

The Third Way
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Matthew 7:12
Effective Sermon Series
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The typical approach to life is “I win – you lose.” I can only win if I beat you. However, we have another option, a third way. It uses the plural personal pronoun, “we.” Life is more than just “me” or “you” – it is also “us.” As John F. Kennedy said, *“A rising tide lifts all boats.”* We can cooperate rather than compete. This is the essence of Matthew 7:12. It is referred to as “The Golden Rule.” It is one of the most effective ways to maintain personal relationships. In Covey’s *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, he emphasizes the importance of having a “Win/Win” strategy. If we can’t get to that, it’s a “no deal.” We see this unfolding in Jesus’ ministry. He was proactive in coming to earth. He knew His identity and was willing to maintain His integrity in every transaction. Jesus always met people where they were. He embodied abundance, not scarcity. He offered people from every facet of life a Win/Win. They could have community, be empowered, find forgiveness, and discover purpose. They could experience grace, healing, inclusion, and resurrection. Jesus wants everyone to win. He was and is incredibly generous and magnanimous. His character reveals the most effective human being who has ever lived. Yet, people still resisted Him. Jesus did not force the kingdom of God on anyone. It was their choice to accept Him. If they rejected Him, the deal was off.

APPLICATION: How can you incorporate “third way” or “Win/Win” thinking into your daily life? Where are you on the abundance vs. scarcity scale? How does your relationship with Jesus help you have more abundance? What proactive measures are you taking to help others succeed?

Intro: Jesus embodied the first 3 habits. They are “Private, inside” victories. He was **PROACTIVE** (“*Let’s Get It Started*” - God came from heaven to earth. He constantly took initiative). He **BEGAN WITH THE END IN MIND** (“*Look where you’re going*”) He knew who He was & where He was going). He **PUT FIRST THINGS FIRST** (“*Tyranny of the Urgent*”). He prioritized and told us to do the same. The first 3 habits are personal & begin with “I, Me, Mine, Myself.” Habit #4 shifts from private to public. Independent becomes interdependence. “We/Us.” We go from an individual sport to a team sport.

Matthew 7:1-12 *"Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye. "Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you. "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!*

"The Golden Rule" needs context. Jesus says, "Judge not," but then make judgments Himself. He calls people "**hypocrites**," refers to "**dogs/pigs**" and says "if you who are **evil**..." We might say, "Well, that's Jesus and He was sinless so He can judge. But we must make **JUDGMENTS**, too. What to eat, whether to steal, speed, determine right from wrong. However, we must not **CONDEMN**. We must **SEE OURSELVES** clearly. We don't want someone to shout at us from a distance and say, "Hey, you over there...it looks like you've got a speck in your eye!" A speck in the eye CAN be a problem. You want someone to remove it. But if he bounces up to you and says, "Let me get it out for you" & you notice he's got a LOG about 40 feet long and 5 feet wide in his eye - like a main beam that could hold a house up, you resist. We are all sinners. Jesus calls us "evil" in the text. Do I have a log in my eye? We need to be careful in judgment. **James 2:13 For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.** We must See OTHERS clearly. Do they have a speck in their eye? See GOD clearly. It's a beautiful thought - we give good gifts to our kids, but our loving Heavenly Father desires for us to have far more. My security & identity must revolve around HIM – not upon what I eat, drink, wear, etc. THINK WIN-WIN. 7:12 ***"So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.***

Several "**Win/Lose**" possibilities." "Win" = to cooperate; "lose" = to compete. There are 2 normal expressions of this: **Win-Lose** (or **Lose-Win**). We compete. I beat you or you beat me. We are wired for competition. Politics, Athletics, Law, and Education all have winners and losers. The winner of the election takes office;

the loser who only got 45% of the vote (9/20) lost in a “landslide.” A coach who fails to win enough, gets fired. Law is an “I win – you lose” perspective. School is based on grades – from an “A – F.” A bell curve means winners/losers. If we do well in these things, it impacts our identity. There is a place for competition, but not in relationships built on trust. To compete against family, friends, fellow workers, and neighbors is a scarcity model. “Nobody likes to lose.” Habitual Win-Lose arrangements with Parent/child bankrupt the emotional bank account.

Lose-Lose. Mutually assured destruction. Samson (Book of Judges) is a hero because he killed so many enemy – but it was a Lose-Lose story – he died, too. Jesus said our enemy has a “Lose/Lose” strategy. *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.*

Jesus came with a 3rd way. There is a **Win-Win.** *I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.* (John 10:10) There is more than “I win/You Lose.” It was His desire that there be a “Win/Win.” It wasn’t just that He would win – He wanted to bring everyone with Him. Jesus turned the struggle to be first upside down.

There’s something wonderful about watching the success of another person. Jesus came with an entirely different model, but the Pharisees fought Him. They wanted Him and the “bad” people to lose. This is the default position many Christians live with, too. The longer we are a Christian, the easier this becomes. Jesus told people He loved and cared for them, w/o telling them they could do whatever they wanted to do. Jesus wasn’t just a “nice guy” who let others walk over Him.

Jesus knew who He was. When our identity is secure, we won’t be angry, bitter, jealous, proud, greedy, etc. If my identity is secure, I am a generous, not a stingy person. I live with Abundance, not scarcity.

2 Corinthians 9:6-8 *Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.* How generous am I with my **Time, Money, and Speech?**

“**The Law of Reciprocity**” is if you do something nice for me, it greatly enhances the possibility (even the obligation) that I will return the favor. A server who shows warmth and smiles stands a better chance than one who has a grimace and little charm. Someone who hands out free samples to taste is hoping the law of reciprocity will work. Many of us find it hard to accept a free sample and just walk away. Have you ever gotten a \$1 bill in an envelope when asked to fill out a

survey – and you keep the dollar but feel obligated to respond? We may buy some of the product even when we did not find it that enjoyable.

Covey suggests using Win/Win Performance Agreements. He illustrated with his daughter. When she was 16, she got her driver's license and had an agreement about her responsibilities with the car. If she kept it clean and properly maintained, she could use it. It was a Win/Win. However, there were consequences that could change. It just takes one person can propose a Win/Win solution. We can get to Win/Win by seeking a Mutual benefit.

Two weeks ago, I said there are 7 Pillars of Families: COME, PRAY, PLAY, EAT, GIVE, READ, SERVE. Our granddaughter, Lonnie, has found a new love – playing Old Maid. Rather than losing by winding up with the Old Maid, Lonnie wants to be holding the Old Maid card at the end. The card isn't a wicked witch face but is a delightful Mother Goose. She has reframed the game – what is considered losing, in everyone else's view, is what she considers winning.

Jesus wants us to reframe life, too. To go from Win/Lose to Win/Win. It's not "He who has the Gold Rules" but "The Golden Rule."

This comes from the power of Jesus in our hearts. Invite him in. Receive His mercy and grace. Then extend that to others. Helping Others Follow Jesus = a great win/win.