Preschool–Grade 6

The Golden Rule

Sunday School Lesson for Preteens (Ages 11–12), 45–60 minutes

Main point: Treat others the way you want to be treated: not just avoiding harm, but doing good first, because God has been so good to us.
Bible passage: Matthew 7:7–12. Students read Matthew 7:7–12, Luke 6:31 and Matthew 22:37–40 out loud themselves.
Memory verse: "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets." *Matthew 7:12 (KJV)* and "And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise." *Luke 6:31 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each student, paper or a notebook and a pen for each student, a whiteboard and a marker, and one take-home sheet for each student.
Before class: read Matthew 5:1–2 and 7:7–29, Luke 6:27–36, Luke 11:13 and Matthew 22:35–40. Write both memory verses on the board.

1. Opening game: Don't vs. Do (5–10 minutes)

Draw two columns on the board: "Don't" and "Do." Students call out school rules and family rules they know, and you write each one in its column ("Don't run in the hall," "Do your homework"). Count the columns. Ask: *Which column is easier to keep: the "don'ts" or the "dos"? Can you keep every "don't" and still never help anyone?* Say: "Jesus gave a rule that is a 'do.' Let's read it."

2. Bible story: Students Read It (15 minutes)

Set the scene: Jesus saw the multitudes, went up into a mountain and sat down, and His disciples came to Him, and He taught them (Matthew 5:1–2). Matthew 5–7 is that one long teaching.
Read out loud: Matthew 7:7–12. Students take turns, a verse or two each. Old words in this passage:

- **asketh, seeketh, knocketh** (7:8): asks, seeks, knocks
- **serpent** (7:10): a snake
- **being evil** (7:11): Jesus is saying people are not perfect; everyone sins. Yet even people who sin give good gifts to their children.
- **how much more** (7:11): if imperfect people give good gifts, God, who is perfectly good, gives far more
- **therefore** (7:12): so, because of this
- **whatsoever ye would that men should do to you** (7:12): whatever you want people to do for you
- **the law and the prophets** (7:12): the Old Testament Scriptures

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Read out loud: Luke 6:31. Jesus taught the same thing in Luke: "And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise." **Likewise** means in the same way.
Read out loud: Matthew 22:37–40. Later, Jesus said the first and great commandment is to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul and mind, and the second is like it: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." On these two commandments **hang** (depend) all the law and the prophets. Compare it with Matthew 7:12: loving your neighbor as yourself looks like doing for others what you want done for you.

Look closer. Point out these details with the class:

- **"Therefore" ties it together.** The Golden Rule comes right after God's good gifts (7:11–12). We give good things to others because God gives good things to us.
- **It is a "do."** Jesus didn't only say, "don't hurt people." He said "do ye even so to them." It means doing good first, without waiting for others to start.
- **The best gift.** Luke tells the same teaching about the father and his son, and ends it: "how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" (Luke 11:13).

3. Questions to ask (15 minutes)

1. Jesus said to ask, seek and knock (7:7). Why do you think He used three different words? What does each one look like in prayer?
2. Jesus' example of bread and a stone (7:9) is almost funny. What does it tell you about how God sees you when you pray?
3. Why does it matter that 7:12 starts with "Therefore"? How does what God gives us change how we treat people?
4. What is the difference between "don't do to others what you don't want done to you" and "do to others what you want done to you"? Which is harder?
5. Luke 6 puts the same teaching next to "love your enemies" (Luke 6:27, 6:31). Who is someone hard for you to treat the way you want to be treated?
6. Matthew 22:40 says all the law and the prophets hang on loving God and loving your neighbor. How is the Golden Rule a picture of that?

4. Memory verse (5 minutes)

Old words: **whatsoever** means whatever; **ye** means you; **would** means want; **men** means people; **even so** and **likewise** mean in the same way; **the law and the prophets** means the Old Testament Scriptures.
Read both verses together. Then students cover one phrase at a time and quiz a partner. Say Matthew 7:12 this week; keep working on Luke 6:31 next week too.

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5. What this means for us (5–10 minutes)

Say: "Jesus said, 'how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?' (Luke 11:13, KJV). God loves you, and 'all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, God who came as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). 'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures' (1 Corinthians 15:3–4, KJV). We obey the gospel the way Peter preached it: 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) We **repent**, turning from sin, and our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are buried with Jesus by baptism in His name, all the way under the water. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we rise to walk in newness of life, a brand-new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). And God fills us with the Holy Ghost, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance, which means as He gives the words (Acts 2:4). Jesus called this being born of water and of the Spirit (John 3:5)."
Pray with the students, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.

6. Activity: Journal (10 minutes)

Each student writes privately. No one has to share. Write these three prompts on the board:

1. List three things I would want people to do for me (be specific).
2. For each one, write the name of someone I could do it for this week, even someone who isn't easy to love.
3. Write a short prayer asking God for what I need, and thanking Him for good things He has already given me (Matthew 7:7, 7:11).
   If there is time, invite a few volunteers to share one sentence.

This week: do the three things from your list, and do them first, without waiting for anyone to do them for you.

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You that You hear us when we ask, seek and knock, and that You give good things. Help us do for others what we want done for us, even for people who are hard to love. In Jesus' name, amen."

If a student asks, "Why doesn't God give me everything I ask for?": answer honestly and gently. Jesus promised **good things** (Matthew 7:11). A good father doesn't give his child everything the child asks for; he gives what is good. God knows what is good for us, so we keep asking, seeking and knocking, and we trust Him.

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