

BATTERIES INCLUDED MATTHEW 7:7-12

There are three words I despise - *detestable words*.

These three words will spoil a child's birthday.

They'll ruin a family's Christmas morning.

They create marital tension, and humble parents, and cause grown men to lose their temper, and force late night trips to Walmart, and waste gasoline...

And what are these three hated words? “Batteries Not Included.” Buy something electronic, overlook these words... and the results can be frightening!

Perhaps it's happened to you. You bought the perfect present. You were so excited to see it opened. Yet you missed them... right on the back of the package were those three words... **“Batteries Not Included.”**

There's nothing more disheartening than to possess a gift that promises fun - even a better standard of living - yet be unable to operate it for a lack of power.

And realize the same is true with the words of Jesus.

If we just read His words, and it were left up to us to obey and implement them, how frustrating it would be.

We'd lack the power to put the Bible into practice.

But realize, when you read the Bible the **batteries are always included!** The author of this book makes His Holy Spirit available to help you digest its meaning, and discern its implications, and put it into practice.

I've heard it said, "**The Bible is a floodlight** (*it provides me the big picture*), **it's a spotlight** (*it focuses me centerstage*), **it's a security light** (*it protects me from hidden dangers*), **it's a street light** (*it illuminates my path*), **it's a night light** (*it drives out my fears*), **the Bible is a headlight** (*it keeps me between the white lines of God's will*), **it's a searchlight** (*it rescues the lost*), **and it's a shoplight** (*it finds my problems and makes the repairs*)... **But as with any light it has to have a power source. It comes with batteries.**

The Lord would never make the mistake I've often made, and give us a power tool without the batteries.

Wherever God calls us, He equips us... What God asks, He enables... Where God guides, He provides.

You could say the Sermon on the Mount **comes with a cord**. Rather than read it, and scratch your head, and wonder how you'll ever do it - *you just plug it in*.

The Bible turns on. The author Himself comes to the willing heart, and switches on the power. *He helps you understand. Motivates you to do. Fills you with love. He spreads around the grace of God in a humble heart.*

So that as you read, you get ready and able to do.

And this becomes particularly relevant in this AM's section of the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 7:12...

We'll read verse 12, but we'll start with the five verses that precede it. Let's begin in verse 7, "**Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks**

for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being 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! Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

Today's text includes one of the most famous verses in all the Bible. Matthew 7:12 is the Mount Everest of Ethics. It's called "The Golden Rule" for a reason!

Let's read it again, "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets." The NAS words it this way, "treat people the same way you want them to treat you..."

Understand, Jesus wasn't the first teacher who insisted on this kind of ideal for human relationships.

Other men taught similar sounding principles.

The Jewish Talmud read, "What is hateful to you, do not to your fellow man." Buddhism had an adage, "Hurt not others, in ways that you yourself would find hurtful."

Confucius had said, "What you do not want done to yourself, do not do unto others." The Greek thinker Socrates put it, "What stirs your anger when done to you, that do not to others." Another Greek philosopher, Epictetus, said it this way, "What you avoid suffering yourselves, seek not to inflict upon others."

But here our Lord Jesus takes what men had stated for centuries, and gives it a new, rejuvenating, even revolutionary twist. What other minds had framed in the

negative, Jesus expresses in the positive! Don't just avoid doing evil, but go out of your way to do good!

“Whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them.” Morality isn't a platform from which I can look down on other people - and feel superior to everyone.

It's not a lofty perch from which good people stay clean, and look good, and stay unspotted from the rest of the world. Morality isn't a trophy case for good folks to be displayed and admired by everyone else.

To the contrary, **true morality is love on the offensive!**

It goes out of its way to help people - *to reach out, to pull up, to hold tight*. True morality isn't just *dodging sin*, it's *doing good*. Real goodness is on the lookout for ways to take initiative and be a blessing to others.

Recall what Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:28. He told the believers, **“Let him who stole steal no longer** (There's the negative, *“don't steal,”* but Paul doesn't stop there. He continues...) **but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.”** Don't just stop stealing... *get a job, make a little money, do some good, help people - don't just stop ripping people off.*

Go from *the thrill of the heist* to *the thrill of the help*.

