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Presentation Transcript
God-Based Marriage, The Organizing Principle 2 – Golden Rule
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April 10, 2020

The institution of marriage in Western culture – as we said in the introduction to the series – what a mess! But that is only because the West has surrendered knowledge that God has given us about marriage. If you want to have a good marriage, there’s a way to do it. And that way comes out of the Bible originally.

I was reading a book the other day that had been recommended to me about marriage, called *Hold Me Tight*. It’s the principles a therapist uses that’s well-known to teach people how to be happily married. And that principle, that’s the core principle, of her whole thing comes right out of the Bible, whether she knows it or not.

If you want to have a good marriage, there are ways to do it. That’s what this series is about – the *God-Based Marriage*. In the introduction, we explained that God has organized marriage by instilling a number of principle, which, if followed, will create a good marriage. From there we moved to the first principle. Marriage fits into God’s universal relational hierarchy. And today, we’re going to move on from there to another principle, built into both the heavenly and the universal realms – what humans have called *The Golden Rule*. So let’s dig into that.

Let’s look at what Jesus said – Matthew 7:12:

Matthew 7:12 – “*So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.*”

Let’s think about two things here. First, how it applies to the whole law. This principle is about a generic kind of love that we are to extend to all people, and even to God. It includes things like not stealing their stuff, not coveting either, because that leads to plotting to take it away by subtlety, not testifying falsely in court or lying to or about others. Rules that most cultures follows, because the law of God is written in the heart of everyone, we’re told by the apostle

Paul in Romans. Do you know in what part of the heart the law of God is written? Well, it's written in the conscience.

I had a man come for counseling once, who was, in his past life, a reprehensible person. And over the course of his sessions, I learned that when he was seventeen, he punched his mother in the nose. Now, I'm not saying she didn't deserve it, because she had her own problems, but still, most people would never do something like that. He also head-butted one of his children in the face. Still, he was not abusive most of the time and had come to a point where he deeply regretted what he had done. His conscience convicted him. Though he was not a Christian and had never read the Bible, he *knew* that he did not like it when his father had beaten him – which is an explanation for why he acted the way he did, but not an excuse – and he knew he should not have hurt his children or his mother. These values are common to all cultures.

Jesus made the point that the whole law of God is about love of every kind, including a general way of thinking about one's own behavior as an expression of empathy. You know, we wouldn't want to be treated some way, so we shouldn't treat others like that. Some people have turned that around. By their behavior, it seems that they believe it's good to do it to others before they do it to you. But that, clearly, is a recipe for hatred and the diametrical opposite of what Jesus had in mind.

Secondly, how it applies to successful human life. The second thing to note is that this principle is the foundational rule for successful relationships with others. So it has to be included in a marriage. Right?

During the war that broke out in Eastern Europe some time back – decades ago – what used to be called Yugoslavia – I began to understand, through what the media was obfuscating the truth, that there was a war between so-called Christians and so-called Muslims – at least, that's how it seemed to me. And once I got that principle, I began to notice that intense hatred on both sides is explained by telling of atrocities that the other side had perpetrated against them ages ago. None of the people on either side, in the present day, were alive to be offended by the sins of the past, nor could perpetrate them. So these sins were all perpetrated by people that none of the present actors even knew! And the tortures and the atrocities that were perpetrated were perpetrated on people they didn't even know. But there was a lot of age-old judging and hatred reignited by this conflict that took place in Eastern Europe – none of which would have happened if both sides were not willing to do to others what they would not have wanted to have done to them. And their excuse to violate this deeply entrenched law was, it had been done to them in times past, so let's do it to them before they do it to us this time. So we can take it from that global view right down to not throwing our trash over our back fence into our neighbor's yard.

I had a neighbor once, who...the middle of his back yard cornered in one part of my back yard. In that corner, I could always find a little pile of cigarette butts. So he would smoke his cigarettes out in the yard, I'm thinking, and then dropped the butts over the fence – probably sneaking a

smoke so his wife wouldn't know. Or, maybe it was the wife smoking and hiding it from her husband. I don't know. But they would drop them in my yard.

Or, not talking to our children in a way that we wouldn't like to be talked to. I mean, just think about that for a minute. What's your tone when you talk to your kids?

