

THE GOLDEN RULE: A MORAL SEARCHLIGHT

Eric Marlowe

“**W**hatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them” (Matthew 7:12). Often referred to as the Golden Rule, this teaching is perhaps humanity’s most prevalent moral maxim. The term “Golden Rule” can be traced back to the seventeenth century, but the principle is ancient.¹ The rule reveals virtue in our very nature in that we can all inwardly know our duty toward others. Expressly the rule tutors us in all commandments respecting our neighbor, thereby relieving us the need of constant guidance from parents, teachers, or preachers. The teaching is ingenious because it provides each individual, regardless of status or education, a moral searchlight that reveals how to treat one another.²

By applying the Golden Rule, we support freedom and respect human rights. As Elder Russell M. Nelson said, “The golden rule . . . forbids interference by one with the rights of another.”³ In the eleventh article of faith, we claim the freedom of worshipping according to our own dictates, and, true to the Golden Rule, we proclaim the right of others to do

Eric Marlowe is an institute director and seminary coordinator in Raleigh, North Carolina.

the same. Calls for respect and tolerance are in large measure realized through the Golden Rule. In an increasingly connected world with its varying beliefs, cultures, and practices, the Golden Rule offers peace and harmony. What is more, the Golden Rule rejects notions of false freedom, the claim that people have the right to do whatever they choose.

The Golden Rule works with the interpersonal teachings of Jesus, providing a guide, a sort of litmus test for determining their proper application. As Harry J. Gensler said, “The golden rule . . . does not replace regular moral norms. . . . It only prescribes consistency—that our actions (toward another) not be out of harmony with our desires. . . . It tests our moral coherence. If we violate the golden rule, then we’re violating the spirit of fairness and concern that lies at the heart of morality.”⁴

The rule’s usefulness, therefore, hinges on the agent’s sincerity. It asks that we look outside ourselves, trade selfishness for sympathy, and place others on equal ground. President Ezra Taft Benson referred to the rule as “the formula for successful relationships.”⁵ As Jeffrey Wattles explained, “The rule engages one in approximating a higher perspective from which the kinship of humanity is evident. To pursue this higher perspective is to risk encountering the divine and the realization that every step along the forward path is illuminated by the Creator.”⁶

To help increase understanding and application of the Golden Rule, this chapter includes a brief look at the rule prior to Jesus, the expansion and fruition of the rule as Jesus taught it, and our need for knowledge and imagination in its application.

THE GOLDEN RULE PRIOR TO JESUS

Though Adam and Eve may have learned the Golden Rule as part of the fullness of the gospel,⁷ the rule’s pronouncement in the Old Testament is more implicit than explicit. From the beginning it was taught that God is the father of all (see Genesis 1:26), thus conveying kinship and equality among humanity. This inherent equality supports treating others the way we would like to be treated—the foundation of the Golden Rule. The rule is also postulated, if not explicit, in the law of Moses. Leviticus 19:18 reads, “Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against . . . thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” Assumed is that one treats oneself with dignity and respect. Therefore, the application of

this command is to love your neighbor as you would like your neighbor to love you—in effect, the Golden Rule.⁸ Furthermore, examples of the rule periodically appear throughout the Old Testament. For instance, in 2 Samuel 12:1–7 Nathan uses a parable of a rich man taking from the poor to challenge King David to consider the consequences of his actions from the perspective of another.

Specific statements of the Golden Rule appear in Jewish literature well before Jesus. For example, the Ben Sira text (190–175 BC) expresses the Golden Rule in context of basic fairness and consideration: “Judge your neighbor’s feelings by your own, and in every matter be thoughtful” (31:15; NRSV).⁹ The book of Tobit (compiled near end of second century BC) explains, “And what you hate, do not do to anyone” (4:15; NRSV).¹⁰ And Hillel, a prominent first-century B.C. rabbi, said, “What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbour: that is the whole Torah, while the rest is the commentary thereof” (Hillel, Talmud, *Shabbath* 31a).¹¹

As well, other ancient cultures and faiths possessed forms of the Golden Rule. In Homer’s *Odyssey* (circa 700 BC) we read, “I am thinking and planning for you just as I would do it for my own self” (5:188–89).¹² Likewise, a text from Egypt (600–500 BC) states, “That which you hate to be done to you, do not do it to another.”¹³ In China Confucius (551–479 BC) explained, “Do not do to others what you would not like yourself” (*Analects* 12:2; see also 15:23).¹⁴ And in the fifth century BC, the Greek philosopher Socrates suggested, “So one ought not to return a wrong or an injury to any person, whatever the provocation is” (Philo, *Crito* 49c).¹⁵

Two noteworthy points regarding the Golden Rule prior to Jesus: First, such early and broad knowledge of the concept highlights its importance in God’s plan. In wisdom, God saw fit that his children in earlier ages possessed this moral guide (see Alma 29:8).¹⁶ Second, iterations of the principle before Jesus were mainly concerned with prohibiting unfair treatment—in other words what we would not want others to do to us, we should not do to them. By contrast, the scope of the Golden Rule as Jesus taught is significantly broader.

