

# DID YOU EVER HEAR THIS IN “CHURCH?”

BY: BRAD CULLEN – APRIL 10, 2004

That I create tension among some of my brothers and sisters has to do with a very simple writing focus. The history of this focus is quite simple. I became a student of those things that the writers of the first five books and the last book of the New Testament, quoted Jesus as having said. I decided for a time to read only the “red letters” to the exclusion of everything else except for context.

For example, Mark quoted Jesus as saying, “Whoever does the will of God is my brother and my sister and my mother.” In order to understand what Jesus was responding to we have to read Mark’s narrative leading up to the quote. In that, I found it necessary to read more than only Jesus’ words in red.

The more I read the more I became convinced that Jesus was pointing to an entirely different spiritual possibility and dynamic than was taught in any church to which I had ever been exposed.

Some things Jesus said just didn’t make sense when I tried to factor in what the “church” at large taught and practiced. I decided to ignore the large volume of commentary available that either supported or took issue with several fundamental tenets of Christianity and I began to simply put what Jesus said to the test in a practical manner. Shortly after I began this trek, in the early 1980s, I stumbled onto the biography of a man that became my primary example of taking the words of Jesus seriously. Mohandas K. Gandhi and shortly thereafter I also saw the epic movie about him, “Gandhi.”

I was amazed that this little (in physical stature) man, a Hindu, who is credited with what is thought by some as causing the largest social upheaval in modern history, based his life and teachings largely on what Jesus was quoted as saying in the Gospels.

I reasoned that if a Hindu that refused to believe in the deity of Jesus Christ simply on the basis of how British Christians treated Indians, and yet turned the world of his day upside down with his brand of non-violent, civil disobedience – and that he claimed was based on the teachings of Jesus – what could someone that does believe in the deity of Jesus do by applying his teachings? I had already set my mind to finding out and this confirmed it!

“Generations to come will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth.” - Albert Einstein

"Gandhi was inevitable. If humanity is to progress, Gandhi is inescapable. He lived, thought and acted, inspired by the vision of humanity evolving toward a world of peace and harmony. We may ignore Gandhi at our own risk." - Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

I find it noteworthy that neither King nor Einstein, while extolling the virtues of Gandhi, made mention of the thing that Gandhi said formed the basis of his philosophy and actions, i.e., the teachings of Jesus.

One of the most telling things Jesus said underscores something that is an anathema to the thinking of many Evangelical Christians. Since Gandhi professed not to believe in the sovereignty or deity of Jesus – it is on that basis many Christians exclude Gandhi from the ranks of the “saved.” So let’s listen carefully to what Jesus had to say on this theme:

“What is the point of calling me, ‘Lord,’ if you do not do the things I say? I tell you that whoever comes to me, and hears my sayings and does them can be likened to a man that starts the construction of his house of life by digging deep and laying the foundation for it on rock. When the floods and storms of life came they could not shake it because it had a solid foundation. But he that hears and does not apply my sayings is like a man that built his house without a foundation and when the wind and rain came against it collapsed. The ruin of the house was complete.”

What astonishes me is how Christians can ignore something key to what Jesus said, i.e., anyone judging another person is himself in danger of being judged – in their condemnation of Gandhi because he didn’t call Jesus, ‘Lord.’ Gandhi obviously not only heard the sayings of Jesus, he applied them! You have to go outside the sayings of Jesus to conclude that Gandhi is “lost.” You also have to go outside the sayings of Jesus to conclude that Christianity, based on its belief system in the deity of Jesus Christ alone is “saved.” As Jesus’ half-brother, James, said it, “You say you believe? That’s nice, even the demons believe and they shake with fear with the knowledge of what is coming!”

Winston Churchill is quoted as having referred to Gandhi as, “that evil little black man.”

There is plenty of relief to be garnered from the teachings of Jesus without resorting to ignoring what he said, or even worse refuting what he said, which is certainly the practice of many that refer to themselves as Christian leaders and teachers – and which, by the way, a thing that Jesus said definitively not to do!

In my view, a person will never grasp the simplicity of the promises of being cared for by God, a loving Parent, until he or she grapples with some of the “harder” sayings of Jesus. Once I’ve come face to face with my inability to, “Love your enemies, do good to those that abuse you, if somebody comes and takes your shirt let him have your coat as well. If somebody takes what belongs to you – don’t demand it back,” without first making an advance commitment – only then am I ready to hear the good news from Jesus’ own mouth, such things as, “My yoke is easy and my burden is light.” All these tough things and more are what comes just before the red lettered quoted reference above that Gandhi committed to follow and which changed the course of history because of it. These are the things Jesus said anyone that put into practice was building his or her life on a solid foundation. Gandhi, again, a Hindu, a non-believer in the deity of Jesus Christ did so.

How come I never heard that in church? I’ll send you a whole list of things that Jesus said in the original languages that you have most likely never heard in church – empowering things that set us free from the hold that this earth has upon us. They are listed in, “**The Blueprint for Spiritual Freedom.**”

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