

Love and Compassion



All you need is love.

—The Beatles

One of the greatest embodiments of love and compassion in our time is the Dalai Lama. Exiled from his homeland many years ago when the Chinese communists invaded Tibet, the Dalai Lama has nevertheless become an ambassador of love to the entire world—ceaselessly traveling from one land to another, sharing goodwill. When asked what his religion is, he does not begin a long dissertation on the nature of Tibetan Buddhism. Instead, he says simply, “My religion is love.” Even though the Chinese government hates and fears him, he refers to them as “my friends, the enemy.”

How many of us, having endured what the Dalai Lama has, could respond to such hatred with such love? No doubt, most of us fail to live up to our own expectations when it comes to acting in a loving way. Jesus said that it is easy to love those who love us, and hard to love our enemies—and yet much of the time we find it difficult enough just to love those who love us.

I recall reading a story some years ago about an encounter that took place between a Jewish rabbi and his wife, and a member of a white supremacist group who hated Jews. Circumstances arose in which this young man, along with his brethren, broke into a local synagogue and destroyed much of it, defacing almost every surface with racial slurs and other slogans of intolerance.

If something like this were to happen to most of us, our first reaction might be one of equal anger and disgust. We would call the police with the hopes that the responsible parties would be found, arrested, and severely punished. We would probably feel horribly violated, and our intolerance of hate groups would become intense. Some of us might even want to retaliate in kind.

But instead of calling the police, the rabbi and his wife went looking for the responsible people. They were finally able to locate one member of the hate group, and instead of responding to him angrily, they told him that they loved him. This response so disarmed the man that, when the rabbi invited him to dinner at the couple’s home, the man actually accepted the invitation.

After dinner, the rabbi and his wife talked with this young man for many hours, during which time he shared his life story with them. It was not surprising for the couple to learn that this poor lost soul had been abused and unloved as a child. Neither was it surprising to them that his role models had been parents who were bigots.

It was apparent to the rabbi and his wife that the young man’s hatred had nothing to do with them, any more than it had to do with the fact that they were Jewish. They understood that this young person’s hate was really an expression of his own pain and suffering. Life had been hard and cruel to him, so he had become hard and cruel to survive.

The rabbi and his wife did not see a hate-filled criminal before them—someone who ought to be vilified and punished. They saw a human being who was desperately in need of love and compassion. As it turned out, love worked a miracle: not only did the ex-white supremacist voluntarily repair all the damage his group had done to the synagogue, but he became like a son to the rabbi and his wife, and they became the loving parents he never had.

An inspiring true-life story like this allows us to see that love and compassion are more than spiritual platitudes. Hate really can be transformed by love, just as the great spiritual teachers have always told us. To see what we need to do in this world, to recognize the pain and suffering in everyone, we have to transform ourselves into living embodiments of love. If we succeed—through great effort, and many failures—we come to realize that what we did for the sake of others was the very thing we needed to do for ourselves. Love, like hate, returns to the sender.

Love your neighbor as yourself.

*The Gospel According to Mark; parallels:
Matthew, Luke, Thomas*

You have heard it said, "You should love your neighbor and hate your enemy." But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you might be children of your Father who is in heaven.

The Gospel According to Mark; parallels: Matthew, Luke

I was hungry and you fed me. I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me. I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me. I was in prison and you came to me. What you did to the least of these, my brethren, you did also to me.

The Gospel According to Matthew

Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

The Gospel According to Matthew; parallel: Luke

Recognizing what brings pleasure and pain to oneself, the true yogi treats others accordingly. Thus, he desires happiness for everyone, sorrow for no one.

The Bhagavad Gita

The true yogi, with his heart centered in Me, recognizes the Self in all beings, and acts accordingly.

The Bhagavad Gita

Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer in sacrifice, whatever you give away, whatever renunciation you practice, know that you do these things as an offering to Me.

The Bhagavad Gita

Practice gentleness, seek truth, give up anger, do not slander, and have compassion for all beings. Be gentle, be modest, be useful to others. All these things belong to the one who wishes to see Me.

The Bhagavad Gita

Seeing himself in others, one who is in a state of higher consciousness feels compassion for all beings, and holds only positive thoughts about them.

Doctrinal formulas

The one who has excelled does only good for others, and treats everyone the same. He has compassion for the whole world.

The Anguttara Nikyaya

If you do not care for each other, who will? When you take care of others, when you care for the sick, you are caring for me as well.

The Buddha

When you see yourself in others, it is impossible to hurt anyone else.

The Buddha

Nothing but good comes to him who loves others as he loves himself.

The Tao Te Ching

The wise man has no need of anything, so he is able to give his full attention to others. He feels compassion equally for those who are concerned about others, and those who are not.

The Tao Te Ching

The world is transformed by those who love all people, just as you love yourself.

