

it is not a sermon, it is a speech and a poor one at that (32). God is also the end of all preaching, “Preaching is strategic when it helps move the church toward God’s purposes—when it helps the church be what God called us to be and do what God called us to do” (180). Second, this work is *Christocentric*, Christ is the point of all preaching, according to Overdorf: “Preaching is God’s means of announcing the hope and salvation of Jesus to the world” (23). “When you quit preaching Jesus, you quit preaching” (81). Recognizing Christ in all of Scripture is paramount to the preaching endeavor, for all Scripture either prepares for Christ, proclaims Christ, or equips us for a response to Christ (82, 84–85). Finally, this book is *bibliocentric*, while the story may be ancient, it is alive and relevant (21). For those off-course Overdorf steers them aright: “Sermons that convey God’s eternal truth are grounded not in our creativity, soapboxes, or musings, but in the Bible” (40), for it is neither circumstance nor creativity that drive our preaching strategy—it is Scripture (181). Sadly, too many times “our actions [about reading the text] betray an unspoken assumption: the Scripture text is but a necessary step to reach what we believe is most important—our own thoughts about the text” (195).

When Overdorf writes on preaching, one would do well to listen. Whether you are a Paul or a Timothy, his final prayer for the preacher (208–10) will serve as an encouragement and a pattern to convey. For further homiletic insight try Jesse Nelson, *Preaching Life-Changing Sermons* (Kregel, 2022) or Allan Moseley *From the Study to the Pulpit* (Lexham, 2018). This book is highly recommended. Overdorf puts the glory of preaching on the shelf where anyone can share, for “preaching is the proclamation of God’s story, grounded in his Word, empowered by his Spirit, and embodied in his servant, for the redemption and edification of his people” (26).

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Unto Others: Rediscovering the Golden Rule—the Lost Key to Relationships, by Dave Swavely. Minneapolis, MN: Cruciform Press, 2022, 144 pp. \$13.99.

Pastor Dave Swavely, church planter and mission leader, writes out of concern for relationships that should function in love. Among the author’s other writings, *Life in the Father’s House: A Member’s Guide to the Local Church* (P&R, 1996) illustrates his church relational commitment. In the present study he addresses the unique relationship Jesus calls “unto others,” and invites Christians to rediscover it for the good of the home, church, and society.

In his study, the author chronicles the loss and calls for the recovery of the golden rule (13–19). Chapters include “Why the Golden Rule is

so Very Golden”; “How the Golden Rule Was Lost for Generations,” including six reasons it happened; “Recovering the Golden Rule for the Church Today”; “Applying the Golden Rule in Everyday Life”; and “You Hold the Key.”

The final section lays out a biblical and practical eight-step process for applying the golden rule. For support in making biblical and lasting application, the book’s format includes step-by-step processes. Also, each chapter concludes with questions to facilitate thought and reflection.

Maybe you have heard the golden rule misinterpreted: “Get others before they get you” or “treat others well so that they will treat you well.” These distortions of Scripture produce devastating consequences. No wonder relationships make up a large portion of our counseling ministries. We address marriage and family issues, but what about a believer’s relationship with others? How do the “unto others” commands differ, if at all, from the many one-another commands (21–23)?

Scripture frequently addresses one-anothers for local church relationships: e.g., “love one another.” These commands are reciprocal or two-directional in nature and are essential for church life. But the Bible also identifies a relationship that focuses on us as individuals in our relationship to others that is one-directional, us to the other person. To our loss, we are less inclined to understand or address this relational role. What is more, the unto others helps clarify reciprocal treatment by differentiating it. That is because the others relationship is not intended to be reciprocal or two-directional. It is one-directional. We do for others with no concern to receive their reciprocity.

How many counseling challenges could be resolved, even preempted, by a clearer understanding and a faithful practice of “unto others”? How many more ignored people would be included in church and community activities? Practicing the Lord’s “do unto others” command will decrease the exclusion of people on the fringes. It will remind us that mistreatment is not just deliberate abuse; it is also neglect of the disenfranchised. Crucially, Jesus’s call unto others makes these precious saints visible to us. Not surprisingly, many of them need counseling care for their lives are a daily crisis.

After all, Jesus sends us into all the world to witness. He also sends us unto others in our midst to help them. Many take his golden rule to mean that if you want others to treat you well, then you need to treat them well first. But Jesus made a much bolder claim on our lives; treat others well regardless of whether they treat you well in return. No wonder he also commands to “love your enemies.”

Our Savior explains that the golden rule fulfills the law and the prophets, all the Old Testament. Recent biblical law studies demonstrate that the essence and purpose of the law was to display the perfect character of God in values (23–25). Rather than look for current applications to specific OT laws, we as twenty-first century Christians should understand and amplify the values behind the Law in every aspect of our lives. The present study reduces these values to one because Jesus did—love others.

In response to the OT law, David models the golden rule. King Saul continually mistreats David humiliating him and attempting to take his life. In response, David refuses opportunities to retaliate. The apostle Paul does unto others. Leaders aim to harm him with false accusations undermining his good testimony. On several occasions opponents beat and stone Paul nearly taking his life. But the apostle responds with love and kindness. He does not retaliate (30–31).

We would like others to focus on us and do for us. We are born self-interested, and we live in a reciprocating world. Some say, “You scratch my back and I’ll scratch yours.” Jesus’s message challenges the very basis of reciprocity and calls for a radical alternative; sacrifice yourself by doing unto others.

What would happen if Christians in all institutions practiced Jesus’s golden rule? In the home, family members would draw unconditionally close to others in the face of mistreatment, abandonment, and divorce; in the church, people would not take offense but faithfully serve others; and in society, Jesus’s followers would model caring relationships that shine bright in the darkest places (97–126).

In a world tragically bent on harming others before they harm you, Jesus calls us to do unto others regardless of what they do to you. This tall order comes from God who consistently and completely does unto others with fail-safe perfection. Without pause, the author states: “The golden rule is a life-changing heavenly truth that will be worth far more to you than any earthly treasure, if you understand it rightly and practice it biblically. When rediscovered, this lost key to relationships will unlock the kind of supernatural power that can transform individual lives, the church, and the rest of society” (135).

This is an important study for every believer. In a day when unbelievers measure Christians and find them wanting for not caring for others, it is a call to repent of our self-interest. May our Lord and Savior use this message to wake up and challenge us to love and good works not in retaliation toward others and not for what we can get from them. Self-denial in serving others is deeply satisfying. After all, God created us for it.

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Spiritual Care Basics and Beyond: What Do I Say? What Should I Do? Interpersonal Tools and Resources for Spiritual Care, by Joel Hempel. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2023. 200 pp. \$28.00.

The author, having ministered in roles of pastor, institutional chaplain, mentor, administrator, clinical pastoral educator, and pastoral counselor, currently serves in retirement as Director of Diaconal Ministry at his church. He has taught spiritual care, also known as soul care,