

CHRISTIAN LIVING Luke 6:20-38

(You will need a flipchart or similar for this study)

Would you recognise the phrase 'The Golden Rule'? (Most people accept it's the best way to behave in a civilised world)

if no answers, uncover pre-written on flipchart, page 7 –
'Do to others as you would have them do to you'.

'The Golden Rule' is accepted as the best way for people to try to get on together in civilised society.

How might we paraphrase it? 'Treat people with the fairness that you would hope from others' or – 'live as good law-abiding people'. (Write ideas on the board)

Are we happy with that?

But was that what Jesus was teaching? We'd better read the whole passage:
Luke 6:20-38 (Cover flipchart)

20 Looking at his disciples, he said:

"Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

21 Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied.

Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.

22 Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man.

23 "Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their fathers treated the prophets.

24 "But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort.

25 Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry.

Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep.

26 Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets.

*27 "But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who ill-treat you. 29 If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. 30 Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. **31 Do to others as you would have them do to you.***

32 "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' love those who love them. 33 And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' do that. 34 And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' lend to 'sinners', expecting to be repaid in full. 35 But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is

kind to the ungrateful and wicked. 36 Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

37 “Do not judge and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. 38 Give and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

The first four verses (20-23) ‘The Beatitudes’ are well-known and sound very good.

But the verse we are looking at is verse 31 [\(let people find it\)](#) and is the last of a set of phrases that start in verse 27, [\(let people find it\)](#) and they follow a set of verses (from v24) where Jesus denounces those who are the exact opposite of those in verses 20-23. [\(let people find them\)](#)

Those who we might call good, law-abiding people:

Woe to you who are rich,
Woe to you who are well fed,
Woe to you who laugh
Woe to you when all men speak well of you

And the verses from verse 27 are also disturbing in what Jesus is actually saying. So disturbing that modern-day Christians ignore them.

Love your enemies
Do good to those who hate you
Bless those who curse you
Pray for those who ill-treat you
If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also
If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic
Give to everyone who asks you
If anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back.

So perhaps we need to look at what Jesus is actually commanding here.

1) Love your enemies. [\(Pre-written on flipchart page 1\)](#)

Let’s list who my enemies are. [\(Wait for suggestions – write on board\)](#)
[I could start with anyone who commits a criminal act against me. I might then go on to include any who would spoil my enjoyment of a peaceful life.](#)

If I asked the question ‘Who is my neighbour?’ we would be quick to reply – we can all quote the parable of ‘the Good Samaritan’. [\(Luke 10:30-35\)](#) But to start to imagine who I would consider to be my enemy is much harder.

Think about that Parable of the Good Samaritan. Suppose we were going to act it out. I'd need an Inn-Keeper. Not too demanding, he only has to do what he's paid to do. I'll need a Good Samaritan. He has to show love to the stranger who has been beaten, robbed and left for dead by thieves. I need some bad characters – people who think nothing of cracking skulls with iron bars.

I also need a traveller – prepared to get beaten up and act dead. Again, not too demanding.

But let's pretend it happened to me in real life. Now, ([Indicate flipchart](#)) like the Good Samaritan loving the stranger, I now have to love the thugs who attacked me.

But look – it wasn't a gentle mugging. I was beaten with clubs, and punched and kicked until I lost consciousness. I was stripped of all my clothes, had everything I had stolen, and then I was left in the heat of the sun with every expectation that I would soon die from my injuries.

Look, it's hard enough to love a stranger, but to love your enemies Well I'll try, but it won't be easy. A savage beating is not easy to forget. After all, I was left for dead.

But it doesn't stop there:

2) **Do good to those who hate you.** ([Pre-written page 2](#))

'Do good' is a positive action. Something the recipient would be aware of. Trying to love those who have attacked me is one thing. Demonstrating my love to them in actions is a totally different thing. [Add 'demonstrate my love to them in actions'](#)

I would prefer to see them arrested and charged for their offences and receive a long spell in prison. After all, that's what the law requires. And we should all be good law-abiding people.

[Or is this verse suggesting that maybe instead I should argue for a light sentence, perhaps even try to help in their restoration to society?](#)

No, I'm sorry, but that's just not good enough, it's not what Jesus has in mind. Look at Verse 35: *But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, **because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked**.* 36 *Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.*

[Who are the ungrateful and wicked people that Father God is kind and merciful to?](#)

Jesus now expands:

3) Bless those who curse you (Pre-written page 3)

This is linked to the previous phrase where, for whatever reason, someone now feels personal animosity against me. Jesus explains that my response of love to them has to be from the heart. It's not good enough to say:

'Well, as a Christian I automatically love everybody, really; deep down.'