The Tao Te Ching

Compassion and mercy bring victory. Heaven belongs to the merciful.

The Tao Te Ching

You receive no benefit from loving only those who love you. Great benefit comes from loving those who hate you.

The Gospel of the Egyptians

Be compassionate, as your father in heaven is compassionate.

The Gospel According to Mark; parallels: Matthew, Luke

You should never celebrate the downfall of those who are ignorant.

Agrapha

Your Father makes his sun rise on the good and the evil alike.

The Gospel According to Matthew and Luke

Do not give food only to worthy people, but give it also to strangers. Turn no one away from your house. For what you give is what will be returned to you.

The Taittiriya Upanishad

Seeing Me in all living creatures, know that love for all others is love for Me.

The Bhagavad Gita

When evil men worship Me they should be regarded as good because they have found the right resolve.

The Bhagavad Gita

To Me, all beings are the same. I hate none, and no one is more dear to Me than another.

The Bhagavad Gita

Hate does not overcome hate. Only love overcomes hate. Knowing that we are all destined to die, why fight amongst yourselves?

The Buddha

The only way you can become free is to love those who hate you.

The Dhammapada

Do not deceive anyone. Do not turn away from anyone. Never wish anyone harm.

The Buddha

Have compassion for all of creation. Nurture within yourself compassion that is limitless.

The Karaniya Metta Sutra

In war, have mercy. True warriors do not carry arms. True fighters do not get angry. Those who wish to win should not be contentious. This is being in harmony with what is natural and pure.

The Tao Te Ching

Do not turn away those you consider sinful and unworthy. If you have wisdom, you will try to save everyone.

The Tao Te Ching

If fields did not have weeds, what would farmers do?

Chuang Tzu

Wise men always seek to save everyone. That way, nobody goes to waste.

The Tao Te Ching

Be compassionate as your heavenly father is compassionate.

The Gospel According to Mark; parallels: Matthew, Luke

When someone wants to take your shirt, let him have your coat as well. If someone forces you to go a mile with him, go with him an extra mile.

The Gospel According to Matthew; parallels: Luke, Thomas

Give to one who begs from you, and do not turn your back on those who wish to borrow from you. Do not let one hand know what the other is doing.

The Gospel According to Matthew; parallel: Luke

Judas asked Jesus, "How do we begin our journey on this path?" Jesus said, "By being kind and loving."

The Gospel of the Hebrews; parallels Thomas

Whoever, in devotion, offers Me a gift, whether it be a flower, a fruit or water, I accept it as coming from one who has a pure heart.

The Bhagavad Gita



Just as a mother keeps her child from harm, and guards him with her life, so you should treasure all living beings. With a grateful heart, spread love throughout the world.

The Buddha

The greatest reward in this world is to take care of others. The greatest loss in this world is to receive from others without gratitude.

The Buddha

One should act without thinking when performing acts of charity.

The Dhammapada

Encourage goodwill in the world by being charitable and kind.

Doctrinal formulas

Good works leave no tracks behind.

The Tao Te Ching



That your actions might be perfect, let
your love flow without measure.

The Manichean Psalms

Jesus went about the cities and villages,
preaching the good news of the
Kingdom and healing diseases and every
infirmity. When he saw the crowds,
he had compassion for them, because
they were harassed and helpless. They
were sheep without a shepherd.

The Gospel According to Matthew

I give you a new commandment: Love
one another as I have loved you.

The Gospel According to John

Even if one is firmly attached to the
Void, if he does not have compassion
for others he will make no progress
toward reaching the final goal.

Saraha

When you cultivate an attitude of
friendliness, little by little your own ill-will
will diminish. When you cultivate an attitude
of compassion, little by little your own
annoyance will diminish. When you spread
joy, little by little your aversion will diminish.
When you consider all others as equal,
little by little your revulsion will diminish.

The Majjhima Niyaka Sutra

Out of the abundance of your heart,
cultivate love and compassion for all beings.

The Buddha



Hypocrisy



*Always look at your moccasin tracks first
before you speak of another's faults.*

