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GOLDEN RULES 7

The Last Golden Rules

A Thirteen Lesson Bible Study

by Jeff S. Smith

7. Under what circumstances do we hear the expression "For Christ's sake" today? In such circumstances, is the speaker likely thinking about Jesus at that moment?

8. Today, when we speak of "forbidden fruit," what is usually implied?

9. What does James illustrate with Job (James 5:1-11)?

10. David makes poetic use of the expression in Psalm 17, presuming to refer to himself as the apple of God's eye. What was troubling David at that time and what did he hope to gain by writing such words?

11. Consider Second Timothy 4:16-18. Do you think Paul was talking about a real lion? If so, okay. If not, what do you think he meant?

12. Paul has the last word on "Eat, drink and be merry" in First Corinthians 15:32. Consider the context of the chapter–what is Paul's point?

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 seventh 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.

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Printing Instructions

1. Download the booklet and open it in Adobe Reader.
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3. Now FLIP THE PILE OVER so the blank sides are ready.
4. Print ONLY the EVEN pages.
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Lesson 13: *Review*

1. Where is "Ivory Tower" elitism likely to be found today, especially in opposition to pure Christianity?

2. Think about Second Corinthians 12:10. What lesson did Paul learn from his thorn in the flesh?

3. Under what circumstances does Luke describe Stephen as seeming to have the face of an angel (Acts 6:8-15)?

4. Consider Deuteronomy 30:1-20. What course of action is Moses recommending for his hearers? What promise or reward does he attach?

5. Are there any examples of Christians requesting such "signs" as shooting stars or other things? Should we ask God for signs? How would he guide us apart from signs like that?

6. Where does water (holy or not) fit into God's New Testament plan (Mark 1:2-8, John 3:1-1-5, 7:37-39)?

he call one who does such? What made him feel permitted to eat, drink and be merry?

6. Clearly, then, laying up treasure in Heaven is the opposite of eating, drinking and making merry. How does one go about laying up treasure in Heaven (Matthew 6:19-21, Titus 3:14, First Corinthians 16:1-3, James 1:27)?

7. What does Peter argue about the hedonistic lifestyle wrapped up in this expression (First Peter 4:1-4)? What three words in verse 3 pertain to drink?

8. Anything wrong with gluttony (Deuteronomy 21:18-23, Proverbs 23:21, 25:16, 28:7; Titus 1:12)?

9. Paul has the last word on "Eat, drink and be merry" in First Corinthians 15:32. Consider the context of the chapter–what is Paul's point?

Lesson 1: *Ivory Tower*

The term "ivory tower" is almost always use with derision today, except when one is quoting the Song of Solomon, of course. What was once a romantic description of a woman's neck has become a designation for any kind of disconnected elitism.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Consider Song of Solomon 7:1-5. What is the writer's point? Were you able to read the passage without blushing? Are you surprised to find such language in the Bible? Ready to share this passage with the children? Think your spouse would be impressed if you applied the same imagery to her? Ready to move on to Question 2?

2. What does he imply by choosing an ivory tower to illustrate her neck?

3. The Song of Solomon is the most romantic book in all the Bible, but it really has no competition for that title. Can you list some other Bible romances?

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4. Some key words in Song of Solomon temper the passion a little and lend themselves well to New Testament morality. What are those words (2:7, 3:5, 8:4) and how do they compare to the First Thessalonians 4:1-8, First Corinthians 6:18-20?

5. Linguists believe that the first modern usage of the "Ivory Tower" was in an 1837 poem by Frenchman Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve, who used the term to describe the unworldly dreaminess of fellow poet Alfred de Vigny. The Hawksmoor Towers at Oxford University are an even more tangible representation of the term–they are twin creamy-white Neo-Gothic towers at the only pure research college at the university. Thus, those who labor in "ivory towers" are being mocked as isolated, insulated, impractical, disconnected elitists. Who were the elitists in Christ's day (Matthew 23:1-12)?

