

Is There a Secret to Healthy Relationships?

Several years ago a Southern California newspaper, reported on a peace march that began in Los Angeles. By the time it reached Barstow, about 120 miles away, there were only about half of the marchers left. Soon the ones who remained began arguing among themselves. They divided along two lines; the real walkers against those who were riding in vehicles. In addition to that, they fought over the dress code. They decided to hold an election, but then disagreed over who could vote, finally allowing even small children to vote. After that, the election was declared invalid. By the time this peace march ended, many went away not speaking to each other.

Each of us is far from perfect and we have all faced problems in our relationships with other people. What does the scripture teach us about this area of our brokenness? Have you considered, lately, the Golden Rule? ‘Do unto others as you would have them do unto you’ (Matthew 7:12). I want to make two primary points that I believe will help us to better understand what it really means. First of all, the Golden Rule is...

The Standard that Shatters Our Self-Confidence

The ‘Golden Rule’, as it has been called, is believed by many to be the standard of ethical conduct in relationships. 19th century Anglican bishop J.C. Ryle, speaking on the value of this standard writes, “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 shows us a balance and measure, by which every one may see at once what is his duty.”

We need God’s standard to guide our relationships and that is exactly what Jesus gives us in the Golden Rule. Now it might be tempting to say, “Okay. This is what we need to do. Let’s go and do it.” But not so fast. Jesus’ words here are not merely to be thought of as good advice on healthy relationships. He first wants to challenge our self-confidence. What do I mean? Jesus is saying in effect, “From the depths of your heart, always treat others perfectly as you would want to be treated in each and every situation,” and if we’re honest, our self-confidence should be shattered! Sinful mankind cannot perfectly fulfill or even externally sustain this standard in our relationships. What are we to do? The answer lies in thinking correctly on what Jesus is saying. Secondly, Jesus himself fulfills....

The Standard that Secures Our True Hope

Notice the end of the verse. “...for this is the Law and the Prophets.” In other words Jesus is saying that this ethical teaching is a summary of the Law and the Prophets (see also Matt. 22:37-40). Back in chapter 5 of this Sermon on the Mount Jesus said, “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.” And that is exactly what He has done. You and I cannot perfectly live up to this standard of conduct, but Jesus can and did on our behalf. Christians, that is to say those who are, by faith, resting in the perfect life and sacrificial death of Jesus Christ, are those who have been and are being changed

from the inside out. Now, in a way that we were unable to do before our salvation, we can seek to have God honoring relationships daily. God is at work to make us more like our Savior and we, as Christians, now have the Holy Spirit indwelling and empowering us for genuine love to God and others from the heart. The Golden Rule shatters our self-confidence while securing and even growing our true hope in the One who fulfilled perfectly the Law and the Prophets. He is at work in our relationships for our good and his glory.

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