Some time back, I had a client forget that she was scheduled for a session. There I was, twiddling my thumbs, waiting for her to show up. After ten minutes, I called her. When she saw my name on her phone, she knew why. She picked up the phone, and said, "I forgot. I'm so sorry. Why don't you charge me for the session?" I would have, except that she was so upset with herself for putting me out that I decided to let go of it. I usually give everybody a freebie anyway. Those who are not upset and expect to be let off the hook, however, I bill their credit card for the full price of the session. So, in this case, it pays to follow God's rule, or at least acknowledge it. So the point is that we deflect a lot of trouble by following this rule. If you don't do stuff that bugs people, they're not going to be bugged with us.

So let's talk about how this rule can apply in marriage. When I first started thinking about how I would organize this point, I thought I would pick out a few areas where it might seem important – like who gets to watch what they want on TV – but I just couldn't narrow it down. This principle applies to *every* interaction we have with our mate. Sure, we want to watch what we want to watch on TV and should ensure that our mate deserves to do the same, but it also applies to the tone of voice that we use when we talk to our mate, or the side of the bed we get to sleep on. So it wouldn't be too helpful to simply list all the things I could think of, which married people need to be considerate in. So, I'm back to picking some areas that are vital to every relationship, many of which we will cover as we get deeper into this series. In fact, almost everything I say from now on in this series connects back to the Golden Rule in some way, so that makes it just what Jesus said. It's pervasive. It's the *whole* Law and the Prophets.

Here are some of the things we'll be covering in the rest of the series: Having our mate's back. Would you want your back covered? Yeah, so that's part of the Golden Rule – a commitment. You want your mate to be committed to? Well yes. So that's Golden Rule. Working together on joint goals? Yeah, we all need help, right? So we'd want that. Emotional connection? Well, that's one of the main reasons people get married, so there's the Golden Rule. It can be applied there, too. Working to repair relational ruptures? Well yes. We all make mistakes. When we make mistakes, would we not want somebody to come to us and work to get things straightened out? So those are the five big things we're going to talk about next. And the Golden Rule applies across the board.

However, while it is a pervasive rule, it makes sense to think about how it might need to be applied in a very special way in marriage. What if I do something, involving my wife, that I wouldn't mind if she did it to me, but she minds if I do it to her? For example: I turn the TV volume up where I can hear it. I wouldn't mind if she did that, because she listens with lower

volume than I do. But what if it's so loud that she can't read. Well, now I've done something that's okay if she did it to me, but not okay if I did to her. So this kind of thing happens all the time in marriages. Think about being sloppy in the bathroom. What if I squeeze the toothpaste tube in the middle? Well, I don't care if she does it too. It's just how you do it, right? But it drives her crazy if I do that. See, this is just an example, folks. We each have our own toothpaste.

How do we modify the "do unto others rule" the way you would want it done to you? Do we say that, in cases where there's a difference, we would do it the man's way, because that's how the hierarchy works? Well, in some marriages, that's the way it's done. But that's *not* how it's supposed to be done.

Let's go to Genesis 2:21 and 24.

Genesis 2:21-24 – *So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." That's a quote. And then it continues on: Therefore – the point we're supposed to take from this is – a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.*

So there are *two* being in a marriage. But when we think about them, we're to think about them like they're one person. So, going to the hierarchy, the man sees that his wife is like a part of his body. Well, she was – in the beginning! Right? That's the point that we're supposed to take. So what she wants has the same value to him as what he wants for himself. Now this is an unstated meaning. It's there to see, but it's not talked about by God – at least at this place. But Paul talks a

lot more about this in Ephesians 5:28. And I've already covered this in a cursory way in the introduction, but let's hit it again. In Ephesians 5:28, it says:

Ephesians 5:28-33 - *In the same way – in the same way that Christ loves the church – husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. How is that? He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. So a man's not to love his wife like she's a possession – something he owns. That's the stuff of objectification. No, a man is to love his wife like she's a part of him – not that he's to treat her the way he wants to be treated, but the way she wants to be treated, because what she wants is what he wants. So this is taking it up several notches from how we treat a neighbor, who's not connected as our mate. Right? "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." Now, I know that my neighbor and I are part of a human family, but we are not one flesh. Then he talks to wives. The same principle applies to how she treats her husband. It says in the next verse: *This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.**

However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband. Why would she do that? Well, out of respect to Christ and God the Father for the hierarchy, and out of respect to her husband. What he wants is just as important to her as what she wants. So it isn't just that men are supposed to think this way about it. It's for everybody that's a Christian and wants to be like Christ. He loved His wife this way and we're to love our mates the same way.