THE GOLDEN RULE AS JESUS TAUGHT

When considering the Golden Rule as Jesus taught, two prominent features stand out. The first is Jesus’ lengthy extension of the rule beyond

reciprocity, and the second is the considerable breadth of its application as a moral searchlight.

Beyond reciprocity. In matters pertaining to protection of life, property, and certain rights, the law of Moses was determinedly firm. But to be clear, firm directives in the law such as an “eye for eye” (Exodus 21:24; Deuteronomy 19:21) meant justice, not vengeance. Considering the law’s penchant for justice and the rule’s mainly reciprocal intent in other cultures and religions, one sees that perhaps the most sweeping change undertaken by the Golden Rule in Jesus’ teachings is its lengthy extension beyond reciprocity or mutual exchange.

To begin, Jesus’ declaration is decidedly positive. Instead of emphasizing *not doing*, his iteration of the rule invites us to consider how we want to be treated and then *act* that way toward others. Beyond restraint, Jesus’ positive assertion of the Golden Rule invites us to proactively consider, then *do* that which benefits another. Moreover, a common form of reciprocity is that we do favors in expectation of receiving favors in return, and that we should repay favors previously received. Though Jesus makes clear that the principle of justice is not dismissed (see Matthew 5:45), in teaching us to turn the other cheek and love our enemies he plainly asks that our goodwill not be restricted to returning or garnishing favors (5:38–44). In this context, application of the Golden Rule is no longer tethered to an exchange but rather approximates God’s love.

Jesus further extends understanding of the Golden Rule by expressly linking it with God’s willingness to bestow good gifts. By conjunctively using “Therefore” (Matthew 7:12), Jesus connects the rule with his preceding theme, “Ask, and it shall be given you; . . . knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (Matthew 7:7–8), and the idea that if an imperfect parent can give good gifts to a petitioning child, our Father will certainly give good gifts to those who ask (see Matthew 7:9–11). Connecting requests for divine assistance with the Golden Rule may infer that living the Golden Rule qualifies us to worthily ask and receive.¹⁷ This is supported by Jesus’ earlier teachings that if we want to be forgiven we must forgive, and how we judge others is how we will be judged (see Matthew 6:14–15; 7:2, Luke 6:38). Thus treating others by the Golden Rule qualifies us to be similarly treated and blessed by God. In light of such teachings, we learn that what we do to others we in large measure do to ourselves (see

Alma 41:14–15). As President Anthony W. Ivins explained, “‘Judge not, and ye shall not be judged; . . . forgive and ye shall be forgiven.’ In other words, ‘whatsoever ye would that men shall do unto you, do ye even so unto them.’”¹⁸

By connecting God’s desire to give good gifts with the Golden Rule, Jesus may also be exhorting us to follow God’s example. As Elder James E. Talmage taught, God is willing to give good gifts; therefore, we should do likewise by living the Golden Rule.¹⁹ Furthermore, God’s willingness to give good gifts is specially illustrated in the context of fatherly love. Because the Golden Rule challenges us to treat others based on our best experience—the way we would like to be treated—it follows that God’s love is the highest inspiration for living the Golden Rule. By thus connecting fatherly love with a proactive Golden Rule, we become “the hands and feet and spokesperson of divine love.”²⁰

Consider also Jesus’ extension of the rule to missionary work. The Joseph Smith Translation of Matthew 7:1 begins, “Now these are the words which Jesus taught his disciples that they should say unto the people.” In this missionary training context, the principles in Matthew 7:1–12 were *what* Jesus’ disciples were to teach others. The Golden Rule could also summarize *how* the disciples were to teach the preceding principles. For example, the Golden Rule could engender patience in their teaching as they recall how they were gradually converted. Furthermore, Elder Ben E. Rich taught that missionary work “is a manifestation of devotion to the principle of reciprocity. We are doing for others what others have done for us and for our parents.”²¹ Thus considered, application of the Golden Rule prompts missionary work. And President Gordon B. Hinckley said that if we will live “the Golden Rule, others will be led to inquire and learn. We shall become as a city set upon a hill whose light cannot be hid.”²² In short, connecting the Golden Rule with missionary work can lead us to share the gospel, to do so respectfully, and to exemplify the Master’s teachings.

