The Golden Rule

By Marilynn Reeves

The majority of people appear to accept whatever religious teachings were handed down to them by their parents. A few rebel, despite warnings of dire consequences to the fate of their soul, and develop beliefs of their own. Or they simply choose not to believe. I'm just happy that we live in a country that allows us freedom of choice, without persecution.

Some people say the Bible was written by the literal Hand of God and each word should be taken verbatim. Others believe it is a collection of stories, philosophy, and mythology first told by elders over prehistoric campfires and eventually written down by ancient scribes. Regardless of where one stands on the issue, I do think there is much beauty and wisdom to be found in the Bible, and it provides possibly the best rules to live by ever written.

Virtually every culture has a story about the beginning of life on Earth. Various civilizations have passed down stories about an ancient flood. And all major religions have some form of bible that they believe is the definitive Word of God.

But whether their source is the Talmud, the Koran, or the Judeo-Christian Bible, sadly there are always those who will interpret certain passages to condone cruelty to animals, subjugation of women, hatred, bigotry and even murder. Countless wars have been fought in the name of religion. "If you don't believe as I believe," they say, "then you must die!"

If I took away anything from my earlier years of Bible study, I think the lessons and ideals attributed to the man called Jesus are the most inspiring and most wise. "Love thy neighbor." "Forgive your enemies." "Render assistance to those in need." And if those axioms for right living seem too difficult to comprehend, they were probably best expressed in layman's terms in the Golden Rule: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

If everyone on the planet could live by those simple words, perhaps there would at last be Peace on Earth.