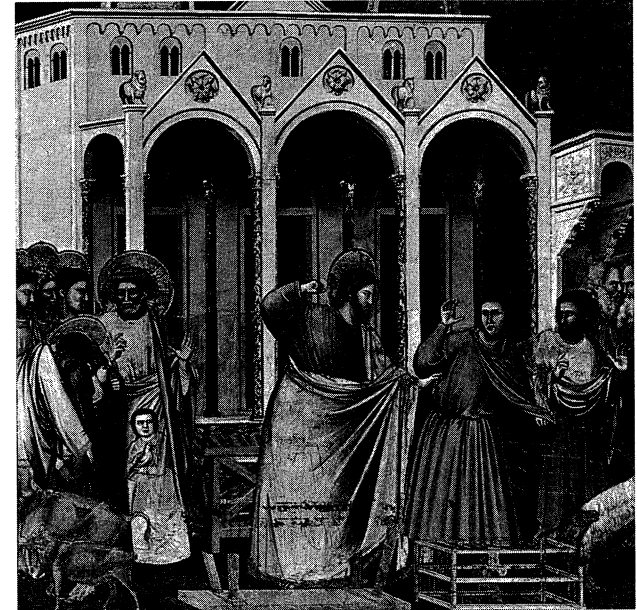
—Sauk saying

The warnings against hypocrisy voiced by Jesus, Buddha, Krishna, and Lao Tzu are never directed at the general public. They are directed toward those of us who claim to be religious or spiritual. Their criticisms might sting, but we should be grateful for them. Without recognizing the things we need to work on, we cannot grow. Puffing ourselves up, being in denial about our shortcomings, not taking responsibility for those times when we injure others by our thoughtlessness—are all attitudes that are self-defeating. Perhaps more than anything else, hypocrisy keeps us bound in the chains of illusion. If we do not practice what we preach, we are not self-aware. And if we are not self-aware, we are not growing.

None of this is news. We all know what hypocrisy is, and some part of us always knows when we are being hypocritical. It is our need to always justify ourselves that keeps us from hearing with open ears and seeing with open eyes. But we never really grow unless our defenses are down. Even our own inner voice can't get through to us unless we allow ourselves to become vulnerable. So, in a way, this chapter is as much about self-awareness as it is about hypocrisy. We can't fix something unless we know it's broken.

There are many similarities between Jesus and the historical Buddha. Their ethical and moral teachings are very similar. They both had life-altering mystical experiences. Both men began movements of religious renewal—Jesus within Judaism, Siddhartha Gautama within Hinduism. But there was one major difference between these two men: Jesus was a social prophet and a social critic, Buddha was not.

If we've had a Christian upbringing, one of the many images of Jesus that might come to mind is of him giving the religious hypocrites of his day a tongue-lashing. Supposedly, the subjects who bore the brunt of Jesus' challenges were the Pharisees—religious legalists who proclaimed that they were strict followers of the Mosaic Law, the Torah. Jesus accused these legalists of following the letter of the Law, while ignoring its spirit. He criticized them for making a show of their piety, while failing to put their piety into action. Simply put, these legalists didn't practice what they preached. And Jesus pointed this out to them.



But while Jesus is well known for his statements against hypocrisy, the following verses make it clear that he was hardly alone in this. Buddha, Krishna, and Lao Tzu were in full agreement with the man from Galilee.

Be careful that your spiritual practice is not done in public, so that others know that you are spiritual. When you give to charity, do not announce it like hypocrites do. Praise is their reward. Practice charity in secret and your Father will reward you in secret.

The Gospel According to Matthew; parallel: Luke

Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord" will be saved, but only those who do works of righteousness.

*The Gospel According to Matthew;
parallels: Luke, Egyptians*

Stay away from people who consider themselves to be learned. They walk around in fine clothes and like to be noticed so that they might be honored in public. They take seats of honor in synagogues, and at feasts. These hypocrites steal from widows even as they repeat long prayers. The judgment that comes upon them will be great.

The Gospel According to Mark; parallels: Matthew, Luke

Renounce hypocrisy, for it is produced by evil intent. Hypocrisy leads you far away from the truth.

The Apocryphon of James

Those who are conceited, self-important, full of pride, and drunk with wealth honor Me in name only. They sacrifice to Me in name only. They hate Me within their own bodies because they are pretentious, full of ego and malice, lust for power, and are disrespectful of others.

The Bhagavad Gita

If you practice yoga but are conceited, you do not know Me at all. You have failed to understand My teaching, and you will not succeed.

The Bhagavad Gita

Those who perform spiritual practices in public so that they will be noticed and praised with honor and respect are unbalanced. Their ostentation will come to nothing.

The Bhagavad Gita

All actions are polluted that come from conceit, insincerity, and desire. These things are the result of evil thoughts.

The Bhagavad Gita

A monk is not a true monk until he has purified his own mind. Although he may wear a saffron robe, if he is not honest and doesn't control himself, he is not worthy of his robes.

The Dhammapada

Those who have heard my word, lifetime after lifetime, but have not practiced it, lifetime after lifetime, will only continue to suffer.

The Lotus of the True Law

Monks who seek recognition in order to gain influence and admiration, and monks who overwhelm others by insisting on their own point of view, only increase pride and passion.

The Kevaddha Sutra

Those who plant evil seeds will only harvest bitter fruit. These people are their own worst enemies.

