



Coalesce Podcast

Episode 37 — Our Life *is* the Path

Note, terms, scripture, practice

Christians were given commandments about mercy, compassion, loving enemies, and forgiveness without being taught the nondual consciousness necessary for living most of those commandments.

hypocrites (the word first meant “actors”)

Without Buddha I Could Not Be a Christian, by Paul Knitter

“Although I am not God, I am not other than God either.” (Romano Guardini)

“...how I treat them I’m treating myself, and as Jesus says, I’m treating Jesus. That’s the social consciousness dimension of contemplation.” (Thomas Merton)

“...to remove one’s ego from one’s peacemaking, so that one’s actions will not be coming from one’s ego-needs but from the wisdom and compassion that constitute one’s true nature.” (Paul Knitter)

“...knowing that if the inner world is authentic, an individual’s political, economic, and service attitudes will always change organically from the inside out.” (Richard Rohr)

Sunyata: Emptiness, Interbeing, Groundlessness, incarnate mystery of Trinity

[Acts 17:28](#)

[Ephesians 4:6](#)

“Therefore, a better image for creation might be a pouring forth of God, an extension of God, in which the Divine carries on the divine activity of interrelating *in* and *with* and *through* creation.” [Clearly, then, God is not just “out there”!] (Paul Knitter)

budh: to wake up, to understand, to know what is happening in a very deep way

Three graces of mindfulness practice: precision, gentleness, and letting go

“...our life *is* the path, and we no longer rely merely on the forms of practice.” (Thich Nhat Hanh)

Touchpoints of the Teaching: impermanence (*anitya*), nonself (*anatman*), and nirvana.

Practice: The Four Limitless Qualities

Buddhism identifies Four Limitless Qualities: loving kindness (*maitri*), compassion, joy, and equanimity. Loving kindness and compassion may appear to be the same, but there are subtle differences. In Buddhism, compassion includes a willingness to identify so fully with someone that you would be willing to carry a little of their suffering. Equanimity may be close to what Christians mean by peace. These four qualities are limitless in that they increase with practice and use. If you don't choose daily and deliberately to practice loving kindness, it is unlikely that a year from now you will be any more loving. The qualities are also limitless because they are already within you—which beautifully parallels the Christian theology of the Holy Spirit. There is a place in you that is already kind, compassionate, joyful, and equanimous.

Last week's practice, Tonglen, focused on holding the suffering of self and others. Today I will paraphrase Pema Chödrön's practice for loving kindness, *maitri*. I invite you to set aside a quiet period to go through these simple steps with intention and openness.

1. Recognize the place of loving kindness inside yourself. It is there. Honor it, awaken it, and actively draw upon it.
2. Drawing upon the source of loving kindness within, bring to mind someone for whom you feel sincere goodwill and tenderness, someone you love very much. From your source, send loving kindness toward this person and bless them.
3. Awaken loving kindness for someone who is a casual friend or associate—someone not in your inner circle, but a bit further removed, someone you admire or appreciate. Send love to that individual.
4. Now send loving kindness to someone about whom you feel neutral or indifferent—for example, a gas station attendant or a cashier. Send your blessing to this person.
5. Think of someone who has hurt you, who has talked evil of you, whom you find it difficult to like or you don't enjoy being around. Bless them; send this would-be enemy your love.
6. Bring all of the first five individuals into the stream of flowing love, including yourself. Hold them here for a few moments.
7. Finally, extend this love to embrace all beings in the universe. It is one piece of love, one love toward all, regardless of religion, race, culture, or likability.

This practice can help you know—in your mind, heart, and body—that love is not determined by the worthiness of the object. Love is determined by the giver of the love. These steps can be repeated for the other three limitless qualities. Remember, spiritual gifts increase with use. Love, compassion, joy, and equanimity will grow as you let them flow. You are simply an instrument, a conduit for the inflow and outflow of the gifts of the Spirit. You are “inter-being.”