

## **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 come 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.

One's religion has nothing to do with compassion. It's our love for God that is the main thing. Many Christians and non-Christians alike come to help in our houses in Calcutta and throughout the world. We have volunteers of all religions working with our aides day and night. Religion is meant to help us come closer to God, not meant to separate us ... true religion, no? All God really wants is for us is to love him. The way we can show our love for him is to serve others.

*Excerpted from 'For the Love of God', edited by Benjamin Shield  
and Richard Carlson. C. 1990, New World Library*

### ***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 no, whether you believe in God or Buddha or some other religion or not, in 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 for God is if that person genuinely shows love to fellow human beings.

Every major religion has similar ideas of love, the same goal of benefiting humanity through spiritual practice, and the same effect of making its followers into better human being. All religions teach moral precepts for perfecting the functions of mind, body, and speech. All teach us not to lie or steal or take others' lives, and so on. The common goal of all moral precepts laid down by the great teachers of humanity is unselfishness. All religions can learn from one another; their ultimate goal is to produce better human beings who will be more tolerant, more compassionate, and less selfish.

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, and they shared it for the benefit of 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.

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