

## Three Simple Principles for World Peace

Graham Lester  
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Sunday Service



*Graham Lester*

[All the religion and all the ethics the world really needs available now, right here and free of charge]

Here are the three simple principles that can be applied by people of all religions and no religion in order to bring about a peaceful, ideal global society.

1. Always act from good will.
2. Try to be objective.
3. Be joyful.

The golden rule – treat others as you would wish them to treat you – is the classic formulation of the principle of always acting from good will. Ethics is the application of this rule in daily life.

A simple command, “Love your neighbor as yourself”(Leviticus 19:18), was set down by an ancient Hebrew author, probably in about 450 BCE but possibly considerably earlier. A few decades later, the Chinese philosopher Mozi wrote: “If people regarded other people’s families in the same way that they regard their own, who then would incite their own family to attack that of another? For one would do for others as one would do for oneself.” Thus, in both the West and the East, the principle of reciprocity that later came to be called the Golden Rule was announced to the ancient world.

The rule is beautiful in its simplicity and powerful in its application. It can also be reconciled with almost any religion or philosophy.

Why have we not been more consistent in applying such a beneficial principle? There are two main reasons: self-interest and ideology. That we fail due to self-interest is obvious; it simply means that we find the rule inconvenient and choose not to apply it in the first place. This problem is not insurmountable, however, because the great majority of people are in fact willing to make some effort most of the time. We don’t need for everybody to be a saint.

Ideology is more subtle. Few religions or worldviews reject the golden rule outright but most, and perhaps all, erode it, principally through modification. Ideologies add exceptions to the rule, justifying them on dubious sectarian grounds. A simple example is the burning of witches and heretics: people thought that they were loving their neighbors as a whole by setting fire to one particular neighbor, based on their reading of scripture. As Byron wrote:

“Christians have burnt each other, quite persuaded  
That all the Apostles would have done as they did.”

This is why the golden rule is not enough. We need a second principle: objectivity.

Objectivity implies that an ideology or even a personal bias ought to be modified in response to new information. In the very long run a commitment to objectivity can harmonize different religions and ideologies because all people ultimately draw from the same well of human knowledge. Follow the data and the end will take care of itself.

Of course, nobody is completely objective. We all have our biases. We can only make an honest effort to keep our minds open and admit the facts.

But a happy world has to be made of happy people. We also need to lighten up! Hence, we need a principle to remind us to try to stay upbeat. To compromise excessively on one’s individual fulfillment and self-realization should be discouraged if only because it ultimately impairs the happiness of others. The person who overburdens himself prematurely might break completely when life places additional unforeseen burdens on himself. Keep your own load light; someone else might need your help. The miserable person soon becomes a weight on the community, even when his intentions are good.

The devils are in the details and the details can only be resolved over the course of many years, yet these three essential principles comprise all the religion and all the ethics the world really needs. All the virtues – honesty, fairness, tact, modesty, caring, generosity, courage, self-control, diligence, competency, reliability, etc. – flow from them. It isn’t much more complicated than that.

But for those of you who prefer to remain wretched I shall be sending a little man with a big collection plate round shortly.