Breadth of application. In addition to his extension of the rule’s meaning beyond reciprocity, Jesus also clarifies the considerable breadth of the rule’s application as a moral searchlight. First, Jesus affirms the rule’s application in matters of justice. Jesus taught that the Golden Rule embodied all “the law and the prophets” (Matthew 7:12). The term “the

law” commonly refers to the law of Moses in the first five books of the Old Testament (Torah); the term “the prophets” refers to words given by prophets in Old Testament times. Thus “the law and the prophets” was basically a twofold designation of the sum of Hebrew scripture. This understood, when connected with Jesus’ earlier clarification that he came not “to destroy the law, or prophets” but to fulfill them (Matthew 5:17–18), the Golden Rule reaffirms that the basic principles of the law of Moses remain in effect. Indeed, Jesus’ teachings in the sermon do not negate basic principles in the law such as restitution of wrongs, not killing or committing adultery, but rather expand on them. From this perspective, the Golden Rule reinforces the basic justice espoused in the law of Moses.

The Golden Rule also summarizes how to apply the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount. Before asserting the Golden Rule, Jesus generally searches what his followers are to do (Matthew 5–7:11). More specifically, much of the sermon before the Golden Rule deals with our treatment of one another, and in summary fashion the Golden Rule offers needed direction to such commands. Compared with the law of Moses, the sermon provides little detail on how to apply the principles taught. Yet rather than a detailed list of do’s and don’ts, Jesus summarizes how they could apply the wealth of interpersonal principles he had just taught in an accessible rule. How am I to judge? Answer: As I would like to be judged in similar circumstances. How am I to extend mercy? Answer: As I wish to receive mercy. How am I to be a peacemaker? Answer: By considering conduct I deem peaceful and extending it to others.

Beyond the sermon, the Golden Rule’s application can be linked to the two great commandments: love God and love neighbor (see Matthew 22:37–39). As Elder Joseph F. Merrill said, “What do I mean by the expression ‘doing good?’ The Master made the meaning clear when he gave us the Golden Rule, the rule that applies and makes visible in our lives the observance of the two great commandments.”²³ The summary principles of the gospel are to love God and to love our neighbor; the summary guide to their application is the Golden Rule.

NEED FOR KNOWLEDGE AND IMAGINATION

To apply the Golden Rule effectively, Gensler offers two suggestions. “We need to *know* what effect our actions have on the lives of others. And

we need to be able to *imagine* ourselves, vividly and accurately, in the other person's place on the receiving end of the action."²⁴ Perhaps the strongest criticism against the Golden Rule is this: it assumes we understand another from a different race, culture, or religion enough to know how they wish to be treated.²⁵ At the root of this argument is how much are we really alike, or how much do we really know about each other? If people are so diametrically different that our understanding of their particular needs is misaligned, then the rule has little value. However, as members of the Church, we accept the fatherhood of God and brotherhood of mankind and we join our collective voice to a large chorus that similarly assumes a common humanity. Such recognition conveys nearness, similarity of basic needs, and recognition that we are alike in significant ways.

Yet while we want to be treated with due regard for those things we have in common, we also want to be treated with due regard for those things that are unique to us.²⁶ Because the Golden Rule covers both, it behooves us to recognize not only our similarities but also our differences. This can be a real challenge because of our experience gap. Not having experienced the same things as another, how can I imaginatively put myself in their shoes? And if my experience cannot approximate theirs, how can I fully apply the Golden Rule? Even without a shared experience, there are a number of ways that we can gain knowledge about the experiences of others that will enable us to meaningfully apply the Golden Rule.

Knowledge of good and evil. With few exceptions, all people possess the degree of knowledge necessary to apply the Golden Rule. From the beginning, humankind was given the godly attribute to know good and evil (see Genesis 3:22). President Boyd K. Packer explained: "The Light of Christ [Doctrine and Covenants 88:12–13; 93:2; Moroni 7:16, 18] is as universal as sunlight itself. . . . It is the sponsor of everything that is good. It is the inspirer of everything that will bless and benefit mankind. It nourishes goodness itself."²⁷ Jesus' command that we live the Golden Rule acknowledges these divinely given attributes and calls us to employ them in our interactions with others.

