

## **A Loving-kindness Meditation**

John 13: 34-35 Jesus invites us, even challenges us, to love one another. He says we're to love each other, as he has loved us. As we live, demonstrating that love to the world, others will come to know about God.

To love others, we must first love ourselves. One form of prayer that encourages us to grow in love is the 'Loving-kindness Meditation'.

It uses words, images, and feelings to evoke a loving-kindness and friendliness toward oneself and others. With each repetition of the phrases, we are expressing an intention, planting the seeds of loving wishes over and over in our heart. Gradually our heart softens and opens. We become more receptive to God's love for us and able to allow that love to flow out to others.

Begin the practice of loving-kindness by setting aside about fifteen or twenty minutes. Be in a quiet place. Sit comfortably. Let your body rest and be relaxed. Let your heart be soft. Let go of any plans and preoccupations.

1. Begin with yourself. Breathe gently and recite inwardly the following phrases directed to your own well-being. You begin with yourself because without loving yourself it is almost impossible to love others.

*May I be filled with lovingkindness.  
May I be safe from inner and outer dangers.  
May I be well in body and mind.  
May I be at ease and happy.*

As you repeat these phrases, picture yourself as you are now, and hold that image in a heart of loving-kindness. Or perhaps you will find it easier to picture yourself as a young and beloved child. Adjust the words and images in any way you wish. Create the exact phrases that best open your heart of kindness. Repeat these phrases over and over again, letting the feelings permeate your body and mind.

Be aware that this meditation may at times feel mechanical or awkward. It can also bring up feelings contrary to loving-kindness, feelings of irritation and anger. If this happens, it is especially important to be patient and kind toward yourself, allowing whatever arises to be received in a spirit of friendliness and kind affection.

You may want to stay with the loving-kindness meditation for yourself for several days or weeks. That's just fine. Jesus wants us to know that we are loved. It is from that experience we reach out to love others. When you are ready you can expand your circle.

2. After a few minutes, or a few days, when you are ready, choose a benefactor, someone in your life who has loved or truly cared for you. Picture this person and carefully recite the same phrases:

*May you be filled with lovingkindness.  
May you be safe from inner and outer dangers.  
May you be well in body and mind.  
May you be at ease and happy.*

3. Repeat the process for the following groups of people:
  - Someone you enjoy, a family member or friend
  - Someone who is difficult for you
  - Someone who is neutral to you
  - All the beings in the world

Stay with each person for several repetitions of the prayer, until your heart feels softer toward them.

4. Conclude your prayer of loving kindness by drawing your hands back to your heart and being in gratitude for whatever way you experience God loving you.

**Contemplative Fire: Living from the Centre: Loving-kindness Meditation**

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