

## WHAT HAPPENED TO JESUS' SIMPLE MESSAGE OF LOVE?

*Are All the Additional Traditional Things a Help or a Hindrance?*

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You have heard that it was said,

'**Love** your neighbor' and '**Hate** your enemy.'

But I tell you, **love your enemies** and pray for those who persecute you, ...

Therefore, you must **be perfect** as *[God the Source of Love] is perfect [Love].*"

*(Jesus recorded in Matthew 5:43-48)*

**To my Non-Christian friends** - have you ever wondered *why* there are so many very *different* "Christian" churches and denominations that seem to be *competing* with one another? Have you considered that many or even most of their different beliefs and practices might be *unnecessary additions* to Jesus' *simple* message of humble, compassionate, unselfish, other-serving love?

**To my Christian friends** - are you sure that *all* of *your* group's additions are necessary or even helpful? What if some of them are actually stumbling blocks hindering *hurting* hearts from finding and growing in the pure love everyone needs? As an individual-family counselor and conflict-mediator for 40 plus years, it's become increasingly clear that Jesus' profoundly practical principles of life transforming love are *missing* in much of modern "Christianity".

**Yes**, I'm convinced the way of love was uniquely *revealed* in and through Jesus' *life* and teachings. They are profoundly simple and effectively practical — if they are sincerely and consistently lived. But unfortunately, many people have never *comprehensively* studied his love teachings because they've been turned-off and turned-away from "Christianity" by "Christians" who *grossly* failed to love — his way.

### **SO, WHAT WAS (IS) JESUS' MESSAGE OF LOVE?**

A **new** commandment I give you:

**Love** one another. **As I have loved you, ...**

**By this** everyone will **know** that you are **My** disciples,

**IF** you love *.....*" *John 13:34-35*

It's a profoundly simple principle for individual joy and meaningful relationships. It's a "way" of life. In fact, the first followers of Jesus called themselves simply, "people of the way". It's *the* way to live a life of genuine, strong, life-transforming, other-serving *unselfish* love. It's a self-sacrificing love *especially* for the needy and oppressed — *even* for enemies!

The "way" of love is definitely *not* by prideful, independent *self*-righteousness. It's simply by *humble* dependent trust (*rational evidence-based faith*) in the infinite,

transcendent Source of pure love. That means trusting the Creator of love for the *forgiveness* we all need, because we've all freely chosen to think, speak, and act in unloving selfish "ways" that hurt and harmed others.

### **Why didn't I mention the word "Jesus" in the above paragraph?**

It's because many people in history knew and lived this message, this way, this life principle of love, long *before* Jesus's ever walked the sandy roads of the Middle East. For example, in the Old Testament (OT), Enoch lived thousands of years before Jesus. Yet he understood, chose, and walked in this way of humble love. He did it, *not* by prideful self-righteous trust in himself, or by trust in some religious system. He simply lived it by *humble* dependence on the Creator, the Source of love. Think about it. He didn't even believe in the "Bible", because it didn't exist back then. He didn't "believe in Jesus", because Jesus had not yet been born. He didn't know about most of what Christians believe today. In fact, the first century followers of Jesus didn't either.

*Please don't misunderstand me.* I did *not* say that *all* of Christian tradition is false. I'm simply pointing out that a lot of it is clearly *not necessary* — in order to *connect* with God who is love (First John 4:8), and to *grow* in God's way of love. Therefore, the Creator's profoundly simple, *universal* way of love is *not* unique to "Christianity". Long before Christianity, and even today across the world, individuals and groups within other cultures and spiritual traditions have taught and spread this same humble way of love.

Unfortunately however, many *other* people in every culture, especially prideful, *self-righteous* people in power-positions, have *added extras* on top of the simple way of love. Many of those additions became entrenched *traditions* that clouded-over and choked-out the original, simple "Way" of love that's by *free* flowing grace through humble dependent faith on the Personal Consciousness behind the Cosmos. Sure, *some* additional traditional things *might* be *helpful* for deeper understanding about the way of love, and how to live it in practical daily life and community. But, it's important for all of us to *humbly* self-examine, and ask ourselves hard questions.

### **HARD QUESTIONS FOR ALL OF US**

Which of our additional traditional beliefs and practices are *not* necessary for a person to be connected to the Creator of love (God), and to grow in the way of love? Are some actually a *hindrance* to the way of love? Could some actually be hurtful and *damaging*? The burden of proof is on those who *insist* that "their" added traditional beliefs and practices are *necessary* for a person to know and grow in the Creator's way of love. For decades, I traveled the country and was called by some a "leading" teacher, persuading others that "MY" group's many *added* beliefs and practices were *essential*. Now however, I've found a deeper peace and joy by holding to one simple, central truth — the good news of love through amazing free-flowing grace, by rational evidence-based faith.