

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The Golden Rule and the Games People Play: The Ultimate Strategy for a Meaning-Filled Life

By Rami Shapiro

Introduction

1. When have you found the Golden Rule applicable to your life, and when have you found it impractical?

Chapter One: The Games People Play: An Introduction to Game Theory

1. What relationships in your life fall under the category of finite zero-sum games?
2. What relationships in your life fall under the category of infinite nonzero games?

Chapter Two: Warning: The Golden Rule May Be Hazardous to Your Faith

1. Being as honest with yourself as you can, ask yourself which beliefs you hold divide you from others or even pit you against them.
2. Being as honest with yourself as you can, what beliefs do you hold that open your heart to others?

Chapter Three: Evading the Rule in Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism

1. Being as honest with yourself as you can, when have you deliberately gone against the Golden Rule?
2. What were your reasons for doing so?

Chapter Four: Evading the Rule in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam

1. Taking a hard look at your religious or spiritual beliefs, identify instances where they violate the Golden Rule.
2. What would you have to change about those beliefs to act in harmony with the Golden Rule?

Chapter Five: What Have We Learned? Is God Necessary for Morality?

1. In your opinion, is something good because God says it is good, or can something be good in and of itself even if there is no God?

2. What is the God of your understanding? Why do you believe what you believe?

Chapter Six: What's Love Got to Do with It? The Golden Rule and Reciprocity

1. What is your goal in a loving relationship?
2. How do you cultivate love in your relationships?

Chapter Seven: Who Am I? The Golden Rule and the Nature of Self

1. What is your gut reaction to the notion that God is that “in whom you live, and move and have your being” (Acts 17:28)?
2. Do you feel more comfortable with the notion of you being apart from God or a part of God? Why do you think this is?

Chapter Eight: To Do or Not to Do: The Golden Rule and Free Agency

1. In what ways are you in control of your life? In what ways are you not in control?
2. Free will requires that there is a part of you that is beyond the conditioning of nature and nurture. Do you have a sense of this free-agent self?

Chapter Nine: Living the Rule: Toward a Global Ethic

1. Thinking of compassion as a circle, share who is inside and who is outside your circle.
2. If all religions taught the Golden Rule and how to live in a predominately infinite nonzero world, would it still matter which religion a person chose? If nonreligious philosophies taught the same thing, would it matter to you whether a person was religious or not?

Chapter Ten: Play Different: Shifting the Game

1. Which of your relationships would you like to move from finite to infinite and zero-sum to non-zero?
2. What are the first things you might do to accomplish this shift?