

POV (Point of View)
Flip Your Point of View
Matthew 7.12

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When Sharon and I were dating I was studying at Gordon-Conwell in Massachusetts and she came out to visit me from Cincinnati. We went out to eat at a fancy little restaurant. We both had amazing dishes and we wanted to share them with each other.

So we both loaded up our forks with a perfect bite and then at the same time we both began to extend them over to each other.

And then, halfway across the table both the forks stopped. And there we were, forks stopped halfway, with our mouths open, waiting.

Then we realized what happened. The first half of the flight of the forks we were thinking about the other person, how much they would enjoy the food, and how eager we were to share it. Then when the forks passed each other we shifted our focus from the fork going toward the other person to the fork coming toward us. So we both stopped moving our forks forward and there we sat, our forks stopped, our mouths open, both of us thinking about what we were about to receive instead of thinking about what we were about to give.

This morning we're doing a one-off message between the end of our spring series and the start of our summer series.

It's called POV: Point of View. Those of you who paid attention in high school English know that there's a first person point of view. That's when you're talking about yourself, and your sentences start with I and we. Second person point of view is the "you" perspective. It's the point of view you have when you are talking *to* someone else. And third person point of view is when you talk *about* another person, and you start your sentences with words like he and she and they.

We thought it would be helpful to pause halfway through this election year and take just a moment to remind ourselves of one of the unique ways we as followers of Christ are called to relate across lines of difference.

And that is to ***flip our point of view*** from second or third person to first person, a practice that is urged upon us in one of the most familiar passages in the whole New Testament. It's been known since the 1600s as the Golden Rule. You find it in Matthew 7.12:

Matthew 7.12

So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

The passage is translated in several different ways but they are all pretty similar. Nothing is hidden here in the words that are used or the way the statement is made in the original.

Contemporary English Bible

You should treat people in the same way that you want people to treat you.

English Standard Version:

Whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them.

Message version:

Ask yourself what you want people to do for you, then grab the initiative and do it for *them*.

We find a version of the Golden Rule in a different context in Luke's gospel (11.13), which suggests that Jesus said it more than once, maybe often, as a summary of what it means to love our neighbor as ourselves.

Much has been made of the fact that there is a version of the Golden Rule in pretty much every world religion and philosophy.

For instance, as just a few examples:

An Egyptian papyrus written 600 hundred years before Christ says:
That which you hate to be done to you, do not do to another.

Confucius writing 500 hundred years before Christ said:
Do not to others what you would not wish done to yourself.

And Rabbi Hillel about 100 years before Christ said:
What is hateful to you, do not do to anyone else.

It shouldn't surprise us that this idea shows up everywhere people are wrestling with our obligation toward our fellow human beings, because Scripture teaches that God created every one of us in his image and he planted his universal moral code in each of our hearts.

Nor will it be a surprise to us to discover that, where all the other versions of this rule are framed in negative terms – you don't necessarily need to go out of your way to do good, but you should go out of your way to avoid doing harm – Jesus calls us to a much

more far reaching life of sacrifice and service and regard for others when he frames it in the positive.

A couple of weeks ago I was pulling out of Payless and there was a guy in a pickup pulling a trailer who was in the lane next to me at the light. I was in the left lane wanting to turn left. He was in the right lane trying to turn right.

Suddenly he rolled down his window and started screaming and swearing at me.

If I were to repeat his two minute long tirade without the swear words I think it would go something like this. "Hey . . . you . . . signal."

It was that five o'clock jam time, and he was surrounded by cars, and the lines at the light were long, and his challenge was that to make that tight right hand turn he had to swing left into my lane first. And he was absolutely furious because I didn't see the blinker on his mirror so I didn't leave room for him to move over.

As the light changed I just waved and smiled and said, "Hey man, sorry. I didn't see your blinker."

I could still hear him fulminating when I was halfway home. Jesus says not just, "Don't be like that." He calls us to move toward one another in sacrificial love and service.

Our world says: Do to them what they have done to you. Treat them as they've treated you.

Nope: Jesus says: Do to them what you would *want* them to do to you. Treat them as you'd *like* them to treat you. Do good to them before, not after, they good to you.

So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

Notice the absolute brilliance of this one ethical guideline.

