

## Lesson 10 Article Sermon on the Mount

**Everyone** (vs. 8) refers to those who belong to the heavenly Father. Those who are not God's children cannot come to Him as their Father. The two overriding relationships focused on in the book of Matthew are those of God's kingdom and God's family. The kingdom concept deals with rule, and the family concept deals with relationship. In the Sermon on the Mount the primary focus is on God's family, and we see repeated references to God as heavenly Father (v. 11; cf. 5:16, 45, 48; 6:4, 8–9, 26, 32) and to fellow believers as brothers (5:22–24; 7:3–5).

The two greatest realities of Christian truth are that God is our Father and Christians are our brothers. Believers are the family of God. Paul speaks of the church as the “household of the faith” (Gal. 6:10) and as “God's household” (Eph. 2:19). John repeatedly speaks of God as our Father (1 John 1:2–3; 2:1, 13; 3:1; 4:14; etc.) and of believers as His children (1 John 3:10; 5:2) and as each other's brothers (1 John 2:9–11; 3:10–12; 4:20; etc.).<sup>1</sup>

(vs. 12) For many years the basic instrument of music was the harpsichord. As its keys are depressed, a given string is plucked to create the desired note, much as a guitar string is plucked with a pick. But the tone made in that way is not pure, and the mechanism is relatively slow and limiting. Sometime during the last quarter of the eighteenth century, during Beethoven's lifetime, an unknown musician modified the harpsichord so that the keys activated hammers that struck, rather than plucked, the strings. With that minor change, a major improvement was made that would henceforth radically enhance the entire musical world, giving a grandeur and breadth never before known.

That is the sort of revolutionary change Jesus gives in the golden rule. Every other form of this basic principle had been given in purely negative terms, and is found in the literature of almost every major religion and philosophical system. The Jewish rabbi Hillel said, “What is hateful to yourself do not to someone else.” The book of Tobit in the Apocrypha teaches, “What thou thyself hatest, to no man do.” Those expressions go only as far as sinful man can go, and are essentially expressions not of love but of self-interest. The motivation is basically selfish-refraining from harming others in order that they will not harm us. Those negative forms of the rule are not golden, because they are primarily utilitarian and motivated by fear and self-preservation. As Scripture repeatedly tells us of fallen mankind, “There is none who does good, there is not even one” (Rom. 3:12; cf. Ps. 14:3); “each of us has turned to his own way” (Isa. 53:6). Man's basic problem is preoccupation with self. Only Jesus gives the fullness of the truth, which encompasses both the positive and the negative. And only Jesus can give the power to live by that full truth.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <sup>2</sup>MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1985). *Matthew*. MacArthur New Testament Commentary (443–444; 447–448). Chicago: Moody Press.