

# The Golden Standard: God's Summary of Righteous Living

Matthew 7:12

# The Story of Gyges' Ring

## **Plato's Tale (2,400 years ago):**

- A shepherd discovers a **golden ring** that makes him invisible
- The ring gave him power to act **without accountability**
- Gyges used his invisibility to seduce the queen, murder the king, and steal the throne

**Plato's Point:** If we strip away the fear of being caught, even the most moral person becomes a monster

# The Haunting Question

**How often do we live as if we have Gyges' ring?**

- When we're anonymous online
- When we're sure no one will find out
- When we think we can get away with it

**What does our behavior reveal about our true character?**

**The darkness: We naturally ask "What can I get away with?" instead of "What's the right thing to do?"**

# Jesus Gives Us a Different Direction

**Jesus doesn't give us a ring of invisibility**

**He gives us a mirror of responsibility**

"So, whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets."

**Matthew 7:12**

**The Golden Rule isn't nice advice - it's God's standard**

# God's Ethical Standard for All Relationships

**Notice "Therefore" or "So" at the beginning:**

- Jesus just taught about prayer and our Father's good gifts
- **Connects our vertical relationship with God to horizontal relationships with others**

**Since your Father treats you with goodness and generosity, you must treat others by that same standard**

**Your ethics flow from God's character revealed in Scripture**

# Positive vs. Negative Ethics

**Most ethical systems focus on avoiding harm:**

Rabbi Hillel (before Jesus): *"What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor."* **That's restraint-based ethics**

**The problem with restraint-based ethics:**

- Creates moral minimalists, not flourishing communities
- You can follow perfectly by doing absolutely nothing
- Becomes morally neutral - contributing nothing

# Jesus Demands Something Radical

**Jesus doesn't say "Don't harm others"**

**He says, "Actively seek their good."**

**The difference:**

- **A dam holds back water (prevents damage)**
- **A spring gives life (produces flourishing)**

**Jesus calls us to be springs, not dams**

# This IS the Law and the Prophets

**Jesus makes an astounding claim:** This single rule IS the ethical DNA of all divine revelation

**Every commandment, every prophetic call, finds its ultimate expression in actively seeking others' good**

**Connects to Matthew 5:17: Jesus came not to abolish but to fulfill the Law**

**The Golden Rule shows what that fulfillment looks like**

# Revolutionary Foundation

**Jesus doesn't root our ethics in:**

- Social contracts
- Cultural expectations

**He roots our treatment of others in God's treatment of us**

**Since your Father actively gives good things, disciples must live that same generous goodness in every relationship**

# How This Transforms Church Community

**We've trained people to be consumers rather than contributors:**

- Call Sunday gatherings "services" to meet our needs
- Evaluate worship by what we got out of it
- Want pastoral care but disappear when others need help
- Demand excellent children's ministry, but won't volunteer

**The Golden Rule question: "How would I want to be treated in this community?"**

# From Consumer to Contributor

## **The transformation:**

- **Want** a vibrant, caring, mission-focused church?
- **Then become** the kind of member who creates that reality for others
- **Be the spring, not the dam**

**This isn't willpower - it's the Holy Spirit's work responding to God's love**

**Because God is already pleased with you through Christ, you're freed to love others without ulterior motives.**

# The Challenge - Gyges or Jesus?

"Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works." **Hebrews 10:24**

**Two ways to live:**

- **Like Gyges:** "What can I get away with?"
- **Like Jesus:** "How can I actively love others the way my Father loves me?"

**The result: A church where everyone asks, "How can I help others flourish the way God has helped me flourish?"**

**Will you spend your life advancing the Gospel?**