Imagine what you and I would come up if we were given responsibility for developing a code for how to relate with every person in every situation.

Most of you have been in the office of a lawyer. You remember how their walls are covered from floor to ceiling with hundreds of identical fat leather bound volumes that are filled with laws, statutes, case precedents, legal treatises, constitutional documents, and legal encyclopedias. It would be like that.

And here Jesus manages in a single sentence to give us a moral code that fits every single conversation and situation we will ever be in.

Jesus appeals to just two things: our internal standards and our imagination.

1. Accessing our internal standards

First, he encourages us to get in touch with our internal standards.

Treat others how you like to be treated. Well, how do you like to be treated? Let me tell you the ways!

Jesus recognizes that we all carry around in us as human beings a picture of how we should be dealt with, and it's one that is heavy on fairness and rights and thoughtfulness and regard.

If someone is splitting the last piece of pie with you . . . you want the pieces to be the same size and if they're not, well, you expect to get the bigger one.

If you get to the restaurant or the pharmacy counter first . . . you expect to be served first and you're put out if you aren't.

If you've been misunderstood . . . you expect others to go out of their way to clear up the misunderstanding and work hard to understand your view.

If you mess up . . . you want to be given a second chance.

We could go on and on. We human beings have a code that runs deep inside of us about the ways we want and expect others to treat us.

How much we're actually supposed to be controlled by those desires is a separate question, about which Jesus and the rest of the New Testament have much to say when it talks about no longer living for self and dying to self and putting others first and considering others more important.

But in the Golden Rule Jesus calls on to be aware of all those ways we are inclined to think about ourselves first, and he calls us to be aware of how they instruct us as we think about our preferences and rights and privileges.

How do you like to be treated? Let me tell you the ways!

2. Using our imaginations.

Then Jesus calls on us to use our imaginations to shift our perspective around and to approach an interaction not from our point of view to the other person's point of view. Do to others what you would have them do to you, What would it be like if I gave you those things, instead of insisting that you give me those things?

Jesus calls us to do a thought experiment. How do I turn my view of this conversation around and look at it through their eyes, hear it through their ears, stand in it in their shoes? How are *they* experiencing this conversation?

This is where we're called to flip our point of view. To focus on the fork going toward them instead of the fork coming toward you.

So, how should we interact with others? Jesus says all we need to do is access these two things – our internal code of expectations and our imagination – to ask, “If I were you, what would *I* want to receive from me right now?” And that will give us guidance sufficient for most every situation.

Some of you have done some drone flying. We're talking about the difference between LOS and FPV. LOS means you're flying your drone by *line of sight*; you are looking across at it, seeing it over there. You see what the drone *does*.

But when you are flying FPV, that means you are flying from a *first person view*. You are seeing not through your own eyes but through the eyes of the camera on the drone. You see what the drone *sees*.

That's the flip, the pivot of perspective, that Jesus invites us to make as we interact with others. To shift from flying LOS to flying FPV. To interact with others in the way we would love to have them interacting with us.

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So here's what I'd like to do now. I want us to practice making this flip right now, and to think through what it might mean related to three different aspects of any interaction we might have with another human being.

Here are the three dimensions I want us to focus on:

1. How do we want them to approach us and view us as they come into the conversation?
2. How do we want them to engage in the conversation and relate with us?
3. And how do we want them to interact with us when their views are different than ours?

First, how would we want the other person to approach us and view us as they come into an interaction with us?

Spend a moment thinking about that. When we first connect with someone, how do you want them to relate to you? What are some words that come to mind?

A. With **respect** for me as a person independent of anything we may have in common or see in the same way

David Brooks, *How to Know a Person*

Above almost any other need, human beings long to have another person look into their face with loving respect and acceptance. (8)

Daniel Pierce and I were in Jamaica two weeks ago. Jamaicans are fond of using the word “Respect” as a way of greeting, saying thank you, saying good bye. At the tolls on the highways they have signs that say, “Respect you, respect me.”

Lisa Hanna, a Member of the Jamaican Parliament, wrote this:

In Jamaica, we often use the word ‘Respect’ when we greet or part ways with other people, no matter who they are or where they come from. We say this word because we mean it. We respect you as a person because we are all made in God’s image, and we seek to show appreciation for your value. The word respect does not mean that we always agree with that person; it is simply an acknowledgement of their humanity and their value.

