

First and Last, Do No Harm

From Mother Teresa:

“To me, God and compassion are one and the same. Compassion is the joy of sharing. It’s doing small things for the love of each other – just a smile – or carrying a bucket of water, or showing some simple kindness.. These are the small things that make up compassion.

Compassion means trying to share and understand the suffering of people. And I think it’s very good when people suffer. To me, that’s really like the kiss of Jesus. And a sign, also, that this person has become so close to Jesus, sharing his passion.

It is only pride and selfishness and coldness that keep us from having compassion. When we ultimately go home to God, we are going to be judged on what we were to each other, what we did for each other, and, especially, how much love we put in that. It’s not how much we give, but how much love we put in the doing – that’s compassion in action.”

From His Holiness, the Dalai Lama:

“The essence of all religions is love, compassion, and tolerance. Kindness is my true religion. No matter whether you are learned or not, whether you believe in the next life or not, whether you believe in God or Buddha or some other religion or not, in a day-to-day life you must be a kind person. When you are motivated by kindness, it doesn’t matter whether you are a practitioner, a lawyer, a politician, an administrator, a worker, or an engineer. Whatever your profession or field, deep down you are a kind person.

Love, compassion, and tolerance are necessities, not luxuries. Without them, humanity cannot survive. If you have a particular faith or religion, that is good. But you can survive without it if you have love, compassion and tolerance. The clear proof of a person’s love of God is if that person genuinely shows love to fellow human beings.

Human beings need spiritual as well as material sustenance. Without spiritual sustenance, it is difficult to get and maintain peace of mind. The purpose of religion is not to argue which one is best. Buddha, Jesus Christ, and all other great teachers created their ideas and teachings with sincere motivation, love, and kindness toward humanity. I do not think those great teachers created differences to make trouble. Our human mind always likes different approaches. There is a richness in the fact that there are so many different presentations of the way.”

Source: For the Love of God, edited by Benjamin Shield and Richard Carlson, New World Library, San Rafael, CA, 1990