GOLDEN RULE

"So everything you would like others to do to you, you yourself do to them. For this is (the essence of) the law and the prophets."
Matthew 7:12

This separate logion (saying) is most likely added by Matthew due to its reference in the preceding section to the giving and receiving of good things.

It also functions as a summarizing and climactic demand of the main body of the Sermon on the Mount. The rest of this Sermon on the Mount is a collection of concluding warnings.

Luke parallels the first sentence of the Golden Rule:

"And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them."
Luke 6:31

As stated, the Golden Rule is the summary of the Sermon on the Mount as can be seen when we connect it the preceding teachings Jesus has given.

"But you have heard that it was said, 'An eye for and eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you. You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."
Matthew 5:38-48

Matthew adds the word *"everything"* to this section, Luke does not. Matthew also adds the more forceful *"thus, also you"* or *"you yourself."*

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For this is (the essence of) the law and the prophets."

Only Matthew has this summarizing of the *"law and the prophets."*

The Golden Rule is widely known in various cultures and religions. Sometimes it is phrased in the negative form in these various cultures and religions, but the meaning is of course, the same.

"What is hateful to yourself, do to no other: that is the whole law and the rest is commentary."
Rabbi Hillel – b. Sabbat 31a

The king received the answer with great delight and looking at another said, "What is the teaching of wisdom?" And the other replied, 'As you wish that no evil should befall you, but to be a partaker of all good things, so you should act on the same principle towards your subjects and offenders, and you should mildly admonish the noble and God. For God draws all men to himself by benignity.
Letter of Aristeas 207 (circa 280-80 BC.)

See thou never do to another what thou wouldst hate to have done to thee by another.
Tobit 4:16 (225-175 BC.)

Recognize that your neighbor feels as you do, and keep in mind your own dislikes.
Sirach 31:15 (196-175 BC.)

Love your neighbor: whatever you yourself hate, do not do to him.
Targum Pseudo-Jonathan Leviticus 19:18

First, you shall love God who made you. And second, love your neighbor as yourself, and do not do to another what you would not want done to you.
Didache 1:2 (50-110 AD.)

"This is what the Law and the Prophets are about," but not "all about."
Augustine – Catena Aurea: Commentary on the Four Gospels, Collected out of the Works of the Fathers by St. Thomas Aquinas (thirteenth century)

This is the so called "Golden Rule," one of the most misunderstood statements in the Bible. This statement is not a sum total of Christian truth, nor is it God's plan of redemption. We should no more build our theology on the Golden Rule than we should build our astronomy on "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star." This great truth is a principle that ought to govern our attitude toward others. It only applies to believers, and it must be practiced in every area of life.
Warren Wiersbie – New Testament Commentary, page 26

The Golden Rule is regarded as an exegesis of the commandment of the Old Testament.

"So everything you would like others to do to you, you yourself do to them. For this is (the essence of the law and the prophets."
Matthew 7:12

You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.
Leviticus 19:18

That the Golden Rule as spoken by Jesus is derived from Leviticus 19:18 is clear from Matthew 22:35-40.

> *And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the law?" And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."*
> *Matthew 22:35-40*

In this text Jesus also quotes from Deuteronomy 6:5 along with Leviticus 19:18 upon which *"the whole law and the prophets"* depend.

To *"love your neighbor as yourself"* would be the equal of *"doing unto others what you would have them do to you"*, which equates Leviticus 19:18 with Jesus' statement of it being the essence of *"the law and the prophets"* along with Deuteronomy 6:5.

> *Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,' and any other commandments, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.*
> *Romans 13:8-10*

> *For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."*
> *Galatians 5:14*

With this reference to the *law and the prophets*, Matthew brings the main part of the Sermon on the Mount to a close in the same way he began it.

> *"Do not think that I have come to destroy <u>the law or the prophets</u>. I did not come to destroy them but to bring them to their intended goal.*
> *Matthew 5:17*

> *"So everything you would like others to do to you, you yourself do to them. For this is (the essence of) <u>the law and the prophets</u>."*
> *Matthew 7:12*

> *Jesus concludes the substance of His sermon with a summary of His teaching. The whole law and the prophets – and remember that Jesus does not annul the law – is about doing the good to others that we want them to do to us. This is so familiar to us that we don't see just how radical Jesus is being here. He has been talking throughout the sermon about the righteousness that surpasses the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. He's been talking about justice in the kingdom throughout the chapter. And He's still talking about justice here. But this doesn't look like justice. Justice, we think, means giving people what they deserve, paying what people are owed. But this is not the justice of Jesus. That justice doesn't restore the world. That kind of justice might bring the world back to where it started. But it doesn't move the world to something new. Jesus' justice is a restorative justice that advances the kingdom and brings humanity and the whole world closer to the consummation.*
> *Peter Leithart, Jesus as the New Israel, page 170*

Everything or as it might otherwise be translated, *whatsoever* or *whatever*, is emphatic and if followed by the challenge *you yourself do to them.* There is a difficulty placed here with intention, a difficult challenge involving both an unlimited scope and a faithful persistence.

Everything and *whatever* are strong words that convey expanse, words that rebuke borders.

This is especially so when one considers that the activity of operating in life under this challenge constitutes what Jesus called *the fulfillment of the law and the prophets.*

> *It is from this saying (of the Golden Rule) and that of 22:37-40 (Love the Lord your God . . .) that love became the dominant and summarizing theme of the Christian ethic. To act in this manner, in constant deeds of love, is to bring to expression that to which the law and the prophets pointed. That is, a world where only good is done to others involves by definition eschatological fulfillment, a return to the paradise of the Garden of Eden. To do good to others is to mirror the activity of the Father (7:11), which of course finds its supreme manifestation in the eschatological fulfillment brought by the Son. If this teaching of Jesus were to be lived out in the world, the whole system of evil would be dramatically shaken. Even if it were to be manifested seriously in the Church, its impact would be incalculable. In this sublime command, so simple and yet so deep, we encounter a challenge central to the purposes of God and therefore one that is also eschatological in tone. No other teaching is so readily identified with Jesus; no other teaching is so central to the righteousness of the kingdom and the practice of discipleship.*
> *Hagner – Matthew, page 177*