Introduction

They are the axioms of uncertain origin. Some of our most repeated expressions are actually found in the Bible, but are so far removed from their contexts that the original intent of the Holy Spirit is all but forgotten. In this fourth series of lessons, we will go back to the Bible to find the origin of these “Golden Rules” and then apply them according to the context provided.

Syllabus

1. Washing My Hands of the Matter.............................................................1
2. What Would Jesus Do?...........................................................................3
3. He Who Lives by The Sword Will Die by The Sword............................5
4. My Cross To Bear..................................................................................7
5. Fall From Grace....................................................................................9
6. My Cup Runneth Over ........................................................................11
7. Speak Where the Bible Speaks,
   Remain Silent Where The Bible is Silent............................................13
8. Till Death Do Us Part...........................................................................15
9. Pride Goeth Before a Fall.....................................................................17
10. Book, Chapter and Verse....................................................................19
11. Merry Christmas and Happy Easter....................................................21
12. Physician, Heal Thyself.....................................................................23
13. Review...............................................................................................25
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Lesson 1: Washing My Hands of the Matter

Perhaps it was Pontius Pilate who first enlisted the symbolism of washing his hands to signify a refusal of responsibility. This was certainly his intent as he permitted the mob to crucify Jesus and his action has taken on continued meaning today as people wash their hands of all manner of things.


2. What else do we learn of his character from Luke’s writings (13:1)?

3. Begin by reading Matthew’s account of Pilate’s handling of Jesus’s case (27:11-26). Did Pilate have the same passionate desire to kill Jesus that motivated the chief priests and other enemies? How would you characterize his attitude toward Jesus?

4. How did Pilate try to prevent the execution of Jesus? Why?
5. When someone is given the power to make life-and-death judgments, we expect them to be objective and above corruption. How does Pilate show that he is neither (John 18:35-19:1)?

6. Many filthy consciences come together at Jesus’s trial. Pilate exposes himself as a political animal without the will to make an unpopular, just decision. Still, who had the greater sin (John 19:7-12)?

7. What did Pilate proclaim as he washed his hands in front of the tumultuous multitude (Matthew 27:24-25)? What was their reply?

8. Did Pilate’s words absolve him of responsibility? Why or why not (James 4:17, Romans 14:22, Matthew 10:32-33)? Can one legitimately repent of a sin before committing it?

9. How could Pilate, the mob and all sinners find real absolution from this sin and every sin (Psalm 26:6-7, Hebrews 9:13-14, First Peter 3:21-22)?

10. How is absolution from sin effected for the Christian, after the fact, according to the following passages?

   • Acts 8:18-24:
   • Second Corinthians 7:8-11:
   • First John 1:7-9:
Lesson 2: What Would Jesus Do?

Sometimes abbreviated “WWJD,” the phrase “What would Jesus do?” took on more than just theological significance in recent years. It is a marketing and political phenomenon as people emblazon their cars and clothing with the axiom and parties and causes struggle to prove that Jesus would do exactly what they are doing. There is value in asking what Jesus would do, but not simply as an excuse to validate everything we are already doing.

1. How can we learn what Jesus did or would do in certain circumstances (John 20:30-32, 16:12-15; Hebrews 4:15)?

2. Why is it so important to figure out what Jesus would do (John 15:9-10, Hebrews 5:8-9)?

3. What does it mean when John says that a person is a liar who claims to know Christ without obeying him (First John 2:1-6)? To do what Jesus would do, what must we first put off and what must we put on (Ephesians 4:17-24)?

4. Ephesians 5:8-21 teaches disciples how to figure out what is acceptable to the Lord. Read the passage and associate with each verse below what is involved in figuring it out:

   • verses 8-9:
   • verses 11-14:
   • verse 15:
   • verse 16:
   • verse 17:
1. verse 18:
   
   do not be drunk with wine, but be filled with the Holy Spirit

2. verse 19:
   
   worship and learn as others sing to you

3. verse 20:
   
   be always thankful to God

4. verse 21:
   
   submit to one another in the fear of God

5. What influence does Paul say the mind of Christ Jesus should have upon his followers in Philippians 2:1-8?

6. What lesson was Jesus trying to teach when he washed his apostles’ feet (John 13:1-17)? What should we do to imitate him then?