Study. Two obvious, yet too often neglected, approaches to ensuring the necessary knowledge to enact the Golden Rule are to (1) *ask* those involved and (2) *seek* further knowledge. If we are wondering what someone

believes or how they want to be treated, we can ask them. When we wonder what a particular group may find offensive or may appreciate, we can do a little research. Elder Ballard counseled, “Get to know your neighbors. Learn about their families, their work, their views. . . . Let us cultivate meaningful relationships of mutual trust and understanding with people from different backgrounds and beliefs.”²⁸

Even significant experience gaps can be ameliorated with inquiry and study. For example, Adrian M. S. Piper, an African American, explained:

Claims that one cannot understand . . . what it is like . . . for a black person to be the object of racial harassment if one is white, have the virtue of refusing to appropriate the singularity of another’s experience into one’s necessarily limited conception of it. But they are too often based on a simple lack of interest in finding out what it is like through exploring the wide variety of literary and artistic products designed precisely to instruct us about these things. It is not surprising to find a failure of . . . imagination of another’s inner states preceded by a failure of curiosity about them.²⁹

Perhaps to decrease this experience gap, the Lord asks that we know “things which are at home, things which are abroad; the wars and the perplexities of the nations, and the judgments which are on the land; and a knowledge also of countries and of kingdoms” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:79). In short, mitigating the experiential gap through inquiry and study can allow humanity to coalesce more meaningfully around the Golden Rule.

The Spirit. While the Golden Rule is simple and concise, its real-life application often requires our best efforts, as well as the inspiration of heaven (see D&C 9:7–8). The rule requires consideration of our motives, our available means, another person’s circumstances and needs, etc. Such in-depth consideration, pondering, and study required by the Golden Rule often naturally connects covenant members with the gift of the Holy Ghost (see 2 Nephi 32:5). Elder Charles A. Callis said, “Jesus Christ tells us that ‘whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.’ . . . But how can men do these things without that greater power of righteousness in their souls that the Holy Ghost brings?”³⁰

Proceed in faith. Finally, despite our best efforts, there may be times when our lack of knowledge and imagination limit our understanding, empathy, and compassion. Yet as we do our best to live the Lord's way, the relevant features of a situation often begin to stand out.³¹ Sometimes the light we seek to apply for the Golden Rule begins to gradually illuminate our path as we proceed in faith.

Ability to imagine. In addition to these sources of knowledge, Gensler also noted that it is through our imagination that we seek to understand another's feelings. Imagination in this sense is not a playful departure from reality but rather an attempt to understand it.³² Taking into account what we know of another's circumstances and applying imagination to what we do not know can yield empathy and better understanding of how another person wants to be treated, rather than assuming they are just like us. As Elder Joseph F. Merrill explained: "We must do unto others as we would have others do unto us. And a test of whether we are doing it or not, is just to *imagine* that we are in the other fellow's shoes and he is in ours. When we are in his shoes, how would we like to be treated?"³³

CONCLUSION

Few principles better illustrate the universal Light of Christ (see D&C 88:6–13) than the Golden Rule. Consider the following teachings from some of the world's most prominent faiths. Islam: "None of you truly believes until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself" (Muhammad, *Hadith* 13).³⁴ Hinduism: "One should never do that to another which one regards as injurious to one's own self. This, in brief, is the rule of Righteousness" (*Mahabharata* 11: CXIII).³⁵ Buddhism: "Therefore, as it is the same thing that is dear to you and to others, hurt not others with what pains you" (The Buddha, *Udānavarga* 5.18).³⁶ As Wattles explains, the Golden Rule "is part of the planet's common language, shared by persons with differing but overlapping conceptions of morality."³⁷

Though all major religions include some form of the Golden Rule, the rule's standing and scope within each faith's theology can notably vary. This may be understood like rings on a target: the bull's-eye represents central tenets, with the succeeding rings representing less important beliefs. One religion may hold the Golden Rule in its bull's-eye, another in the first ring of slightly lesser importance, another in its second, and so

on. Yet near-universal understanding and acceptance of the Golden Rule affords it immense potential.