6. How is that elitism expressed in John 7:30-49?

7. Where is elitism likely to be found today, especially in opposition to pure Christianity?

8. Why was the gospel foolishness to the early Greeks (First Corinthians 1:18-31)?

9. What is the danger of this ivory tower elitism (First Corinthians 3:18-20, 8:1-2)?

Lesson 12: *Eat, Drink and Be Merry*

The expression, "Eat, drink and be merry" is rarely connected to the Bible in modern people's thoughts. Perhaps they are too consumed with eating, drinking and merry-making to realize that the expression is used most negatively in the Bible where it first appears.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How long did Ahasuerus and his friends eat, drink and make merry (Esther 1:1-9)? What other words or phrases would you use to describe the environment there? Are there any redeeming qualities at all?

2. We first encounter the phrase, "Eat, drink and be merry" in the contemplations of the Old Testament Preacher. Consider Ecclesiastes 8:4-17. Why did the writer experiment with such hedonism?

3. The phrase recurs in the next chapter, with much the same context. The writer is recounting his fruitless efforts at discovering the purpose of life. Explain what he means in Ecclesiastes 9:1-8.

4. Perhaps some will take the Preacher's statements thus far as an invitation to make eating, drinking and merriment the top priority, yet after all this discussion of carnality, what is his conclusion (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14)?

5. Jesus passed judgment on eating, drinking and merry-making as a lifestyle choice during his brief earthly ministry (Luke 12:13-21). What does

5. Peter spent a great deal of ink describing a similar kind of lions' den for Christian. His was replete with enemies and accusers, but without actual lions. Identify his advice in the following passages:

- First Peter 2:11-12:
- First Peter 3:13-17:
- First Peter 4:1-5:
- First Peter 4:12-16:

6. Consider Second Timothy 4:16-18. Do you think Paul was talking about a real lion? If so, okay. If not, what do you think he meant?

7. Alfred Ely Day comments: "Lions are mentioned in the Bible for their strength (Judges 14:18), boldness (2 Samuel 17:10), ferocity (Psalms 7:2), and stealth (Psalms 10:9; Lamentations 3:10)." What character is described as a lion in First Peter 5:8-11? In what manner is he like a lion?

8. Name two Old Testament characters who boasted of killing lions.

9. Sometimes the lions' den is a place of indolent convenience. Explain the fear of the lion discussed in Proverbs 22:13 and 26:13.

Lesson 2: *Thorn In My Flesh*

Today, a thorn in the flesh in some incurable, inescapable annoyance that causes persistent discomfort, embarrassment or pain. A thorn in the flesh can be a disease, a person, a rival team or even, sometimes, an actual thorn. Paul was the first to claim such a thorn, but was even his literal?

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Consider Second Corinthians 12:1-10. What is the experience that Paul reports here?

2. How does he describe his "thorn in the flesh?" What was its purpose?

3. Who is responsible for thorns in the flesh (James 1:12-18)?

4. Was David a thorn in Saul's flesh? Explain.

5. It might be that Paul's other epistles lend some insight into the exact nature of Paul's thorn in the flesh. What might be suggested by Galatians 4:13-15, 6:11?

6. Think again about Second Corinthians 12:10. What lesson did Paul learn from his thorn in the flesh?

7. What is produced when thorns in the flesh test one's resolve (James 1:2-8)?

8. What makes thorns necessary and inevitable (First Peter 1:3-9)?

9. "Thorn in the flesh" might be a rather mild way of describing the persecution administered to the early Jerusalem church. How did they respond (Acts 5:40-42, 8:1-4)?

10. Identify a thorn in your own flesh as it stands today. (Hopefully some might not be too embarrassed to share one with the class.) What should you be doing–or are you doing–to capitalize upon it rather than letting it depress you and destroy you (Second Corinthians 4:16-5:7)?

Lesson 11: *Lion's Den*

Few have ever actually been in a lion's den, but, put another away, almost everyone finds himself in a lion's den sooner or later. For Daniel, the den of lions was all too literal, but for most of us, it is but figurative of some terrible ordeal in life. Either way, it's no picnic, unless you're a lion.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Read Daniel 6. Where was Daniel living at this time? What was his occupation? Why did his peers dislike him?

2. Where did enemies expect to find an accusation against him? Explain their plan.

3. How did Daniel respond to the decree not to pray to Jehovah?

4. How did Daniel survive his night in the lions' den (cf. Proverbs 28:1)? Did his accusers fare as well?

6. What do these New Testament passages indicate about the protection God will provide for the apples of his eye today?

- Hebrews 13:5-6:
- Romans 8:31:
- James 4:7-10:
- Revelation 22:1-5:

7. The father's instruction to his son in Proverbs 7:1-5 also includes an address to the apple of his eye. What does the father indicate should be the apple of his son's eye? Explain how he would achieve this.