The Christian ethic is more than **“don't kick me and I won't kick you,”** or **“live and let live,”** or **“leave me alone and I'll leave you alone,”** or **“let bygones be bygones.”**

From an early age the primary rule that governs our social interactions - the principle of the playground - is **“keep your hands to yourself.”** But that's not what

Jesus says. He says reach out a hand to someone in need. The greatest morality isn't just not doing evil, but it's finding ways to reach out and do good to others.

Pastor Tim Brown recounts his visit to McDonalds.

He and his daughter were eating dinner when a man who'd been Tim's enemy walked in with his family.

The man had hurt Tim deeply, but he was still surprised by his feelings. His anger still boiled over.

As Tim was leaving the restaurant he overheard his enemy arguing with his wife. Apparently, neither one had brought enough money to pay for their meal.

Tim's first thought was, "How wonderful. I'm glad this happened, and I was around to see him embarrassed."

That's when God spoke to Tim's heart, and reminded him of the Scripture he'd read that morning, Romans 12, "Repay no one evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone." God asked Tim if he wanted to free from his hurt and his wounds healed?

Reluctantly at first, Tim opened his wallet, pulled out a \$20 bill, and handed it to the man. Tim writes, "With tears in my eyes I told him, "Here, have lunch on me."

Jesus' Golden Rule requires us to put ourselves in the other guy's shoes, even when his feet stink! We're forced to identify with *his needs* and *her feelings*.

The Hebrew word "mercy" is defined as "the ability to put myself in someone else's skin." And this is exactly what Jesus did. He was love *incarnate* - or *in flesh* - *in skin*.

He came as one us, and now He knows where we hurt, and how to help. He's been where we're at.

When we take time listen to another person and try to understand what they're thinking - and personalize their concern - and walk a mile in their shoes - we're showing them the same mercy Christ has shown us.

Once, a little boy pulled into a yard on his bike. He saw a sign, **"Puppies For Sale."** He asked their owner how much did they cost? The pups were \$10 a piece.

"Can I see them?"

The man whistled and from around the corner of the house bounded a mother, and a litter of cute little puppies. But one sad little pup was dragging behind the others. He was pulling a limp leg behind him.

The little boy saw the cripple puppy, then reached in his pocket and pulled out \$.50 - *all he had*. He bargained, **"I'll pay \$.50 a week if I can have that pup."**

The owner responded, **"I don't understand, we took him to the vet, he has no hip joint, that puppy will never get better, what do you want with a useless puppy?"**

The little boy reached down, and pulled up his pants-leg to reveal the metal brace that was supporting his own twisted leg... **"Mister, that pup is going to need someone who understands him to help him in life!"**

The Golden Rule doesn't tell us to treat others as we EXPECT be treated - or even as we SHOULD be treated - but as we WANT to be treated. As Jesus said in Matthew 22:39, **"Love your neighbor as yourself."**

There's a law in a part of Russia that requires a factory to spill its chemical waste into same stream from which it draws its water. The company has to take it's waste above its intake lines before its released.

Thus, if the company wants pure water for its operation it must purify the water it uses before it puts it back into the stream. And Jesus is saying the same about our contribution to the stream of human interaction. *Treat others like you want to be treated.*

Give out the same love you hope to get back.

How do you like to be treated?

Do you like be cut some slack and shown some patience? Do like to be given the benefit of the doubt? Do you appreciate a hearing before you're sentenced?

Do you like being accepted just as you are? Do you like your opinions respected, even if no one agrees?

Do you like it when your friend lets you talk, and vent your feelings, even when they know you don't really mean it? *Well, do you extend the same grace to them?*

Do you like a cold shoulder or a warm embrace?

A snub or a smile? Encouragement or criticism? A kick in the pants or pat on the back? Mercy or justice? Love or law? A second chance or a final chance?

Verse 12 calls on us to take the initiative!

Don't wait until their treatment of you changes, before you change your treatment of them. It's *the Golden Rule* not *the Wrought Iron rule*... Love others as you *want* to be loved - not as you have been loved.

Don't wait on your teenager to take off the headphones, before you put down the iPad or the newspaper, and start communicating with your child.

Don't wait for a grumpy husband to become lovable before you put away the bitterness and show him love.

Don't wait for a kind deed or hospitable gesture from your neighbor, or your in-laws, before you show them love and demonstrate your concern for them.

