

# Love & Fear

Dave Andrews

**‘The opposite of love is hate; but the obstacle to love is fear.’**

Albert Einstein, the famous scientist, stated that ‘one of the most important questions facing every individual is whether or not the universe is friendly’. It would appear that ‘most people do not believe that it is.’<sup>1</sup>

‘Fear is something we all experience’.<sup>2</sup> ‘No single instant is truly fearless - even the most loving or playful setting seems to hold some unseen promise of danger.’<sup>3</sup> ‘As human beings we naturally fear hunger, illness and injury. We also fear economic hardship, social disrepute, and abandonment. And we are afraid of the time when death will come to us or to our loved ones.’<sup>4</sup>

Wayne Muller, a psycho-therapist, says ‘Terrifying fears we inherit from our childhood refuse to fade away. The lies, the betrayal, the abuse, the desertion – we remember each moment in vivid detail. For the child who has been hurt, fear becomes a reflexive response.’<sup>5</sup>

‘Our childhood fears (are) compounded because the people who claimed to be the guardians of our safety were inevitably the same people who caused us hurt. So just as we learned to be afraid, we also came to believe that no one could be trusted give us shelter.’<sup>6</sup>

Ghassan Hage, an Australian anthropologist, says that, as Australians, we are also afraid that if we took the land we live in, others may want to take it too. He says that Australians have an underlying fear of revenge for the genocide our ancestors committed, de-colonisation by aborigines, and re-colonisation by migrants and refugees.<sup>7</sup> ‘We live our lives in fear, regardless of whether those fears are real or (not)’.<sup>8</sup>

Parker Palmer, a Quaker educator, says ‘Fear is the air we breathe. We subscribe to religions that exploit our dread of death. We do business in an economy of fear driven by consumer worries about keeping up with the neighbours And we practice a politics of fear in which candidates are elected by playing on voter’s anxieties about race and class.’<sup>9</sup> And we continue to ‘collaborate with these structures because they promise to protect us against one of the deepest fears at the heart of being human – the fear of having a live encounter with alien “otherness”.’<sup>10</sup>

Palmer says our fear of ‘having a live encounter with alien “otherness”’ is based on:

1. a fear of difference –

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<sup>1</sup> p36 David Benner Surrender to Love Downers Grove IVP 2003

<sup>2</sup> p 18 Wayne Muller Legacy Of The Heart New York Simon &Schuster 1992

<sup>3</sup> p 19 Muller

<sup>4</sup> p 18 Muller

<sup>5</sup> p 19 Muller

<sup>6</sup> p 20 Muller

<sup>7</sup> p48-52 Ghassan Hage Against Paranoid Nationalism Annandale Pluto Press 2003

<sup>8</sup> p 21 Muller

<sup>9</sup> p39 Parker Palmer The Courage To Teach San Francisco, Josey-Bass, 1998.

<sup>10</sup> p37 Palmer

- of someone or something “other” than ourselves challenging us.
2. a fear of conflict –  
a conflict that will surely ensue when the “other” challenges us.
  3. a fear of loss –  
we fear the loss of something of ourselves in a win-lose conflict.  
and, underneath,
  4. a fear of change –  
even if we accept the promise of unity in diversity, the prospect of conflict being instructive, and the possibility of “win-win” solutions and even “winning” through “losing”, we are still scared of the pain in the challenge to change our lives.<sup>11</sup>

At this point the anguished existentialist Albert Camus says ‘We are seized by a vague fear, an instinctive desire to go back to the protection of old habits.’<sup>12</sup>

Some fear is healthy. It may be a sign of openness, responsiveness, vulnerability, a willingness to take risks, and the possibility of scary, but significant change. But much fear is unhealthy. It alienates us from others and ourselves.