8. Jeremiah and the Hebrew writer used similar language in reference to God's will being written on the tablet of one's heart (Hebrews 8:7-12). What did they have in mind?

9. Read Ephesians 5:22-33. Explain how the church is the apple of Christ's eye and the wife should be the apple of the husband's eye.

Lesson 3: *Face of An Angel*

Before she grew up and attempted to become the latest incarnation of Britney Spears, singer Charlotte Church was said to have the voice of an angel. Comparisons to angelic attributes are pretty common these days even if they are somewhat exaggerated and often insincere. Such comparisons in the Bible, however, take on much greater meaning.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Do angels share the quality of eternality with the Biblical Godhead or are they created beings (Psalm 148:2,5; Colossians 1:16)?

2. Use a lexicon to find and record a more complete definition for the Greek word *aggelos* (ἄγγελος), from which angel is translated. What does this teach us about the mission of angels?

3. At least when interacting with humans, how did angels appear to look (Ezekiel 9:2, Genesis 18:2,16)?

4. What is the derivation of the idea that the have wings and wear halos?

5. Under what circumstances does Luke describe Stephen as seeming to have the face of an angel (Acts 6:8-15)?

6. We cannot know exactly what Luke is describing here–something figurative or something supernatural. The innocence and goodness of Stephen, however, are clear from these words and from the context. Stephen had the face of an angel–did he also have the voice of one?

7. Consider Revelation 10:1-7. How did this angel's face appear?

8. What do we mean today when we say that someone has the face, voice or habits of an angel?

9. What do angels do for mankind?

- Matthew 18:6-11:
- Luke 15:1-10:
- Hebrews 1:6-14:

10. Are all angels destined to be good (Jude 6, Second Peter 2:4)? Explain.

Lesson 10: *Apple of My Eye*

Every father has a child or two or even more who are the apple of his eye. The familiar expression is borrowed from four uses in the Old Testament, each time indicating a special attachment and appreciation given to the apple of one's eye–literally its black pupil, but figuratively the focus of one's attention.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Read Deuteronomy 32:7-14. Whose is the eye and who is the apple in it? How did the eye-owner treat its apple?

2. But then what happened (Deuteronomy 32:15-22)?

3. Think hard. Why does a parent describe a particular child at any given moment as "the apple of his eye"? What is implied? Could such a relationship ever end as sadly as God's with Israel?

4. Zechariah uses the expression in much the same fashion. What does the prophet envision for the apple of God's eye (Zechariah 2:1-13)?

5. David makes poetic use of the expression in Psalm 17, presuming to refer to himself as the apple of God's eye. What was troubling David at that time and what did he hope to gain by writing such words?

6. James is the only New Testament writer who references Job. What does he illustrate with Job's case (James 5:1-11)?

7. What do you think it's like to be "as poor as Job's turkey?" A character in Kate Wiggin's *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*, Mrs. Robinson, said, "They're poor as Job's turkey … but if you give 'em anything they'd turn right round and give it to the heathen." I'm not sure I know what she meant, but to Christ, being poor was never an excuse for failing to be hospitable. What did Jesus tell the church at Smyrna about their poverty (Revelation 2:9)?

8. What is the advice of these passages?

- Ephesians 4:28:
- Hebrews 13:1-2:
- First Timothy 6:17-19:

9. Which of Job's comforters uttered these gems?

- "Who ever perished being innocent?" (4:7-11):
- "Should a man full of talk be vindicated?" (11:2-6):
- "How much less man, who is a maggot?" (25:1-6):
- "I am your spokesman before God" (33:1-7):

10. What did Job think of his friends' efforts (Job 16:1-5)?

11. What is Ezekiel's point in mentioning Job, along with Daniel and Noah (14:12-23)?

Lesson 4: *Choose Life*

Bumper stickers that read, "It's a child, not a choice" and "Choose Life" are all trumpeting the same laudable sentiment. Aborting unborn babies is tantamount to the murder of a real human being, even against the wishes of the so-called "Pro-Choice" movement that denies that obvious truth. "Choose Life," however, is not a Bible bumper sticker, but something far more comprehensive.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Consider Deuteronomy 30:1-10. What course of action is Moses recommending for his hearers? What promise or reward does he attach?