7. When facing temptation, we can imitate Jesus. How did he resist (Matthew 4:1-11)? List some similar steps we can take (James 4:7-10).

8. Would Jesus worry or have us to worry (Matthew 6:25-34)? What should we do instead (Philippians 4:1-7)?

9. What would Jesus have us to do when faced with lust (Matthew 5:27-30, Second Timothy 2:22, First Corinthians 15:33, Titus 1:15)?

Lesson 3: *He Who Lives By The Sword Will Die By The Sword*

A Google search on “He who lives by the sword” reveals more than ten million web pages that paraphrase the words of Christ at his arrest. How many of them credit the Master is unknown, but perhaps there are few that accurately apply what he meant. “All who take the sword will perish by the sword” has proven true for centuries, no matter what the sword was.

1. Read Matthew 26:47-54. In your own words, what did Jesus mean when he reproved Peter’s defensive reaction by saying, “Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword?”

2. One obvious aspect of this doctrine must involve the punishment of murderers, who lived by the sword and must then face the saber of justice. What is taught in Genesis 9:6 and Romans 13:1-7 concerning justice for murderers and other evildoers?

3. Life, however, has its own way of catching up with people who live by the sword, whether that sword is a literal weapon of murder, or a figurative bludgeon such as gossip, hatred, selfishness or unkindness. Consider the warning given in Proverbs 1:10-19. What do evildoers do to themselves in the process (18)? Explain.
4. Consider a few figurative swords that foolish men and women sometimes take up and even live by. First, there is gossip. What harm does a gossip do to himself (Proverbs 20:19)?

5. Others take up hatred and bitterness as a bludgeon to injure their own enemies and neighbors. What self-injury does such a person also inflict (Proverbs 10:12, James 3:8-12)?

6. It is surely a fact that most people who are unkind and uncivil to others receive the same in return. How should Christians handle the situation when someone has shown them unkindness (Romans 12:18-21)?

Christians must not return evil for evil, but should attempt to bless those who do them injury, that their pious example might leaven the wicked.

7. Which of the following accurately reflects the golden rule when it comes to mistreatment?

a. “Do unto others before they do it unto you.”

b. “Do unto others as they have done unto you.”

c. “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

8. Our words are quite often modern swords, by which men inflict harm on loved ones, enemies and neighbors. What should govern our speech instead, according to Ephesians 4:29-32?

No corrupt word should proceed from our mouths, but edifying speech should start there instead. We ought to extend the same mercy and longsuffering toward others that God in Christ did for us.

9. That the swordsman will die by the sword is noted again in Revelation 13:9-10. Why did these saints need patience and faith?
Lesson 4: *My Cross To Bear*

Everyone seems to have a cross to bear and often it has nothing to do with the faith at all. Indeed, a “cross to bear” today can be anything from a physical disability to worry. What did Jesus mean when he taught about a cross to bear, though?

1. Read Luke 14:25-27. “Hate” in this passage means simply “to love less” and indicates the degree of commitment that Jesus was demanding of his disciples. How could family get in the way of discipleship (cf. Matthew 10:34-38)?

2. What consolation does Christ offer those who must bear the cross of family sacrifice (Luke 18:28-30)?

3. The image of Christ carrying his cross toward Calvary should be etched in our minds, so that we take this passage and gladly apply it to whatever sacrifice is presented. What does John write about the commandments of God and command to love (First John 5:1-4)?

4. Consider Luke 14:28-32. Before taking up that cross of committed discipleship, it is wise to gauge whether we can carry it all the way. What two illustrations are employed here to drive home that very point?
5. What does Jesus require a disciple to be willing to forsake if it interferes with his commitment (Luke 14:33)?