David Benner, a professor of Spirituality and Psychology, says ‘Fear works in such a way that the object of the fear is almost irrelevant. Fearful people are more alike than the differences between the foci of their fear might suggest.’<sup>13</sup>

‘When fear arises, we harden our bodies and our hearts, closing inward to protect ourselves. Sometimes we feel paralysed, unable to move; at other times we race around faster, trying to make ourselves into a moving target, something harder to hit. We build walls, call up armies, and pay governments to protect us from danger as we try to minimise the risks of being human.’<sup>14</sup>

‘When we live in fear of everything that may bring us harm, we effectively insulate ourselves from life itself – because sorrow, illness, injury and death are unavoidable ingredients in life.’<sup>15</sup>

‘*Fearful people live within restrictive boundaries.* They tend to be quite cautious and conservative. They also tend to be highly vigilant, ever guarding against moving out of the bounds within which they feel most comfortable.’

‘*People who live in fear feel compelled to remain in control.* They attempt to control themselves and they attempt to control their world. Often, despite their best intentions, this spills over into efforts to control others.’

‘*The fearful person may appear deeply loving, but fear always interferes with the impulse to love.* Fear blocks responsiveness to others. Energy invested in maintaining safety and comfort always depletes energy available for others.’<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> p38 Parker Palmer

<sup>12</sup> pp13-14 Albert Camus Notebooks 1935-1942 New York: Marlowe, 1996

<sup>13</sup> p40 Benner

<sup>14</sup> p 18 Muller

<sup>15</sup> And the irony is – that ‘when we live in fear, regardless of whether those fears are real or imagined...we produce tremendous levels of stress...which lowers our resistance to disease and actually bring about the illnesses we fear the most.’ p 18 Muller

<sup>16</sup> p40 Benner

According to the sage Aussie cartoonist, Michael Leunig, we only have two options - love and fear. We can choose one or the other - but not both.

'There are only two feelings.	Love and fear.
There are only two languages.	Love and fear.
There are only two activities.	Love and fear.
There are only two motives.	Love and fear.
There are only two results.	Love and fear.
	Love and fear.' <sup>17</sup>

If we allow fear to dominate our lives it destroys our capacity to love others. As the songwriter Amanda McBroom put it in her classic love song 'The Rose' :

'It's the heart afraid of breaking  
that never learns to dance.  
It's the dream afraid of waking  
That never takes a chance.  
It's the one who won't be taken  
Who cannot seem to give.  
And the soul afraid of dying  
That never learns to live.'

Albert Camus says if we draw back because of our fear, we may miss out on our moment of enlightenment. 'We are seized by a vague fear, an instinctive desire to go back to the protection of old habits. *At that moment we are feverish but also porous, so the slightest touch makes us quiver to the depths of our being. We come across a cascade of light and there is eternity.*'<sup>18</sup>

According to Alfred Lord Tennyson: '*He that shuts Love out, in turn shall be shut out from Love, and on her threshold lie, howling in the outer darkness.*'<sup>19</sup>

The language the poet uses may be hyperbole, but social observers, like Ghassan Hage, would say that is exactly what Australia, as a nation, has done. We have chosen to reject '*caring*' which always includes a concern for others as well as ourselves. And, consequently, all we are left with is, what he calls, '*worrying*' – a *narcissistic preoccupation with our own safety and security.*'<sup>20</sup>

### **'Love - and love alone – is strong enough to overcome fear.'**

Palmer says 'all great spiritual traditions originate in an effort to overcome the effects (of fear) on our lives. With different words, they all proclaim the same core message: "*Be not afraid*".'<sup>21</sup> Muller says, 'the phrase "Be not afraid" is found the Christian New Testament more than three hundred times.'<sup>22</sup>

'It is important to note with care what that core teaching does and does not say. "*Be not afraid*" does not say – we should not *have* fears. It says, we do not need to *be* our fears.'<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Michael Leunig *A Common Prayer* North Blackburn Collins Dove 1990

<sup>18</sup> pp13-14 Camus

<sup>19</sup> Alfred Lord Tennyson cited by Michael Leunig in *A Common Prayer*

<sup>20</sup> p3 Hage

<sup>21</sup> p57 Palmer

<sup>22</sup> p 22 Muller

<sup>23</sup> p57 Parker Palmer *Let Your Life Speak* San Francisco Jossey-Bass 2003

But how is it possible to *have* our fears, but to not *be* our fears - not be afraid?