2. What is the difference between the religion of so many today and that of Deuteronomy 30:10?

3. Read on in Deuteronomy 30:11-20. How does one go about choosing life and blessing? How does one choose cursing and death?

4. What is involved in clinging to God (John 15:1-8, Romans 11:17-22)?

5. When the Christian is challenged to choose life, what "life" is under consideration (Matthew 10:34-39, Romans 6:23)?

6. Jesus discusses a real life choice in John 6:47-58. What is he talking about?

7. What responsibility does one have if he is looking unto eternal life (Jude 20-21)?

8. What was Paul's conundrum in Philippians 1:19-26?

9. Classic Calvinism would have argued that man has no freewill or choice in the matter of eternal life and death. How do we make our choice known, according to Philippians 2:12-13?

10. "Choose life" usually makes a statement about abortion. What is the New Testament position on terminating innocent human life (Romans 1:29, 13:9)?

Lesson 9: *Job's Patience, Turkey and Comforters*

Pity poor Job. Almost every culture in the world is aware of this great Old Testament character, who seems likely to be a contemporary of Abraham despite his book's placement near the middle of the Hebrew Scriptures. Job's ordeal has become the root of many familiar expressions–some a little more familiar than others. We appreciate "the patience of Job," and hope never to be "as poor as Job's turkey" or as useless as "Job's comforters."

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Consider the book that bears Job's legendary name. What personal attributes are noted in the very first verse of the first chapter?

2. Noah was credited with similar character; what did that man find as a consequence (Genesis 6:8-9)? What did Job find (Job 1:6-8)?

3. What miseries came upon Job in these passages:

- 1:13-19:
- 2:4-8:
- 2:9:

4. How did Job respond to these challenges (1:20-22, 2:10-13)?

5. What is the outcome of Job's ordeal (42:10-17)?

5. So Adam's apple and the forbidden fruit–both common modern expressions–derive from the same event. In fact, nothing in the Bible suggests the fruit was actually an apple, but it certainly was forbidden. Today, when we speak of "forbidden fruit," what is usually implied?

6. Forbidden fruit often has reference today to sexual desire. How does Paul describe that illicit interest in First Corinthians 7:1-9? With fornication, adultery and homosexuality becoming so acceptable today, is there a point at which such commandments can be dismissed as antiquated (First Thessalonians 4:3-8)? Why or why not?

7. What are some other "forbidden fruits" we encounter daily?

8. What does full-grown sin bring forth (James 1:12-15)? Which man is approved of God?

9. How does John very simply define sin (First John 3:4)? Does addiction mitigate the sinfulness of such violations (First Corinthians 6:12)?

Lesson 5: *Show Me A Sign*

A confused young man stands on a hilltop under a canopy of stars and shouts to God, "Show me a sign." Maybe he is looking for religion or an answer to his suffering or just the road back into town. All he wants is a sign from God, but is this the way to obtain it?

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Why did Gideon ask for a sign (Judges 6:11-24)? Was the sign convincing?

2. Did this satisfy Gideon's need for signs or did he ask again? Explain.

3. What about Gideon made the signs necessary?

4. Consider Psalm 86:14-17. Is the sign that David requests for him or someone else? What is the sign he wants to see?

5. The Pharisees, Sadducees and scribes all asked Jesus to show them a sign (Matthew 12:39-42, 16:1-4; John 2:18-22). What sign did he promise to perform for them?

6. What is the leaven of the Pharisees (Luke 12:1)? What does that have to do with sign-seeking?

7. While the Jews requested signs, what did the Gentiles prefer (First Corinthians 1:17-31)? What did the disciples offer instead? Have things changed much?

8. Did many of the 5,000 who ate loaves and fishes follow Jesus because of the sign (John 6:22-33)? What might we learn about the human mindset from this event?

9. What was the purpose of the New Testament's miraculous signs (Hebrews 2:1-4, John 20:30-31, Mark 16:20)?

10. Are there any examples of Christians requesting such "signs" as shooting stars or other things? Should we ask God for signs? How would he guide us apart from signs like that?