The Dhammapada

Be careful not to display yourself in public. There is no sincerity in this. Such self-conscious acts are not in harmony with Tao, and will ultimately ruin a person.

Chuang Tzu

As the meaning of Tao was lost among humanity, it was replaced with intelligence. Along with intelligence came hypocrisy.

The Tao Te Ching

Follow the Way; but boasting and seeking recognition is not of the Way. One who is arrogant has already failed. There is no reward for those who are conceited, and no one can become a true leader by puffing themselves up.

The Tao Te Ching

The moment one stops following Tao, one also loses integrity at the same time.

The Tao Te Ching

Woe to you, scholars and Pharisees.
You hypocrites! Not only do you
refuse to enter the Kingdom, but you
keep others from doing so as well.

The Gospel According to Matthew;
parallels: *Luke, Thomas*

Whatever you teach others with words,
be sure to carry out in actions.

Agrapha

Wretched are you, scholars and Pharisees—
you hypocrites. You wash the outside of the
cup, but are full of filth within yourselves.

The Gospel According to Matthew;
parallels: *Luke, Thomas*

How is it that you see a splinter in someone
else's eye, but do not notice the log in
your own eye? This is hypocrisy! First,
remove the log in your own eye so that
you can see clearly enough to remove
the splinter from your brother's eye.

The Gospel According to Matthew;
parallels: *Luke, Thomas*

Fools dwell in the darkness, and are wise
only in their own conceit. Their vain
understanding serves no one. Rather, it
leads them to destruction. These enemies
of truth are blind men led by blind men.

The Upanishads



It doesn't matter how many spiritual
books you read if you don't practice
what they teach, what benefit is there
in not acting on holy words?

The Dhammapada

Don't worry about what others do
or don't do. Rather, pay attention
to what you do or fail to do.

The Dhammapada

Those who follow their own profane
theories cannot be corrected because
of their pride and hypocrisy. They know
nothing, and they do not follow the Buddha.

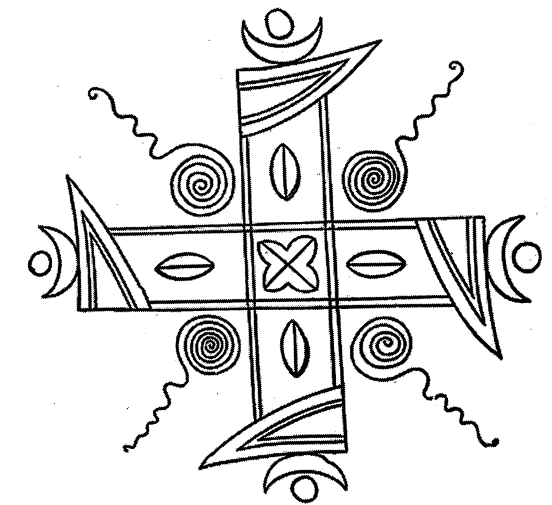
The Lotus of the True Law

Concentrate on your own faults—
the things you have done, and
the things you have left undone.
Ignore the faults of others.

The Dhammapada

Lack of faith
on the part of one person
leads to faithlessness
on the part of others.

The Tao Te Ching



It is not what goes into the mouth
that makes you unclean—
it is what comes out of your mouth.

The Gospel According to Matthew; parallels: Luke, Thomas

There are those of you who call me Lord, but do
not do the will of my Father, and do not follow my
teachings. Get away from me! I do not know you.

*The Gospel According to Matthew; parallels:
Luke, Egyptians, Nazarenes*

Grapes can't be picked from vines full of
thorns, nor can figs be taken from trees
with thorns. Bad fruit comes from bad trees
and good fruit comes from good trees.

The Gospel of Thomas; parallels: Matthew, Luke

Two men went into the Temple. One was a Pharisee
and the other was a tax collector. The Pharisee
prayed, "I give thanks to you, oh Lord, that I am
not like other men—extortioners, adulterers, even
this tax collector. I fast twice a week and I give
tithes from all I receive." The tax collector lifted
up his eyes to heaven, beat his breast and said,
"God, be merciful to me a sinner." I tell you, this
man returned home justified rather than the other.

The Gospel According to Luke



There are those who are ashamed of things they
shouldn't be ashamed of, and those people who are
not ashamed of those things they should be ashamed
of. Such people are following the wrong path.

The Dhammapada

Even though a monk takes ahold of my robes and
follows me all about, but who is filled with desires,
and whose mind is full of malice toward others—
this monk is far from me and I am far from him.

A Sermon to Monks

For your own protection, place yourselves
in the company of wise men, and resist
being in the company of fools.

The Mangala Sutra

The fool that knows he is a fool is more
fortunate than a fool who believes he is wise.
This person only makes trouble for himself
and others, and he suffers accordingly.

The Dhammapada