## 1. We can face our fears.

'We fear what can harm us, but fear may often arise when we unexpectedly encounter those things that would heal us.' As when we 'inadvertently bump into God'. 'Just because (we are) afraid does not mean (we are) in danger'.<sup>24</sup>

Muller says, 'We may actually feel safer when we move *toward* those things that frighten us, not when we move *away*.'<sup>25</sup> As Palmer says 'If you can't get out of it, get into it.'<sup>26</sup> As we move closer to our fears, accept them, explore them, and examine our response to the anticipation of danger, we may begin to discover that we have within ourselves all that is required to feel safe.<sup>27</sup>

*'Many of our fears are based on ignorance, or prejudice, rather than reality. These fears can be dispelled simply by coming to terms with the facts. For instance, more often than not, getting to know our neighbours can dispel our fear of getting involved with them'.*

'A little while ago a friend of mine wanted to get involved with a person in the community with a disability. But he was afraid of getting involved, because he felt awkward around people with disabilities. He didn't know anybody with a disability, and he didn't know how to relate to anybody with a disability. He was embarrassed to admit it, but he was actually quite scared. However, after I was able to introduce him to a neighbour with a disability, and they were able to spend some time together, he discovered, to his delight, that his neighbour with a disability was pretty much like him. His fear, based on ignorance, totally disappeared in the light of his discovery of their common humanity.'<sup>28</sup>

But not all fears are so easily dealt with. Some of our fears are imagined. But some are not. How do we deal our fears when the nightmare is not imagined but a reality?'

## 2. We can play off our fears.

Sometimes we can overcome a real fear by playing off another one against it.

From time to time I've found myself in frightening situations - when the reality *is* a nightmare - and I've been scared to death to have to deal with the reality.

And now and again I've found playing off my fear of what would happen if I *didn't* get involved - against my fear of what would happen if I *did* - actually broke the deadlock, and freed me from my fear of getting involved with the situation!

'One night I was walking down the street and came across a man being attacked by a couple of hoods, who were stabbing him with the jagged shards of a broken bottle. His face was already covered in blood. And the hands he used to protect his face were already badly cut and bleeding. I thought, if someone doesn't do something soon, this chap could be cut to pieces.

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<sup>24</sup> p24 Muller

<sup>25</sup> p28 Muller

<sup>26</sup> p84 Palmer

<sup>27</sup> p29 Muller

<sup>28</sup> p98-99 Dave Andrews Not Religion But Love Oxford Lion 2003

I looked up and down the street. But no one else was around. I knew I it was up to me to do something myself; but, I must confess, I was tempted to just to walk on by. To pretend that I hadn't seen anything warranting my attention, let alone my intervention. I was afraid, terribly afraid, and my fear was well founded. It had a strong basis in fact. There were two men across the road trying to kill someone, and if I tried to help him, chances were that I could be killed too. After all, there were two of them; and only one of me. They looked like street fighters; and I looked like the wimp that I was. I had no weapon, and wouldn't know how to use one if I had one; and they had shards of sharp glass, that they wielded as wickedly as the grim reaper himself might have swung his scythe.

*'Fear such as this should not be dismissed. Because fears based on reality act as a basic reality tests for our intentions. Sometimes it is better to run away and fight another day, than to die for nothing at all. However, this was not one of those times. This time someone's life was at stake. And watching the man get cut to pieces, callously, from a safe distance, and not lift a finger to help him, was a far more terrifying prospect for me than trying to help him. So I wrapped the tattered rags of my makeshift courage around me, and, with trembling hands, wobbly knees, and a heart ringing like an alarm bell, crossed the road to intervene in the fight.*

'I didn't rush over and try to crash tackle the assailants. That only ever works in the movies. And even then it doesn't work all the time. I simply walked to within ten metres of the melee, propped, and said from a safe distance the most inoffensive thing I could think of the time, which was, 'G' Day.' The ant-agonists immediately turned I my direction. Now I had their attention I tried to distract them from further hurting their victim. But the trick was to do it without them harming me instead. So I said to them, in as friendly a tone as I could muster, 'Can I help you?' The aggressors looked at one another, then at me, and laughed. They thought it was a big bloody joke. 'Does it look like we need any help?' they asked facetiously. 'No.' I said very carefully. 'It doesn't look like *you* need any help. But, it looks like *he* might need some help. What d'you reckon?' By now they had stopped stabbing their prey, and, in answer to my question, shrugged their shoulders, and said, 'Well *you* help *him* then!'