Don't wait on a proud co-worker to ask for help, before you give him some help. Real morality is all about love. It breaks the ice, and makes the first move.

I wish I could promise that when you begin to treat others as you want to be treated, they'll reciprocate, but I can't! *On occasions it happens! Be a friend and win a friend - show respect and you get respected.*

In Old England when a family went out of its way for another, a toast was offered on behalf of the benevolent family... "When we and ours have it in our power to do for you and yours, what you and yours have done for us and ours, then we and ours will do for you and yours what you and yours have done for us and ours." *I'm sure you followed that!* This is what we hope happens, "*You and yours do for us and ours.*"

But this isn't the reason Jesus tells us to treat others as we'd like to be treated. Our motive isn't so they'll reciprocate, or in the end my situation will improve.

Rather, Jesus tells us to live out "[The Golden Rule](#)," because it sums up all the Law and the Prophets. This is the surest way to fulfill God's will for our lives - to be like Jesus... *love others the way you want to be loved!*

JC Ryle puts it, "The Golden Rule settles a hundred different points, it prevents the necessity of laying down endless little rules for our conduct in specific cases." Jesus took the jist of it all - the theme of 39 OT books - He boiled down the Law and the Prophets - He *freeze dried* or *shrink wrapped* it into a single phrase.

Live by this rule - "*do unto others as you want them to do unto you*" - and you fulfill the moral and ethical goals God has for your life! In the eyes of God this is what it means to be ethical. Morality isn't some arbitrary standard. It's the loving treatment of others.

Realize, the Golden Rule isn't a matter of convenience - it's a matter of obedience
I wish I could guarantee you, that if you live by the Golden Rule, others will treat you in like manner - *but I can't*. That's not always what happens! Jesus practiced the Golden Rule. He never once slipped from its lofty standard. *Yet did those He love reciprocate that love?*

No, they crucified Him! And they may do the same to you. In Matthew 10:24 He tells us, "*You will be hated by all for My name's sake... A disciple is not above His teacher, nor a servant above His master... If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub (or Satan), how much more will they call those of his household.*"

Whether people *reciprocate* or *retaliate* it doesn't release me from the commandment. The Golden Rule is as binding on *life's victims* as it is on *life's victors!*

Leonard Wolf was a knight in the court of France. He was once invited by the King to his palace for lunch.

The invitation was sent weeks in advance. A few days after issuing the invitation the King ran into Wolf.

His Highness rebuked Wolf for not acknowledging and answering the royal invitation immediately. Wolf hadn't bothered to send an acceptance. He looked at the King in shock, and replied "Sir, a king's request is not to be answered, a king's request is to be obeyed!"

And you and I have not been given a choice in this matter with our King. The secular world may admire Jesus' Golden Rule, but we are commanded to obey it.

One day, when you have a few free moments to sit down and contemplate it, try to think of some other basic principle that if everyone put it into practice would cure all the world's ills faster than the Golden Rule.

Amazingly, this one dictum has the potential for eliminating all our problems: *economic, political, social.*

Yet how many people do you know really try live out The Golden Rule? We've all heard it, and know it, and can quote it... but so few of us really try live by it.

In fact, the skeptics seem to have a field day trying to tarnish the Golden Rule. It's said, "Today, there's a new Golden Rule. He who has the gold makes the rules."

Or they'll quote the ugly spin, "Do unto others before they do unto you." Or even "Do unto the other fellow as you expect him to do unto you, just do it to him first."

Literally, *hurt him before he can hurt you.*

Why is it something as beautiful as The Golden Rule gets scorned, and ridiculed, rather than held up as everyone's ideal? I think there's a simple answer for all the skepticism - *we really don't believe it's possible.*

Most people see the Golden Rule as unattainable!

They like it theoretically, but practically they see it as impossible. *They don't realize the Golden Rule comes with batteries!* God packages it **with batteries included!**

Notice the first word read in verse 12, **“Therefore...”**

It's a conjunction - a bridge between thoughts - it links what comes before with the idea that comes after.

Verses 7-11 are a blank check, a carte blanche assurance of God's blessing. *Just ask, just seek, just knock* - and God promises to give... *He loves to give.*

And Jesus ties this assurance to *The Golden Rule.*

You could call verses 7-11, **“Gas for the Golden Rule.”** If you want to live by this principle here're the batteries that make it possible. Here's the power cord.