So this happens all the time at our house. I will say to Elaine, "Where do you want to go out to eat?" on a Friday evening. See, what's important to her is just as important to me here. We worked hard all week, and now it's time to kick back, and I'd like to know where she wants to go. And she will say, "Well, where do *you* want to go?" because she wants to know what's important to me. Right? I will express some inclination. I'll say, "Let's to go M'tucci's for dinner." Then I will say, "Will that suit you tonight?" And I'm saying that because I want to make sure we go some place that she wants, because that's important to me. And she says, "Yes." So, do we always have to go where I want to go? Well, since we both want to please the other, we added a rule. She picks one week, and I pick the next. So, if we both like to go to the same places, it's not a big deal, but that's how we work it. That's another thing that we've done. We don't go to places that one of us doesn't like. Have you ever done that? You're sitting there, enjoying your meal, and your mate doesn't like what she's eating, because there isn't anything there she likes. That's a bummer! But it's only a bummer if what your wife likes isn't as important to you as what you like. Okay, so she picks one week, and I pick the next. What if I say – after she's decided on her week that she wants to go for Chinese – what if I say, "Okay, but I have to weigh tomorrow and Chinese swells me up like a balloon because of the salt." Well, if I say that, she would always say, "Well, where would you like to go instead?" Even though she picked Chinese, she wants to please me. And I say, "Okay, any place but Chinese just this once." And she says, "Okay, how about M'tucci's? and I say, "Good. You get to pick next week." So we both have needs and desires, and both are needs are important to both of us. That's kind of how it goes.

Now I chose a very simple example. There are things that get a lot more complicated than this. So how do we work that out? Well, it's simple if you do it a lot. And it's hard if you don't. It's just something that you have to work on. You have to grow into it. That's the nature of it. That's what it's all about. That's what it's for. I've quoted this several times, but I had an experience once, where I was at the hospital with my mother when my father was dying. And we were trying to do some things that should have been done a long time before, but I didn't realize they needed to be done, and I don't think my parents thought about it in their old age. But we were trying to work out the financial things. And I was talking to a social worker, buried in the catacombs at the hospital. You know, helping people any other way but medical is not important. And here she was down here in this dark little room. I was really frustrated, and I said, "Well, what do other people do they have this situation come up?" And she looked at me and said, "They struggle with it." And strangely enough, that was most helpful thing I heard the whole time I was there. This is *never* easy. It's just something you have to go through sometimes, so just keep putting one foot

in front of another until it happens. That's the way this is. If you don't know how to do this, because you've not thought about it or practiced it before you got married, then think about it, and work on it, and strive for it, and learn about it from each other and out of the Bible.

Okay, so that's the principle of the Golden Rule. And we're going to see it applied more as we go along, so no need to continue. But I want to ask you this one question: What if you are a person who isn't there yet? Or, what if you have selected a mate who can't think this way yet? Or, more realistically, what if neither one of you is good at the Golden Rule yet? If you're already married, I already said what you should do? Keep trying. One of the reasons God gave us marriage is so that we can practice living by a rule that works on Earth, and then later, in heaven. It's going to stand us in good stead when we have to rub shoulders with Gabriel and Michael, and the seraphim and the angels, and the four beast and the twenty-four elders, and with Jesus Christ and God the Father. Second, before a person gets married, they should work extra hard to find a mated that *can* live this way – that *does* think this way. Now, there are lots of them, but sometimes, things like sex become more important than finding somebody like that. That you both like dogs isn't enough. So that's something to think about.

Okay, that's a wrap. Next time, we will take the Golden Rule to a new level as we discuss the sacrificial nature of marital love. So be looking for it at liferesource.org.

Until next time, this is Bill Jacobs for LifeResource Ministries, serving children, families and the Church of God.