With that, they walked off, and left me to care for the mutilated man on the side of the road. He was seriously injured, but at least he was alive. And so was I.

'I've intervened in many violent situations in my life. Sometimes I've been beaten up so badly I've had to be hospitalised. One time I had to be rushed in for emergency surgery. But that was when I was younger, and intervened more aggressively, and unconsciously escalated the spiral of violence in the situation. Now I'm older, I'm a little wiser. *These days I am very wary about intervening. And when I do, I am very careful to do it as peacefully as I possibly can. My fear doesn't usually stop me. But it slows me down. Which is what fear ought to do. Not stop us. But slow us down. And make us more careful about the way we go about getting involved with people.*<sup>29</sup>

Which is all very well. *But, the fact is, that these days I am more fearful than I have ever been in my life before. And my fearfulness actually stops me from getting involved with people more often than I would like to admit to others, or even to myself. And my faith – which has always been the light of my life – is often not adequate in itself to help me overcome my dreadful sense of fear.*

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<sup>29</sup> p97-101 Dave Andrews Not Religion But Love

I can relate to the final words in the Gospel of Mark, which says of the followers of Christ, that after all that they had said and done, *'they were (still) afraid.'*<sup>30</sup>

*Which isn't really surprising, since anyone who plays the fear of 'one who can kill the soul', off against one 'who can kill the body,'<sup>31</sup> is still going to be fearful.*

How can we deal with not just a particular fear, but our general fearfulness?

### **3. We can cast out our fears...**

#### **a) with greater faith**

'Fear is our response to pain in the future.'<sup>32</sup> 'Fear arises when we believe we will not be strong enough to handle the pain we will be given. We don't have faith in our ability to hold our own against the sufferings and the sorrows the world can bring.'  
'We approach each day of our lives with tremendous anxiety'<sup>33</sup>

'In the Christian scriptures there is a story about Jesus and his disciples crossing the sea of Galilee in a small boat. Suddenly a great storm rose up, the winds tossed the boat to and fro, and the boat began to fill with water. The disciples were overcome with fear; yet Jesus remained asleep. The terrified disciples woke Jesus. Jesus said *"Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?"*

'In the middle of great danger, Jesus was at peace. *The disciples could not rest until the danger had been extinguished, while Jesus' sense of safety rested in a deep faith that all would be well – even in the midst of the storm.*<sup>34</sup>

'What do we mean when we use the word *faith*? We may begin by noting that in most ancient scriptural texts, the word faith is not a *noun* but a *verb*. Faith is not something one person *"has"* and another *"doesn't"*; *faith* is a way of being'.

'It is a way of discovering a place inside us where we are in intimate conversation with what is deepest in our spirit, where we listen to the still small voice of our soul, where we are in a compassionate relationship with what is strong and (good) inside us'.<sup>35</sup>

'Faith is not a fortress against danger, (but) a quiet place of deep trust. It is not a magic formula that prevents suffering; it is a place of strength where we feel most present in heart.'<sup>36</sup> 'The Buddhist word for faith, *sraddha*, literally means "to put one's heart on". It is etymologically akin to the Latin *cor*, (or "heart") from which we derive the word "courage". The practice of faith is clearly the practice of a strong and courageous heart.'<sup>37</sup>

'Genuine faith is born of the ability to trust in what is most fundamentally true within ourselves. Circumstances will change, and all manner of things pleasant and unpleasant will arise and fall away; sometimes our lives will be touched with joy, and