6. What crosses were these people unwilling to bear?
   - Rulers (John 12:42-43):

7. Why did the Hebrew Christians continue to bear their crosses (Hebrews 10:32-39)? What form did those crosses take?

8. What promise did Paul make to reassure the Thessalonians that their cross-bearing would not be in vain (Second Thessalonians 1:3-10)?

9. Read a parallel passage in Matthew 16:24-26. What does it mean to deny self and lose one’s life (Galatians 2:20 and First Corinthians 9:24-27)?

10. Read the additional words that Mark reports (8:38). What cross might be forced onto our backs when we share our faith with others?

11. List some other crosses that disciples must bear.
Lesson 5: Fall From Grace

In the world today, a “fall from grace” often has very little to do with God’s unmerited favor. Usually, the expression is applied to someone who has been pushed off some lofty perch and left penniless, unemployed, unloved or whatever. That the phrase survives at all is somewhat surprising since Calvinism teaches falls from grace are impossible.

1. Generally, what is grace? Specifically, what is the grace of God as it touches human beings (Acts 11:19-23, Ephesians 4:7-13)?

2. What parts of the scheme of salvation are “by grace”?
   - Romans 11:5-6:
   - Ephesians 2:8-9:
   - Titus 3:7:

3. A careful reading of those passages and understanding the definition of “grace” makes it apparent that God’s favor cannot be earned by fallible human beings. New Testament righteousness is rooted in grace; on what impossible basis would Old Testament people have to seek righteousness (Romans 3:23, 9:30-32)?


5. Works do not merit salvation because they cannot cancel out the debt of even a single sin; this is where grace enters. Does this mean that works nullify grace or always interfere with it? Does this make obedience somehow unnecessary or wrong (Matthew 7:21, Luke 6:46-49, 17:10)?
6. What acts of obedience are specified in these passages?

- Romans 10:17:
- John 3:16:
- Second Peter 3:9:
- Romans 10:9-10:
- Acts 2:38:

7. Christians are in God’s grace. What are some of the benefits of this relationship?

- First Timothy 4:8:
- Philippians 4:6:
- First John 1:7:
- First John 2:1:
- Hebrews 12:7-10:

8. What caused some Christians in Galatia to fall from grace (Galatians 5:1-6)?

They had fallen prey to the Judaizing teachers who were compelling Gentile converts to Jehovah to become circumcised as a test of fellowship and to keep a defunct Law of Moses. Seeking to be justified by works instead of faith will cause one to fall from grace.

9. What was threatening to cause some of the Hebrew Christians to fall short of God’s grace (Hebrews 12:14-16)? Others (Second Peter 2:20-22)?
Lesson 6: *My Cup Runneth Over*

Maybe it is the King’s English that keeps this phrase so famous, or maybe it is its origin in the most beloved psalm in the series. In any event, people even today can be heard to exclaim, “My cup runneth over” when they feel blessed beyond expectation.

1. Read Psalm 23. What do you think David means when he says his cup runs over? Do you think this statement mainly means financial prosperity?

2. Who fills our cups that they might even runneth over (James 1:16-18)? What does James identify as a greater gift than something monetary? What does it have to do with a cup?

3. List some blessings that we tend to overlook, even in our prayers.

4. Does God bless sinners and those who reject him (Matthew 5:45)? If so, how? How did God bless the Pentecost audience and the household of Cornelius while they were still in sin (cf. Titus 2:11)?

5. Consider the plight of the Hebrew Christians (10:32-34) and those in Smyrna (Revelation 2:9). If the cup of an unbeliever runneth over with physical blessings more than mine, does that prove that there is no God? Does it prove that I am really unrighteous? What does it prove?
6. What are some dangers when your cup runneth over a little too much (Proverbs 30:7-9, Mark 10:24, First Timothy 6:9-10)? What happened to the Laodiceans when their cups overran (Revelation 3:14-22)?

7. What role does generous sharing play in my hope to have a cup that runs over (Luke 6:38)?

8. What do these passages say about sharing?

   • Hebrews 13:16:

   • Titus 3:14:

   • First Timothy 6:17-19:

9. How can sincere thankfulness affect our attitude toward our wants and needs, especially when we are disappointed that our cups are not running over as we expected (Philippians 4:4-7)?