Lesson 8: *Adam's Apple: Forbidden Fruit*

Prominentia laryngea does not make for much of a familiar expression in this series of studies, until it is translated into the more common vernacular– the Adam's apple. The big bump jutting out from the throats of most men is thyroid tissue and part of the voice box where two cartilage plates meet. Male hormones cause it to grow rapidly during puberty and deepen the voices of young men. One story is that it gained its common name from an event in the Bible and thus we consider it here.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What kind of fruit was borne by the tree which God forbade Adam to eat from (Genesis 2:15-17)? Granny Smith, Red Delicious, crabapple?

2. What persuaded Eve to sample the forbidden fruit and to share with poor Adam (Genesis 3:1-7; cf. First Timothy 2:14)?

3. What knowledge of good and evil did Adam and Eve instantly gain?

4. What did this new knowledge cost them?

5. Beyond that warning, Jesus taught specifically about swearing oaths in the Sermon on the Mount. What is his conclusion?

6. The expression "For Christ's sake" is biblically inspired. How is it used in First Corinthians 4:7-13? What is his meaning?

7. Again, Paul uses the expression in Second Corinthians 12:1-10. How is it used there and what does he mean to say?

8. How should the name of Jesus Christ or his Father be used (Psalm 111:9, Acts 2:38, 4:10; First Corinthians 1:2, Second Thessalonians 1:12, Second Timothy 2:19)? In what uses should we avoid it?

9. What is a euphemism? What does it have to do with this lesson?

10. Are euphemisms for taking God's name in vain acceptable as milder substitutes for offensive language?

Lesson 6: *Holy Water*

"Holy Water" is popular modern expression, but its popularity is more the result of horror movies than anything else. Still, St. Teresa of Avila (1515-82) thought enough of the mythic substance to comment, "I often experience that there is nothing the devils flee from more-without returning-than holy water."[1] Holy Water shows up in exorcism thrillers, video games and even a rock album by Bad Company. What is it about Holy Water?

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Why can't you find the phrase "holy water" in your thick, expensive, leather bound study Bible? What might this suggest to the astute Bible reader?

2. If you have access to research materials, such as in a library or on the Internet, identify who uses holy water religiously and for what purposes.

3. List a few Old Testament events in which water figures prominently.

Naaman the Syrian general was healed of leprosy by dipping seven times in the Jordan River. Did it flow with holy water? What was in that water that made it effective at healing leprosy?

[1] http://www.karmel.at/eng/teresa.htm

5. Where does water fit into God's New Testament plan (Mark 1:2-8, John 3:1-1-5, 7:37-39)?

6. Much superstition surrounds the mythology of holy water, but even more controversy attends to the doctrine of essential baptism. What did Jesus teach about water baptism (Mark 16:15-16, Matthew 28:18-20)?

7. What was Saul of Tarsus told about baptism (Acts 22:12-16)? What did he later teach about baptism (Colossians 2:11-12, Galatians 3:24-27, Romans 6:1-7)?

8. What did Peter teach about baptism (Acts 2:38, First Peter 3:18-22)?

9. What is the final role of water in God's plan (Revelation 22:1-5)?

10. Modern "holy water" is sometimes in infant baptism. Why is that latter phrase inappropriate (Acts 8:38-39, Matthew 18:3, Ezekiel 18:20)?

Lesson 7: *For Christ's Sake*

This writer is more than a little reluctant even to include such an expression in this study, since it used almost exclusively an idle oath in modern times. Of course, it fits in this series for that reason and because it finds its origin in a more reverent setting, the Bible.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Under what circumstances do we hear the expression "For Christ's sake" today? In such circumstances, is the speaker likely thinking about Jesus at that moment?

2. Can you think of some similar expressions? List them.

3. Modern Jews will customarily refrain from writing out the word "God," for fear of using it in vain, but this is an unfortunate exaggeration of the law of Moses. What did that code say about God's name (Exodus 20:7)? Explain.

4. Some argue that only God's name is included in this prohibition, opening up the word "God" itself to vain use since it is not actually his name. Christ, likewise, is a description of Jesus's role, but not his name, they argue. That, however, misses the point and ignores the context. The warning is about invoking deity to prove something false. The concept of using God's name in vain might be approached in the New Testament through a couple of ways. How does Matthew 12:35-37 affect our speech in this area?