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<sup>30</sup> Mark 16:8

<sup>31</sup> Matt 10:8

<sup>32</sup> p24 Muller

<sup>33</sup> p25 Muller

<sup>34</sup> p25Muller

<sup>35</sup> p26 Muller

<sup>36</sup> p33 Muller

<sup>37</sup> p27 Muller

at other times we will be given sorrow. Many times we will be afraid. Faith is not about trusting in a God who will rescue us from hurt, or who – if only we believe strongly enough – will make everything better. The object of faith is to find the spirit within, the divine strength that lives in the deepest part of ourselves, in which we can place our ultimate trust, (and) gently allow the fear and pain to simply move through us'.<sup>38</sup>

'It is a place to which we go when all feels lost, when our strategies have finally failed, and the world has become unmanageable. Then, in despair, we turn inside, in search of our deepest strength. It is a place that others rarely see. This place of inner fortitude has been our most trustworthy ally for much of our lives, yet it is a place to which we go with remarkable infrequency. Only when we are terribly frightened do we go deeply inward to that place.'<sup>39</sup>

'As we cultivate faith we become more able to accept whatever we are given. Regardless of whether we are given, pleasure or pain, we gradually come to feel confident we are resilient enough to endure the perils of being human.'

'Throughout our lives, our jobs will change, our bodies will grow old, people will come and go. Nothing will stay. And yet in the midst of it all, we can still breathe, our hearts beat, we remain present and alive. The courageous heart feels it all, yet remains assured that within ourselves, all will be well.'<sup>40</sup>

'True safety is not the absence of danger, but the presence of a sense of faith, born in the heart, and sustained by a spirit of serenity (through) trust.'<sup>41</sup> 'That, despite the hurts we are given, somehow, within ourselves, all will be well.'<sup>42</sup>

## **b) in God's love**

*'For the Hebrews, faith involved a deep trust in the watchful love of God for all God's children. According to the Prophet Isaiah, even in the midst of the most terrible circumstances, those whose hearts are centred in God's faithful care "shall renew their strength, they shall mount up on wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint".'*<sup>43</sup> (Isaiah 40:13)

*'Perfect love is the one thing that has the potential to heal us of our fears.'*<sup>44</sup> John says his experience of perfect love created a place in his inner landscape where he could live without fear; and when he chose to live in the light of this experience of perfect love, he was able to love without fear. He says: *'The one who fears is not made perfect in love. Perfect love casts out all fear'*<sup>45</sup>

*But where do we find perfect love in an imperfect world?* 'Adult love inevitably re-connects us to our earliest experience of infantile dependence on our parents. And no parent is perfect, and no one's earliest experiences of love are absolutely and consistently positive'.<sup>46</sup> 'Parents are unable to carry the burden of offering perfect

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<sup>38</sup> p27 Muller

<sup>39</sup> p30 Muller

<sup>40</sup> p33 Muller

<sup>41</sup> p28 Muller

<sup>42</sup> p29 Muller

<sup>43</sup> p27 Muller

<sup>44</sup> p44 Benner

<sup>45</sup> 1 John 4:18

<sup>46</sup> p44 Benner

love to their children, as are children to their parents'. *It is a mistake to expect perfect love from humans.' This can only be met in God.'*<sup>47</sup>

*'There is no other source of love but God'. 'While human love can never bear the weight of our need for divine love, it can teach us about divine love. Human love can communicate divine love. Experiences of human love make the idea of God's love believable. The relative constancy of the love of family and friends makes the absolute faithfulness of divine love at least conceivable.'*<sup>48</sup>

*'Only perfect love can completely cast out fear. And since God's love alone is perfect love, there is no substitute for learning what love really is by coming back to the source. God's love is the original that shows up the limitations of all copies. Only his love is capable of making us into great lovers.'*<sup>49</sup>

For John, *perfect love* – the love *which casts out all fear* – can only be found only in the *perfect love of God*. *'God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God. We love because (God) loved us. We rely on the love God has for us.'* 1 John 4:16,18

*'If God is love, he cannot be known truly apart from love. He cannot therefore, be known objectively.'* He can only be known subjectively. *'Genuine knowing - personal knowing – involves much more than head knowledge. It involves the heart. One can encounter divine love only up close and personally.'*<sup>50</sup>

*'It is possible to know God's love personally, beyond simply knowing about it.'* *'On being asked if he believed in God, the great archetypal psychoanalyst, Carl Jung, reportedly answered, "I don't believe in God - I know God!"'*<sup>51</sup>