10. What is the best way to gauge whether your cup is running over (Matthew 6:19-24, First Peter 1:3-7, Second Peter 1:3-4)?
Lesson 7: *Speak Where the Bible Speaks and Remain Silent Where the Bible is Silent*

Secular history suggests that it was Thomas Campbell, who in the home of one Abraham Altars, summed up his attitude toward the Bible with the following words: “Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent.” It is, however, hotly contested among men what he meant by this, for some today contend there is no Bible pattern for Christian living or scriptural pattern for church character. Does it really matter what he meant anyway?

1. What is a Campbellite? Are you one?

2. Does it really matter to my discipleship what Thomas or Alexander Campbell said or did? Are they the founders of this church or its authority? (Consider First Corinthians 1:10-13, 3:1-8, and 4:6-7.)

3. Can you think of a Bible passage that suggests the same idea as the title of this lesson? If so, what is it?

4. What is meant by “the oracles of God” (Hebrews 5:12, Second Timothy 3:16-17, Second Peter 1:20-21, Second Peter 3:16)?

5. What is said of those who go beyond the oracles of God (Second John 9-11)?
6. List some examples of ways in which those calling themselves Christians go beyond the oracles of God. What might be their motivation?

7. How did the Hebrew writer treat the silence of the Scriptures on a given point of doctrine— as liberty to do as one pleases or as the lack of authority (7:11-14)?

8. How did the following characters remain within or go beyond the oracles of God?
   a. Noah (Genesis 6:1-22)
   b. Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10:1-3)
   c. Saul (First Samuel 13:7-15)
   d. Samuel (First Samuel 15:32-35)
   e. David (Second Samuel 7:1-7)

9. Consider Matthew’s account of the events at the Mount of Transfiguration (17:1-8). What three words uttered by Peter prevented him from going beyond the oracles of God?

10. What does the rest of First Peter 4:11 say? What does it mean?
Lesson 8: ‘Till Death Do Us Part

“I take thee to be my wedded wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness or in health, to love and to cherish, 'til death do us part.’ What once sounded so sweet and permanent has been reduced to a fairy tale by a world bent on self-actualization. Where does this idea of ‘‘till death do us part” originate anyway?

1. Using a Bible concordance, try to discover if there is any Scriptural basis for the phrase “‘till death do us part.” Did you find it? Where?

2. Who was getting married in that passage?

3. If you haven’t discovered the answers to the first two questions yet, you are off the hook. The phrase is found in Ruth 1:16-17. Read that passage and identify how each of these phrases impacts the endurance of a marriage:

• Wherever you go, I will go:

• Wherever you lodge, I will lodge:

• Your people shall be my people:

• Your God, my God:

• Where you die, I will die:

• The Lord do so to me, and more also, if anything but death parts you and me:
4. For marriage to endure, three important principles are required. They were present at the first marriage between Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:18-25). List and define them (verse 24).

1. Leave father and mother by setting up new, autonomous home elsewhere.
2. Cleave to one another by depending upon each other.
3. Become one flesh physically, emotionally and sexually.

5. Adam and Eve managed to hold their marriage together, but their offspring have often not been as fortunate. Why did God permit his people to deviate from the Eden Ideal and to divorce their mates (Deuteronomy 24:1-4, Matthew 19:8)?

6. Adam and Eve managed to hold their marriage together, but their offspring have often not been as fortunate. Why did God permit his people to deviate from the Eden Ideal and to divorce their mates (Deuteronomy 24:1-4, Matthew 19:8)?

6. How does God feel about divorce in general (Malachi 2:13-16)? Why?

7. In Matthew 5:31-32, Jesus recognized what Moses had allowed under his covenant regarding divorce. What limitation did Jesus plan to add under his?