My dear friend Danny Sharpe had a chance to spend a week or two hiking the El Camino pilgrimage trail. Before he set out, he determined to see each person he interacted with, and there were many each day, above all else as a person created in the image of God. He has sought to carry that perspective into his dealings with others since he returned.

Winsome Conviction, Tim Muehlhoff and Richard Langer

We are to respect other people simply because they are people made in the image of God, people for whom Christ died, people who struggles with the same temptations as we do, people who stand in as desperate need of a savior as we do. In an ultimate sense, the things we have in common outweigh our differences. . . . In any [conversation], an essential quality to bring to the table is abiding respect for others around that table. We need to be able to affirm their humanity and value them accordingly. (143)

B. Related to that is my desire for someone to **“see” me**.

In our busy world, when we’re always on our phones and we do more automated ordering and interact with computers instead of people on phones, it’s easy for our interactions with others to fall into seeing them as part of the machinery of our economy instead as human beings to whom we can give our eye contact and recognition and our interest.

A couple of days ago I was in a coffee shop and as I was placing my order I just asked the person at the counter how her day was going and what time her day started and she lit up and was eager to talk because she could see that my question came out of genuine interest. Nothing magic. I just didn’t see her as a coffee dispensary. I saw her as a person and was interested and she could tell.

Valuing me, relating in a way that says I see you: how might God have you give those things to the person across from you?

Second, how would we want that other person to engage in conversation and relate with us?

Spend a moment thinking about that. As a conversation begins, how would you want that person to interact with you? What are some words that come to mind to describe the kind of conversation you'd want to have?

It seems to me what we desire in a conversation is that the other person will show interest in me and what is important to me. being curious about me, wanting to get to know me as a person. In a way that prompts you to ask me good questions and listen well, with the goal of knowing me, understanding me, knowing what makes me tick

A. **Showing interest** in me and what is important to me . . .

The Six Conversations, Heather Holleman

The four most critical things to do to foster a warm and connected conversation are: be curious, believe the best, express concern, and share your life. (20-21)

[Relate in such a way that the other person feels:] She is interested in things I'm interested in. She likes me. She wants the best for me. And she is [open] with me. (22)

Be genuinely interested in other people. (23)

Make a deliberate effort to put away your phone. (103)

B. **Being curious** about me, wanting to get to know me as a person . . .

The Six Conversations, Heather Holleman

Be curious. In particular I mean social curiosity, the desire to know and understand more about other people. 24

Psychology researcher Todd Kashdan calls curiosity the "secret juice of relationships" 24

C, In a way that prompts you to **ask me good questions and listen well** . . .

James 1.19

My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry,

How to Have Impossible Conversations by Peter Boghossian and James Lindsay

People find it deeply satisfying when they are heard. (19)

Do what you can to make listening the center of your conversation. (20)

D. With the goal of **knowing me, understanding me**, knowing what makes me tick

David Brooks, *How to Know a Person*

There is one skill that lies at the heart of any healthy family or organization: the ability to see someone else deeply and make them feel seen – to accurately know another person, to let them feel valued, heard, and understood. (9)

Interest, curiosity, asking good questions, listening well, wanting to know me and understand me: how might God have you give those things to the person across from you?

And finally, how would we want them to interact with us when their views are different than ours?

Spend a moment thinking about that. When they discover that their views are different from yours, how would you want them to engage in the conversation at that point? How would you want them to respond to you? What are some words that come to mind?

A. **Love and accept me as a person** apart from my specific views. Don't see me as an opinion on two legs. Which usually means you will begin to see me as a target. See me as a whole person who happens to have opinions.

Don't lump me into a camp or category in a way that makes me no longer a person but just a holder of an opinion.

Doctors can treat patients as patients who have an illness, or they can just see them simply as an illness to be treated. We have the same choice in any conversation. Will I seek to as a whole person? Will I relate to you in a way that reflects how God sees you?

