

If you tell (me) that you're a Christian, I tend to ask if you've read the Gospels. I think it's rather a good idea to read some of them at least. But if you don't have the time, let me sum up the teachings of that guy, Jesus, like this:

1. The outsider, the immigrant, the Pagan, the wounded, the women, the poor, the lost, the sick and the disabled are the ones who have the humility to ask for healing. They cross the borders and barriers to a Jewish holy man because they are not being helped by the 'officials' who are more interested in keeping up appearances than looking after those who don't look, speak or have status like them.

2. If we take time to honour and seek awe and delight in whatever inspires us (sometimes that's God!), then take care of ourselves and live with integrity and THEN take care of others and treat them with the same respect, we'll generally get on pretty well in life. If we reverse the order, we will run on empty, having no time for delight or for ourselves and get sick or resentful.

3. It's important to live in the moment; not fussing too much about tomorrow. That will sort itself when you get there. It's been 100% successful on that score so far...and it's usually a better result without the background fretting.

4. Ask for what you need, clearly and precisely, and then accept that the answer is 'yes.' Stop fussing about it and let it come in its own way and in its own time. Yes, that one IS tricky but it's not rocket science and practice makes perfect.

5. If you are wealthy, you are respectfully requested to share that wealth instead of hoarding it.

6. Peter, betrayed Jesus and didn't get it time after time. He squabbled over status with his fellow disciples and cut off someone's ear. Add a bit of punctuation (NT Greek didn't have any) and you'll get 'THIS is the rock on which I will build my church?!" If Peter got to be a saint, there's hope for all of us.

7. The Gospels make it clear that Jesus was not a Christian; nor did he intend to start a new religion. He was an observant Jew who came to clarify the importance of the Spirit within the Law and to remind folk of the love beneath it. The word 'ecclesia' which is translated as 'church' does not mean a religious building or tradition; it means a gathering of people who have been 'called' for a purpose. It is active; a pilgrimage, not a repetitive set of services.

Jesus was basically Mister Rogers on spiritual speed. The whole tenet of the Gospels is 'won't you be my neighbour?'

And yes, of course, there's more, but we've made a start...

Maggy Whitehouse

*(We are not sure who Mister Rogers is? Maybe an American preacher? Maybe it's Carl Rogers, the 'father' of Client-Centred therapy, Any other ideas?...Ed)*