Before you throw up your arms and walk away in defeat - **“Sorry, I just don't have it in me. I can't live this...”** - have you looked for the batteries inside? Have you plugged into the power God makes available?

In verse 7 Jesus tells us, **“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.”** You think you can't treat others the way you want to be treated... that it's just not in you... and that's fine, you're in good company, *it's not in any of us!...*

Until we ask, and seek, and knock - then God WILL give us exactly what's needed to keep His command.

In your own strength you can never live out the Golden Rule, but remember Philippians 4:13, **“I can do all things through Christ Who strengthens me.”**

The Golden Rule requires a love greater than anything I can muster! A love of a supernatural variety! *An imported love* - straight from God's throne of grace.

I might be able to live the negative version of the Golden Rule - *the Wrought Iron Rule* - "Stay away from me and I'll stay away from you." "Keep my hands to myself" - "Mind my own business" - might be possible.

But to initiate love - to go out of my way for someone I don't even know - or better yet, someone I know and don't really like - I need help. *I need the batteries.*

Traffic Laws require that you obey speed limits, and drive in your own lane, and stop at traffic lights, and stop signs, and a host other laws... And they're all designed to keep you from injuring other motorists.

But the Law can't require you to be nice, and let the guy pass you who's cut you off twice. Or not slow down intentionally to anger the guy who's been tailgating you. It can't make you stop to help someone with a flat tire, or help push a stalled car to the side of the road.

This type of kindness can't be legislated, it springs up from within. Its a gift of God, a work of His Spirit.

Romans 5:5 tells us, "The love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit Who was given to us." What we need is this *poured out love.*

We should all remember the God Who commands the Golden Rule isn't a tyrant demanding perfection from His subjects, He's a loving Father who likes to give good gifts to His kids - to give us His best.

I've learned a lot about the heart of a father, from *my dad*. To this day, when we go out to eat, Dad will pay for the dinner. On occasion, he'll slip me a \$20 bill, or pay my golf. *And then I feel guilty when I beat him.*

And now this is how I treat *my* kids. Nick called me this week, and asked, "Dad, where do you want to eat? Since you're paying for it, you can decide." I appreciated his generosity. But he knows if I can, I will.

There's a French proverb that defines a dad, "A father is a banker provided by nature." This is the point Jesus makes... even fallen fathers, sinful dads, enjoy giving good stuff to their kids - *especially grandkids!*

Years ago now, when Nick was still in elementary school he approached his mom about him and his older brother, Zach, staying up past their bedtime.

Of course, Kathy nixed his request. The boys needed a good night's sleep. Nick went to his big brother, Zach, to inform him of the verdict. I was in the other room eavesdropping when I heard Zach scolding his little brother, "Nick, I told you to ask Dad not Mom!"

Even then I had a reputation... but it's not just me, fathers in general are renowned for indulging their kids with good gifts - and with grandkids it gets worse!

If Colt or Luke asked for bread, I wouldn't tell them to chew on a stone, we'd go to the Cold Stone Creamery for ice cream... If Kate or Q or Grant asked for a fish, I wouldn't hand them a snake. *If it's fish they want, I'll give them fish* - we'll spend the day at the Aquarium!....

If my grandkids are thirsty and ask me for something to drink... forget the milk... I'll pop open a Coca-Cola!

That's just how the G-daddy rolls! For the grandkids I'm going above and beyond. And if I... a sinful, selfish, greedy human being feel that way toward my kids, how much more do you think a flawless Heavenly Father loves His kids and wants to give them all they need.

In Ephesians 3:20 Paul writes of God, *“To Him Who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think...”* The Father delights in giving to us.

If you need grace, and love, and power to keep the Golden Rule count on God to give you all you need.

“If you then, being 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!”

Ask... Seek... Knock... and the Father will provide.

Once a wealthy woman made a \$1 million donation to Chicago University. Northwestern University is also located in the Chicago area, and when the President of Northwestern heard of the generous gift, he was upset.

He knew this lady. In fact, they were good friends.

One day, he asked her, *“Why haven't you ever made that kind of donation to our fine institution?”* The lady's answer was simple. She said, *“Well, you never asked.”*

We struggle, and lack for the exact same reason, *“We've never asked.”* James 4:3 states, *“You do not have because you do not ask.”* Have you asked God to flood you soul with the love you need to live verse 12?