8. Consider also Matthew 19:1-9. Which of the following best represents the doctrine of Christ on marriage, divorce and remarriage:
   a. The Garden of Eden scenario
   b. The Mosaic allowance
   c. Modern no-fault divorce and remarriage

9. Who is free to remarry (Matthew 19:9, Romans 7:1-4, First Corinthians 7:10-11)?
Lesson 9: *Pride Goeth Before a Fall*

*Pride goeth before a fall—it sounds so authoritatively King James that few would openly argue the point. Yet fewer still believe their level of pride is dangerous enough to warrant much of a fall, and for that reason, many are poised for exactly that.*

1. Read Proverbs 16:18-19. Dividing the spoil (the plunder) sounds like a pleasant experience. Why is the reader admonished not to do it?

2. How would you define the pride that offends God?

3. What made the following characters proud?
   - Goliath (First Samuel 17): his size
   - King Amaziah (Second Chronicles 25):
   - Edomites (Obadiah):
   - Pharisees (John 7:40-49):

4. What are some causes of pride and conceit today?
   - Psalm 49:6-7:
   - Psalm 52:1-7:
   - Psalm 94:1-4:
   - Psalm 97:7-9:
   - First Corinthians 3:21-23, 4:6-7:
   - First Corinthians 10:12:
   - Second Corinthians 11:18-23a:
5. We often speak approvingly of taking pride in one’s work, being a proud nation or showing school pride. Are these always examples of acceptable pride? Is there some danger in them?

6. Think. Why does pride (arrogance, conceit) so often lead to a fall?


8. When you have done well in the service of God, are you free to boast and pat yourself on the back (Luke 17:7-10)? Why or why not?


10. How do you enjoy listening to someone brag about himself (Galatians 5:24-26)? How should you conduct yourself when you are practically bursting to tell someone of your success or good fortune (Proverbs 27:2)?
Lesson 10: *Book, Chapter and Verse*

When you give someone “book, chapter and verse,” you are explaining it to him or her in a way that is comprehensive and authoritative. Hardly any room for debate remains after a book, chapter and verse response. How well are we prepared, however, to give such a response?

1. Sometimes we are reluctant to enter into Bible discussions with those outside Christ’s church. Why do you think that is?

2. What duty are Christians given in First Peter 3:13-17? Where does “book, chapter and verse” enter into this duty?

3. What does it mean to divide rightly the word of truth (Second Timothy 2:15, cf. Ephesians 4:15, First Peter 3:16, Acts 20:26-27)?

4. For what four purposes does the word of God thoroughly equip us (Second Timothy 4:16-17)?

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5. Offer book, chapter and verse for the following propositions.
   a. Baptism is for the remission of sins:
      
      Acts 2:38
   b. Churches of Christ is a Biblical phrase:
      
      Romans 16:16
   c. The kingdom would come before some of Christ’s contemporaries died:
      
   d. Baptism now saves you:
      
      First Peter 3:21
   e. Miraculous signs that accompanied apostolic preaching were there to confirm the divine origin of the word:
      
      Mark 16:20
   f. He who believes and is baptized will be saved:
      
      Mark 16:16
   g. Man is not justified by means of faith only:
      
      James 2:24
   h. Religious leaders should not be called by clergy titles like “Father”:
      
   i. The gate to life is narrow and the way is difficult, so few find it:
      
   j. Not everyone who calls Christ “Lord” will enter heaven, but those who do God’s will:
      
   k. Unity means one body, Spirit, hope, Lord, faith, baptism and God:
      
   l. Peter was the first Pope:
      
   m. The disciples were first called Christians at Antioch:
      
   n. The Bible also calls disciples “Methodists” and “Presbyterians”:
      
   o. The disciples observed the Lord’s Supper on the first day of the week:
Lesson 11: *Merry Christmas & Happy Easter*

The two most celebrated holidays on the “Christian calendar” are Christmas and Easter and we are wished a Merry Former and a Happy Latter every winter and spring. The trouble is that there is no Biblical Christian calendar and no apostolic custom of celebrating the birth of Jesus at all or his resurrection only once a year.