Galatians 5.22-23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

How to Have Impossible Conversations by Peter Boghossian and James Lindsay

Conversational partnership isn't about agreement or disagreement; it's about civility, charity, and mutual understanding. (13)

B. Work hard to **understand the other person's views** and what lies behind them

How to Have Impossible Conversations by Peter Boghossian and James Lindsay

Shift your goal from winning to understanding. (12)

Shift from "This person is my opponent who needs to understand what I'm saying" to "This person is my partner in a conversation and I can learn from him – including learning exactly why he believes what he believes." (13)

There is little that is more frustrating than interacting with someone who is convinced they know how you think and they are wrong.

You have this view.

No, actually, that isn't my view. I haven't had the chance to tell you my view.

But it's clear that really is your view.

What a minute! Don't I get to define what my view is?

Winsome Conviction, Tim Muehlhoff and Richard Langer

Misunderstandings revolve around perceived disagreements. But the problem is that perceptions are often inaccurate. The easiest way to test the accuracy of a perception is . . . [to attempt] to state the position of the other side.

Frequently when people attempt to do this, they discover that the folks on the other side shake their heads and say, "But that's not really what I believe!"

Here is a simple rule of thumb. Unless and until you can state the opinion of the other side in a way that makes them nod their heads and say, "Yes – you get it! You get me!" you have failed [to truly understand them]. (141)

C. **Don't tie your acceptance to my agreement** with your views

Romans 14.10 and 15.7

You, then, why do you judge your brother or sister? Or why do you treat them with contempt? . . . Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.

The Six Conversations, Heather Holleman

Communicate that you accept them just as they are without trying to change them, judge them, or shame them. (29)

D. Refuse to let the conversation devolve into an argument

James 3.13-18

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. . . . But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.

How to Have Impossible Conversations by Peter Boghossian and James Lindsay

Ask sincere questions – that is, questions for which you’d like to find answers, as opposed to asking questions as a tactic. (16) Do not disguise statements in the form of questions. The best questions show you’re sincerely interested in exploring answers as opposed to asking a question to achieve some goal. (45)

Nobody likes to be lectured. The research on effective conversations shows that delivering messages – communicating information in a one-way transaction – does not work. (22)

Do not turn conversations into debates. (103)

And I love this from *Winsome Conviction*, Tim Muehlhoff and Richard Langer

If someone else’s convictions don’t make sense, it’s probably because you don’t understand either their backstory or the conviction itself. Your first goal is to understand. That means you need to be a chimp, not a rhino.

Rhinoceroses are notoriously shortsighted – it is said they can’t tell the difference between a tree and a human being from fifty feet away. And that explains their aggressive behavior. If they don’t recognize it, they ram it; it’s hard on both the trees and the humans. It isn’t even that great for the rhino. It’s bad news all around.

Chimps are different. When chimps see something they don’t recognize, they go investigate. They pick it up and prod it and play with it. They try it on their heads to see if it will fit. If they decide it’s not for them, they set it down and pick up something else, but at least everybody has had a good time and can walk away without being rammed. If [someone] has a personal conviction you don’t understand, be curious, investigate, and ask questions that you really are interested in getting the answer to. Don’t ram them. Be a chimp, not a rhino. (181)

Seeing you and relating to you as a whole person worth loving and accepting regardless of your views: how might God have you give those things to the person across from you?

So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

The essential code of our world is give *what you get*. Treat others the way they've treated you.

The essential code of the kingdom is give *what you've been given*. Grace, acceptance, love, forgiveness: give others what you have received from on high.

Through his death on the cross, Jesus put the love of God on display.

In our every dealing we have with others, Jesus invites us to do the same.

I John 3.16

This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.

Here are two ways I'd like to invite you to lean into this with me.

1. **This Wednesday**, at 7, here in the sanctuary, we'll have a workshop for the whole church family. It will just be an extension of what we're doing this morning.

Let's try this out in a safe way. We'll do some Q and A about today's message and then I'm going to have us share with each other:

An easy topic: What is a favorite movie, or book, or restaurant?

A little more challenging but not a heated political issue: What is your view of education for children: home school, Christian school, public school?

2. **This summer**, read David Brooks, *How to Know a Person: The Art of Seeing Others Deeply and Being Deeply Seen*

We'll meet at the end of the summer, on Wednesday evening, August 28, and talk about it. I hope every person will read it – especially those of you who are in positions of leadership.