We need to take to heart this whole business of *asking*, and *seeking*, and *knocking*... Remember when Abraham, the father of our faith, prayed for God to

spare the city of Sodom. The horse trader in him came out. He bargained with God. He showed his chutzpah.

He started with 50. “God if there’re 50 righteous souls in the city will you spare it?” God said, “Yes.”

But Abraham got God down to 45, then 40, then 30, then 20, then 10... *I wonder if Abraham had pushed God further if He would’ve aborted His plan altogether?*

One truth stands out, *Abraham kept asking and God kept granting*. I think we need to learn to ask. All too often we’re too busy to ask, or too proud to ask. We’re so bullish on doing it ourselves, we never stoop to ask.

Charles Swindoll makes interesting observation about this whole matter of *asking, seeking, knocking*...

He writes, “No mumbo jumbo, no need to bargain, beg, plead, or pay penance... no incantations, no secret password. Nothing but the most difficult thing for high-tech, super-efficient, uptight, and overachieving souls to do. Just ask in simple faith.” If you need power from on high to obey God; then why not ask for it...

If you want to break it down further...

Asking implies **dependence**... Seeking involves **desire**... And knocking emphasizes **determination**...

And here are the three ingredients of an effective prayer life - **dependence, desire, and determination**.

This comes out in a literal translation of verse 8. It reads, “**For everyone who keeps on asking receives, and he who keeps on seeking finds, and he who keeps on knocking it will be open.**” It’s a progression.

Think of an adult child that needs some money...

At first, the proud child might ask his parents if an opportunity arises... But when the deadline becomes eminent, he'll track them down - seek them out... And when his desire turns to desperation, he'll knock on their door and try to bug the money out of his parents.

And quite frankly, God wants to be bugged. He loves to be sought by desperate folk, not too proud to knock.

It's the self-sufficient heart that turns Him off!

Jesus once told a parable about a man who had an unexpected guest in the middle of the night. He had to borrow bread, so he went next-door to his neighbor.

But his neighbor was already in bed. He shouted at the guy on his doorstep to *bug off* until the morning.

But the bread-less host was desperate. He kept banging and begging - *making a scene* - until the guy got out of bed and loaned him some bread. The situation had become an embarrassment to both men.

Yet Jesus held this story up as an example of effective prayer. Jesus complimented the man on his "*importunity*" or "*shameless persistence.*" And it pleases God to get us to the point where *our desire* is greater than *our pride*. *When a man's desperation overwhelms his sophistication, he'll ask, seek, knock.*

In Luke 11, on another occasion Jesus gave a similar teaching on *asking, seeking, and knocking*. But He ended the passage with a more direct application...

“If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!”

In Luke, Jesus cuts to the chase - gets to the point. Here’s why we should *ask*, and *seek*, and *knock*...

When a man gets to the end of himself - when he gets desperate to obey - then there’s a spiritual power waiting for him. God’s greatest gift is the Holy Spirit!

In 1899 a man opened a butcher shop in Colorado. He later branched out with a small chain of Department Stores he called “**The Golden Rule Store.**” His goal was to treat his customers, as he’d want to be treated.

In the Stock Market Crash of 1929 this man nearly lost everything. He had a nervous breakdown, and signed himself into the Battle Creek Sanitarium. One day he heard the hymn, “**God Will Take Care Of You.**”

He believed in Jesus, and became a born again Christian. And now with the power to live *The Golden Rule*, his chain of *Golden Rule Stores* began to grow.

The Golden Rule chain eventually numbered 1,660 department stores. In fact, it later changed its name.

Its founder died in 1971 with a personal wealth of \$24 million. And his name... James Cash Penny.

In looking back on his life, JC Penny, wrote, “**I lost everything, but I learned never to compromise. I would rather be known as a Christian than a merchant.**”

People will tell you that in our dog-eat-dog world the Golden Rule is an unrealistic principle to live by, but what they don't know is that **batteries come included.**

We have a Father in heaven who loves us, and wants to give us all we need to do His will and keep His commandments. God loves to infuse *ordinary lives* with *extraordinary love...* and power and strength.

So ask... seek... knock... then take the love God gives you and initiate love to the people around you.

Treat others just as you want to be treated!