However, as prominent a role as the Golden Rule can play in our effort to live good lives, clearly it is not the gospel's preeminent focus. Jesus is the *good news*, and salvation does not come merely by following the Golden Rule.³⁸ A Catholic philosopher explained, "When Christianity was proclaimed throughout the world, the proclamation (*kerygma*) was not 'Love your enemies!' but 'Christ is risen!' This was not a new *ideal* but a new *event*, that God became man, died, and rose for our salvation. . . . The essence of Christianity is Christ."³⁹ The rule can certainly help illuminate the path, but it is not our destination.

Elder Joseph F. Merrill taught, "Conduct actuated by the golden rule yields the greatest happiness."⁴⁰ Viewed broadly, the Golden Rule is an expression of human kinship.⁴² The rule helps ensure respect for the rights of others. It is a social guide, a searchlight, a compass for discerning the best way to treat others. It causes us to look outside ourselves, thus keeping pride at bay. The rule is versatile, broadly applicable, and far reaching in its impact. As Wattles explains, "Only a principle so flexible can serve as a moral ladder for all humankind."⁴² Anyone who sincerely applies the Golden Rule helps ensure their acts are consistent with their moral standards. And for those who put Christ and his teachings at center, the rule becomes a means of patterning their lives after the Divine.

NOTES

1. Four seventeenth-century Englishmen—Bishop William (1679), George Boraston (1683), John Goodman (1688), and Benjamin Camfield (1697)—used the term "golden rule" (see Jeffrey Wattles, *The Golden Rule* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996], 78, 211–12).

2. Wattles, *The Golden Rule*, 165.

3. Russell M. Nelson, "'Blessed Are the Peacemakers,'" *Ensign*, November 2002, 39.

4. *The Blackwell Encyclopedic Dictionary of Business Ethics*, ed. Patricia H. Werhane and R. Edward Freeman (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), s.v. "Golden Rule," 304–5.

5. Ezra Taft Benson, "Your Charge: To Increase in Wisdom and Favor with God and Man," *New Era*, September 1979, 40.

6. Wattles, *The Golden Rule*, 189.

7. Nelson, “Blessed Are the Peacemakers,” 39; see also Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 157, 167; Moses 5:4–12.

8. Considering the phrase “love thy neighbour as thyself” (Matthew 19:19), Brown, Griggs, and Mackay explained: “The Greek version of this clearly draws a comparison between the feelings we should have for others and how we would feel if we were the recipient of the affection: ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbor as if he were thyself’ (in other words, love your neighbor as you would want your neighbor to love you). This, then, is a restatement of the ‘Golden Rule.’ (See Matt. 7:12.) There is no admonition to love oneself” (S. Kent Brown, C. Wilfred Griggs, and Thomas W. Mackay, “Footnotes to the Gospels,” *Ensign*, March 1975, 34).

9. Ben Sira, also known as Ecclesiasticus, is regarded by Protestants as apocryphal and by Roman Catholics as deuterocanonical, i.e., accepted among the second group of books regarded as canonical by the church. (see Wattles, *The Golden Rule*, 44–45, 201). Not long thereafter, the Golden Rule appears in a religious sense in the *Letter of Aristeas* (127–118 BC): “Insofar as you do not wish evils to come upon you, but to partake of every blessing, (it would be wisdom) if you put this into practice with your subjects” (207; trans. R. J. H. Shutt in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols; ed. James H. Charlesworth [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985], 2:26). The text is grouped with *the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*—noncanonical Jewish writings (see Wattles, *The Golden Rule*, 45, 201).

10. Tobit is also regarded by Christians as deuterocanonical or apocryphal, not in the canon of the Hebrew Bible (see Wattles, *The Golden Rule*, 45–46, 201).

11. *The Babylonian Talmud: Seder Mo'ed in Four Volumes*; trans. Rabbi Dr. I. Epstein (London: Soncino Press, 1938), 1:140.

12. *The Odyssey of Homer*, trans. and introduction by Richmond Lattimore (New York: HarperPerennial, 1991), 93.

13. Translation and discussion in Richard Jasnow, *A Late Period Hieratic Wisdom Text*: P. Brooklyn 47.218.135, *Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization* 52 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 95.

14. *The Analects of Confucius*, trans. and annotated by Arthur Waley (New York: Vintage Books, 1938), 162, 198. Confucius also said, “What you do not like when done to yourself, do not do to others” (Doctrine of the Mean 13:3; in *The Four Books: Confucian Analects, The Great Learning, The Doctrine of the Mean, and The Works of Mencius*, trans. James Legge [Shanghai: Chinese Book Company, 1933], 365).

