

As the World Turns

► **By Michael Mountain**

Our work for the animals is a work of the soul.

“The most basic freedom we all have is to sow seeds of goodness and be able to reap their fruit.”

I was interviewed the other day for a documentary on how different people and organizations from all over the United States are reacting to the events of September 11, and how it has changed our lives, our work, and our outlook.

Some of the questions were about how we think the government is managing the war. That's an area that, as an animal charity, Best Friends doesn't get into. But there was one question I certainly could answer: "Do you have any advice for the President?"

"Absolutely," I said. "I'd give him the same advice that we give ourselves in running the affairs of Best Friends: In everything that you do, follow the Golden Rule."

You certainly can't go far wrong keeping the Golden Rule in mind. Its basic message is simple, yet all-encompassing: As you give, so shall you receive. So do unto others as you would want them to do unto you, and never treat others, human or otherwise, in a way that you would not want to be treated yourself.

"But wait a minute," you say. "That may be all very well in theory, but it's not practical in today's complicated, dangerous, roller coaster world."

That's an understandable way of thinking. But it's missing the point. The truth is, life becomes complicated when people lose sight of the fundamentals – not the other way round. The world is in the state it's in precisely because people have lost touch with this basic knowledge of how nature works. And the more we disregard it, the worse things will get.

"Does that mean just rolling over when you're attacked?"

Not remotely. The Golden Rule doesn't tell you to wimp out. It simply reminds you



that you're going to have to lie in the bed you make. (It might also remind you that if you fail to come to the assistance of an oppressed people who are being abused by thugs, that piece of negligence could come back and bite you or your people in the you-know-where, too!)

But note also the words of the great revolutionary, Mahatma Gandhi, who observed that if you keep up the "eye for an eye" routine long enough, everyone simply ends up blind – blind to what they're doing to themselves, to each other, to their future, to their children, to their life.

Of course, the starting point in living by the Golden Rule is not trying to figure out what everyone *else* should do; it's figuring out the right way for *you* to live.

Once you do that, you begin to free yourself, step by step, from all those mindbending complications of modern life. You find yourself making choices that are right for you. And you start relating to other people and animals in ways that make you feel good about yourself and bring a new kind of joy into your life.

None of us can ultimately control what other people do. History is the graveyard of all who have tried.

But just as you can't force other people to follow the Golden Rule, no one can stop you from following it, either. Nobody can make you treat others – be they humans or other animals – in a way that you would not want to be treated yourself.

And if we all sow what we reap, then there is one freedom that each of us has, even in the most oppressive of regimes, cultures, or societies. It is the freedom to sow seeds of goodness, the fruits of which nothing and nobody can ever prevent you from reaping. 🐾