Jesus react when insulted (1 Peter 2:21-24)?
4. Jesus teaches a higher level of mercy through three illustrations. The second illustration is found in verse 40. How might Exodus 22:26-27 help us understand this illustration? Should a Christian use legal recourse to settle disputes (1 Corinthians 6:1-8; 9:12)? Why or why not?

5. Jesus teaches a higher level of mercy through three illustrations. The third illustration involves our response to being “compelled” into service (Matthew 5:41; cp. 27:32). What can be and what should be our attitude when others ask for or insist upon our help?

6. In Matthew 5:42 Jesus insists upon giving personally to others who are in need. What might be our response to those in need and what does a negative response often say about our hearts?

7. In Matthew 5:43-48 Jesus turns His attention to “loving” your enemies. Below are the four Greek words commonly used for “love” in the first century. Define each and circle the word Jesus uses here.

- STORGE—
- EROS—
- PHILIA—
- AGAPE—

8. What are the three practical methods Jesus provides for how we ought to respond to our enemies (Matthew 5:44)? Can you think of a time using this method has helped change or improve your relationship with another individual?

9. When we only love or greet those who love or greet us back, who are we most like (Matthew 5:46-47)? When we are willing to reach out to those who hate us, who are we truly emulating (Matthew 5:48; cp. Genesis 1:27)?

10. What does God do for both the “*evil and the good*” and “*the just and the unjust*” (Matthew 5:45)? Will this type of consistency in goodness always have a positive impact? Why is it important to be both optimistic and realistic as we consider these expectations from Jesus?