2. Explain what it means to teach as doctrines the commandments of men.

3. How do tradition, opinion and denominational creeds enter into this matter?

4. On what day of the year was Jesus born? Cite your reference for that answer. Cite the command, example or implication that the birthday of Jesus Christ was to be observed at all.
5. Is a religious observance of Christmas “from God or men?” Can you describe the details of its origin?

6. Are there some parts of the Christmas season that are not steeped in religion, which Christians could observe without “teaching as doctrines the commandments of men?” If so, list a few.

7. In what passage does the word “Easter” appear?

8. How has God instructed his people to commemorate the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ?
   • When (Acts 20:7)?
   • How frequently (Acts 20:7)?
   • How (First Corinthians 11:22-26)?

9. What are some of the dangers of substituting an annual observance of Christ’s death and resurrection for the Biblical communion?

10. What is Lent? Where do you find the practice in Scripture (Colossians 2:20-23)?
Lesson 12: Physician, Heal Thyself

“Physician, heal thyself” is a proverb, according to Jesus Christ, and was probably in wide use when he appropriated the phrase to anticipate the reaction of his audience in the synagogue of Nazareth (Luke 4:14-30). Although Jesus uses the proverb against them, there is certainly much truth in it.

1. Read Luke 4:14-30. Jesus anticipated what the Nazarenes were thinking as they listened to him fulfill Scripture—“Physician, heal thyself.” They did not want him to heal himself, however; whom did they want him to heal?

2. No passage more completely reflects the truth found in this proverb than Matthew 7:1-5. Before one decides to rebuke or correct another, what should he be in the habit of doing?

3. Why do we have the tendency to overlook our own failures while magnifying those of others?

4. Consider Mark 7:1-13. What was the plank in the Pharisees’ eyes?

5. Finish the passage by reading Mark 7:14-23. Make a list of the planks that not only afflict our vision, but also our hearts.
6. What did John tell the following groups to do to heal themselves (Luke 3:7-14)?

- The people in general:

- The tax collectors:

- The soldiers:

7. How did the following New Testament characters go about healing themselves of sins?

- Iscariot (Acts 1:16-18):


- Simon (Acts 8:18-24):

- Saul of Tarsus (Acts 22:12-16):

8. What responsibility do we have in our own salvation (Philippians 2:12)?

- We are responsible for working out our own salvation with fear and trembling. This means that we must take responsibility for our part in remaining faithful, resisting temptation and emerging from life prepared for eternity. It is the complacent that take salvation for granted and end up forfeiting eternal life.

9. How did the words of this proverb echo even under the cross of Christ (Luke 23:35)?
Lesson 13: Questions For Review

1. What did Pilate proclaim as he washed his hands (Matthew 27:24-25)? Did Pilate’s words absolve him of responsibility (James 4:17, Romans 14:22, Matthew 10:32-33)? Can one repent of a sin before committing it?

2. How can we learn what Jesus would do (John 20:30-32, 16:12-15; Hebrews 4:15)? Why is it so important (John 15:9-10, Hebrews 5:8-9)?

3. Read Matthew 26:47-54. What did Jesus mean when he reproved Peter’s reaction by saying, “all who take the sword will perish by the sword?”

4. What crosses were these people unwilling to bear?
   - Rulers (John 12:42-43):

5. What caused some Christians in Galatia to fall from grace (Galatians 5:1-6)? What was threatening to cause some of the Christians to fall short of God’s grace (Hebrews 12:14-16 and Second Peter 2:20-22)?
6. Read Psalm 23. What do you think it means when his cup runs over?

7. What Bible passage expresses the idea of “speaking where the Bible speaks and remaining silent where it is silent”?

8. For marriage to endure, three important principles are required. They were present at the first marriage between Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:18-25). List and define them (verse 24).

9. Are there examples of acceptable pride? Is there any danger in them?

10. What duty are Christians given in First Peter 3:13-17?

11. Explain what it means to teach as doctrines the commandments of men (Matthew 15:1-9). How do tradition, opinion and creeds interfere?

12. No passage more completely reflects the truth found in this proverb than Matthew 7:1-5. Before one decides to rebuke or correct another, what should he be in the habit of doing?