I now have to demonstrate that my love is real. I now have to consciously seek the good of those who oppose or attack me so strongly. And I have to verbalise my feelings in the form of a blessing. (Add 'confirm my love by verbalising it')

If we mentally decide to do something, it helps to say so out loud (perhaps to someone else) to actually confirm that we mean it!

4) Pray for those who ill-treat you (Pre-written page 4)

This now confirms my verbal response, by repeating it as a prayer to God. Not asking God to intervene against those who ill-treat me; not asking Him to change their attitude to me; not even asking God to change their ways; but simply asking that God too will bless the very ones who are my enemies.

5) If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also (Pre-written page 5 – also now add 'retribution, justice, punishment, compensation')

Our normal response is to seek some form of retribution, or at least justice – suitable punishment for the wrong-doer and perhaps a payment to us by way of compensation.

Sorry – (CROSS OUT THE WORDS YOU JUST ADDED)

Justice: punishment and making amends, are not for us to demand. Not only that, but it is entirely opposite to the attitude Jesus asks of us.

Isaiah 53:7

*He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth;
he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth*

Look at verse 37: *“Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven*

(Write on board) Don't call the police!

If we are to live as Jesus did, we will have to accept injustice and the suffering that accompanies it, without complaint. More than that, we must not be resentful of it. But even more than that – whatever has been done to us, we must be happy for it to be **repeated**, even on-going.

Now please tell me that I have read this wrong. Surely this isn't a command of Jesus?

6) If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. (Pre-written page 6)

We would love to add provisos to this too. 'Well, I might be happy if he took it because he's cold and starving, but if he just steals to get money for drugs, then that's different'.

Sorry again, because that's not the way Jesus treats us. Look at the passage from verse 30 *Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. 31 Do to others as you would have them do to you.*

32 "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' love those who love them. 33 And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' do that. 34 And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' lend to 'sinners', expecting to be repaid in full.

Forget about 'love the sinner but not the sin'. That's also watering down Jesus' commands to us. It gives us a reason for righteous indignation. As soon as we feel righteous and indignant, we have judged someone else, and Jesus tells us in v37 not to do that.

We are told to love unconditionally and to give unconditionally, and expect nothing in return. Instead we must expect injustice, and we must not seek retribution. *Verse 35: because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. 36 Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.*

Now we can look at verse 31 again

7) 'Do to others as you would have them do to you.' (Pre-written page 7)

Let's change the words slightly: 'Do to others as you would have Jesus do to you'. If we are happy with the idea that other people should receive just punishment for their wrong-doing, how can I expect mercy for my sins? Jesus died, the just for the unjust: Specifically so that I will not have to suffer the punishment for my sins.

Actually, if I was to be honest, I would actually like to have other people treat me with the love and compassion of Jesus. I would actually prefer to be loved in return every time I do or say things which I regret. And if I'm being honest I would prefer not to receive any punishment for my wrong-doing.

Imagine the relief if I had been out driving, had taken a corner far too fast, was right over the white line, and I had carelessly scraped all down the side of a car coming the other way. We both stopped and got out. The other driver came running over and said:

What might we expect him to say? – or do! Imagine our incredulity if instead he said: ‘don’t worry about it; think no more about it, it’s not a problem, it was an accident. Look it was probably just as much my fault – let me pay for the repairs. Is there anything else I can do to help?’ [\(Indicate verse on board\)](#)
That’s exactly what I *‘would have them do to me’*

Back in the 1990s, young people started wearing wristbands with WWJD written on them: ‘What Would Jesus Do?’.

The command to ‘love my neighbour’ and ‘do to others as you would have them do to you’ is not just a nice way for people to get on together. This is a hard command to live like Jesus – and nothing less.

I think maybe Stephen got it right

Acts 7:59-60

59 While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." 60 Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep.

Read from verse 35:

You will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. 36 Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. 37 "Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. 38: Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

But surely the Bible shows that society needs laws, with those in authority over us to maintain law and order? **So how can we apply this teaching?**

[It has to be for individuals, to be applied at a personal level. For those who know Jesus and who want to live like him.](#)