15. *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, Bollingen Series 71 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 34.

16. Elder Russell M. Nelson explained, “The Golden Rule . . . is found in nearly every major religion. Others such as Confucius and Aristotle have also taught it. After all, the gospel did not begin with the birth of the Babe in Bethlehem. It is everlasting. It was proclaimed in the beginning. . . .” (“Blessed Are the Peacemakers,” 39). In 1978 the First Presidency stated, “The great religious leaders of the world such as Mohammed, Confucius, and the Reformers, as well as philosophers including Socrates, Plato, and others, received a portion of God’s light. Moral truths were given to them by God to enlighten whole nations and to bring a higher level of

understanding to individuals” (Statement of the First Presidency regarding God’s Love for All Mankind, February 15, 1978).

17. S. Brent Farley, “The Appearance of Christ to the People of Nephi (3 Nephi 11–14),” in *Studies in Scripture, Vol. 8: Alma 30 to Moroni*, ed. Kent P. Jackson (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), 159.

18. Anthony W. Ivins, in Conference Report, April 1924, 85.

19. James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1982), 228–29.

20. Wattles, *The Golden Rule*, 184.

21. Ben E. Rich, in Conference Report, April 1909, 45.

22. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Five Million Members—A Milestone and Not a Summit,” *Ensign*, May 1982, 44.

23. Joseph F. Merrill, in Conference Report, October 1938, 80.

24. Gensler, “Golden Rule,” 304.

25. Considering the Golden Rule in isolation, some have criticized it by reasoning that doing to others only what we would want is tantamount to imposing our will; what we want may not always represent our best interest; the rule is too simplistic, unable to deal with complex challenges, and so forth. Yet observing the rule in context of Jesus’ teachings ameliorates these challenges. For example, what we want may not always represent our best interest. In context of the gospel and fatherly love the rule does not mean “do what others want,” but rather leads us to do unto others what is in their best interest, thus avoiding potential harm.

26. Wattles, *The Golden Rule*, 174.

27. Boyd K. Packer, “The Light of Christ,” *Ensign*, April 2005, 13.

28. M. Russell Ballard, “Doctrine of Inclusion,” *Ensign*, November 2001, 37.

29. Adrian M. S. Piper, “Impartiality, Compassion, and Modal Imagination,” *Ethics* 101, no. 4 (July 1991): 739.

30. Charles A. Callis, in Conference Report, April 1938, 99.

31. Wattles, *The Golden Rule*, 159.

32. Wattles, *The Golden Rule*, 120.

33. Joseph F. Merrill, in Conference Report, October 1943, 86; emphasis added.

34. *An-Nawawi’s Forty Hadith: An Anthology of the Sayings of the Prophet Muhammad*, trans. Ezzeddin Ibrahim and Denys Johnson-Davies (Cambridge, United Kingdom: The Islamic Texts Society, 1997), 56.

35. *The Mahabharata of Krishna-Dwaipayana Vyasa*, 12 vols., trans. Kisari Mohan Ganguli (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1991–2003), 11:235.

36. *Udānavarga: A Collection of Verses from the Buddhist Canon*, comp. Dharmatrāta (Delhi: Rare Reprints; New Delhi; distributed by D. K. Publishers’ Distributors, 1982), 27.

37. Wattles, *The Golden Rule*, 189.

38. A study by Nancy T. Ammerman suggests a growing number of Christians see their faith in terms of practices, not doctrines. She titles this phenomenon “Golden Rule Christianity” because the rule is often at center. They want to keep some connection with classic Christianity and the Bible but instead of viewing scripture as literal they approach it more as a tool for making one’s life and the world better. See

“Golden Rule Christianity: Lived Religion in the American Mainstream,” in *Lived Religion in America*, ed. David Hall (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1997), 196–216.

39. Peter Kreeft, *Back to Virtue* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), 83; cited in Robert L. Millet, *Selected Writings of Robert L. Millet* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000), 179.

40. Joseph F. Merrill, in Conference Report, October 1940, 77. Similarly, President N. Eldon Tanner explained that “by seriously trying to apply the Golden Rule that the Savior gave to us, we will find greater joy, success, satisfaction, and friendship as we go through life, and we will enjoy the love of others and the Spirit of our Father in heaven” (“Love One Another,” *Ensign*, October 1972, 2).

41. Wattles, *The Golden Rule*, 188.

42. Wattles, *The Golden Rule*, 189.