

The (Un)Common Good Study Guide Week 1

Spiritual Practice: Loving Kindness Meditation

Loving-Kindness Meditation (also called Metta meditation) is a practice of extending compassion, love, and goodwill. Practicing loving-kindness opens our hearts to the reality that we belong to each other. May we remember that compassion is the foundation of justice, and love is the starting point for real change.

Find a comfortable position. Close your eyes if you feel comfortable, or soften your gaze. Take a deep breath in... and out. Allow yourself to settle into this moment.

We will begin by offering loving-kindness to ourselves. Silently or softly repeat these words:

May I be filled with love and kindness.
May I be healthy and whole.
May I be safe and at peace.

Now, bring to mind someone you love—a friend, a family member, or someone who has shown you kindness. Hold them in your thoughts and offer them these words:

May you be filled with love and kindness.
May you be healthy and whole.
May you be safe and at peace.

Next, expand your circle of compassion. Think of someone you struggle with—someone you disagree with or find difficult. With an open heart, extend these same blessings to them:

May you be filled with love and kindness.
May you be healthy and whole.
May you be safe and at peace.

Finally, let's extend loving-kindness to all people and all creation—our neighborhoods, our nation, and the world.

May all beings be filled with love and kindness.
May all beings be healthy and whole.
May all beings be safe and at peace.

Take a deep breath in... and out. When you're ready, gently bring your awareness back to the present moment.

Scriptures

Matthew 22:36-40 NRSVUE

“Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” He said to him, “ ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

Doctrine & Covenants 164:5

“It is imperative to understand that when you are truly baptized into Christ you become part of a new creation. By taking on the life and mind of Christ, you increasingly view yourselves and others from a changed perspective. Former ways of defining people by economic status, social class, sex, gender, or ethnicity no longer are primary. Through the gospel of Christ a new community of tolerance, reconciliation, unity in diversity, and love is being born as a visible sign of the coming reign of God.”

Summary

Chapter 1: A Gospel for the Common Good

Christianity is not about personal salvation alone but about transforming relationships—our relationship with God, with our neighbors, and with society. The common good goes beyond partisan politics; it calls us to seek justice for all, especially the vulnerable. Jesus’ greatest commandment—to love God and neighbor—demands that we put others’ well-being on par with our own. Today, there is a deep hunger, particularly among young people, for a faith that engages with the real world. Faith communities have a vital role in guiding this vision.

Chapter 2: The Lion, the Word, and the Way

The way we understand Jesus shapes the Christianity we practice. If Jesus’ mission was to transform the world, then our faith must reflect that mission. Wallis critiques both conservative and liberal churches—conservatives often focus solely on personal salvation, while liberals sometimes struggle to proclaim Jesus as the Living Christ. However, Jesus is both a teacher and savior, and his kingdom is a reality meant to transform society.

Chapter 3: Who Jesus Is and Why It Matters

Jesus’ first sermon in Luke 4 defines his mission: bringing good news to the poor and setting the oppressed free. This gospel is not about personal escape to heaven but about creating a new order of justice and peace on Earth. Wallis argues that the "private-atonement gospel" misses Jesus’ deeper message—God is personal but never private. True faith should lead to both personal transformation and social action.

Discussion Questions

1. How did the practice of Loving-Kindness Meditation make you feel? What would happen if we lived each day with this mindset? How might it change the way we see others, especially those we disagree with?
2. “The kind of Jesus Christians believe in will determine the kind of Christianity they practice.” (pg 13) How does this statement challenge or affirm the way you live out your faith? What does Community of Christ’s understanding of Jesus say about our mission as a church?
3. Jim Wallis writes, “God is personal but never private... I have been distrustful of private gospels that refuse to address the world and its need to be changed.” (pg 57) How do you react to this? Is social justice an essential part of the gospel? What does that mean for us as disciples?
4. What would it mean if people of faith saw their primary identity as being part of God’s beloved community, rather than through class, race, or national loyalties? What would change in our world if Christians truly saw themselves as Christian first?
5. What does Jesus’ mission in Luke 4:18-19 mean for you personally? How are you called to live it out in your daily life?
6. How can Community of Christ better embody Jesus’ vision of compassion, justice, and liberation today?
7. What if our faith compelled us to actually do the things we say are important? How can we move from divisive religion toward a spiritual force for the common good? What would that look like in our congregations?

Practicing the (Un)Common Good: 5 Actions for the Week

Choose one of the following to do this week

Reflect & Journal – Choose one of the discussion questions from this week and write down your response. How is God challenging you? What personal shifts might be needed to align more fully with Jesus’ mission for justice, peace, and the common good?

Practice Loving-Kindness Meditation – Spend a few quiet minutes each day offering blessings of love and compassion—first to yourself, then to loved ones, then to those you struggle with, and finally to the world.

- [Loving-kindness meditation: what it is, how to practice and why — Calm Blog](#)
- [A Lovingkindness Meditation](#) with Sylvia Boorstein

Take a Sabbath from the Noise – Read the article [Opinion | The Joy of Quiet - The New York Times](#). Pick a day to step away from social media and news. Use that time to pray, be present with loved ones, or simply rest. Reflect on what changes in you when you pause from the distractions of the world.

Live the Beatitudes – Read Matthew 5:3–12 and choose one beatitude to intentionally embody this week. Whether it’s being merciful, working for peace, or standing with the oppressed, put Jesus’ teachings into daily action.

Engage in a Common Good Project – Take one small, concrete step to serve your community. Organize a gathering to discuss issues of justice, join a local service project, or connect with a nonprofit supporting the vulnerable. Jesus’ mission is lived together—what can you do with others to make a difference?

Closing Poem

Lessons in Trying to Save the World

By Nikita Gill

If you name it hope instead of impossible.
If you hold it with tenderness.
If you call it the blessing of your ancestors.
If you look around and see the faces
of everyone you love
Trying to save the world with you.
Then this work becomes love.
And even mountains will move.

Other Resources

- [Community of Christ: Make My Joy Complete](#) Sermon by Scott Murphy
- [Who is Jesus to Me](#) Leading Congregations in Mission
- [Walter Brueggemann: Jesus Acted Out the Alternative to Empire | Sojourners](#)