Gerald May said *'There is no leap of faith into this knowing. This (personal) knowing involves a leap – some would say a quantum leap –beyond faith.'*<sup>52</sup> Will And Spirit (Cincinnati Harper & Row 1983)

John says that it is *not faith itself - but a leap of faith-beyond-faith into love* - that helped him overcome his fear. He says: *'In love there can be no fear.'*<sup>53</sup>

*'When we live our lives by acting out of this deep place of knowing (that we are loved), when we listen to the voice that speaks to us (of love), then we may truly begin to practice faith.'*<sup>54</sup>

*'It is not the fact of being loved that is life-changing. It is the experience of allowing (our selves) to be loved.'*<sup>55</sup> *This experiential knowing of our selves as deeply loved by God deepens our thoughts with new data about our world, and deepens our feelings with new attitudes towards our world. We know that at the heart of the universe is the heart of God, and the heart of God is a heart of love, we can trust God, take risks, and embrace the world that we live in.*

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<sup>47</sup> p84 Benner

<sup>48</sup> p84 Benner

<sup>49</sup> p85 Benner

<sup>50</sup> p28 Benner

<sup>51</sup> p28 Benner

<sup>52</sup> p135 May

<sup>53</sup> 1 John 4:18

<sup>54</sup> p32 Muller

<sup>55</sup> p76 Benner

*'Only love (like this) can free us from the tyrannising effects of fear. Only love (like this) can renew trust where it has been shattered. Only love can soften a hard heart. Only love can inspire acts of genuine self sacrifice.'*<sup>56</sup>

### **c) through Jesus Christ**

'Christian spirituality is not a set of beliefs – or a list of obligations. First and foremost it is a relationship. It is a journey toward union with God' .<sup>57</sup>

*'I am convinced God comes to us as love, in love for love',<sup>58</sup> 'that God wants the intimacy of friendship, not our fear. God comes to us with gestures of love, hoping to eliminate fear, not manipulate us through it. And he offers his love as the one thing in the universe capable of making an otherwise hostile cosmos into a friendly home. He offers his love as the one thing in the universe capable of freeing us from our fears.'*<sup>59</sup>

*The creation story is a love story. 'It begins with the Spirit hovering over the unformed elements of creation (like) a bird nurturing new life that is forming under her (care)'. ' Love is our source and love is to be our fulfilment.'<sup>60</sup> And the redemption story is the love story continued. 'Realizing we had forgotten our story, God sent Jesus as the personification of love'<sup>61</sup>. He said he came to gather people together again, as a bird gathers her chicks under her wings.*

However, we have reduced the great love story to systematic theology and substituted dogma for encounter. So that the God who comes up close and personal to us in Jesus feels as distant and as impersonal as ever before.

'Jesus described himself as "the Way" to God. The image of journeying with Jesus highlights (the fact) Christians are not simply commanded to go somewhere or other or do something or other. They are invited to follow Jesus.'<sup>62</sup>

'Union is not fusion. My becoming united with Christ does not annihilate my being as a separate self. Rather, *I find my truest and deepest self in Christ, and this "me-in-Christ" (indeed this "we-in-Christ") becomes my new self.*<sup>63</sup>

The change envisaged in becoming this "we-in-Christ" cannot be described as self improvement - but nothing less than 'death and resurrection of the self'.<sup>64</sup>

*'The truth of Christ's life is that life is love and love is life. There is no genuine life without love.'*<sup>65</sup> *In Christ, we are called not just to receive love, and to give love, but to become love. 'He wants us to be lovers because love is his way.'*<sup>66</sup>

'Love is the acid test of Christian spirituality. If Christian conversion is authentic, we are in the process of becoming more loving. If we are not becoming more loving something is seriously wrong. Love is the single most important criterion of spiritual

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<sup>56</sup> p10-11 Benner

<sup>57</sup> p105 Benner

<sup>58</sup> p13 Benner

<sup>59</sup> p37 Benner

<sup>60</sup> p21 Benner

<sup>61</sup> p25 Benner

<sup>62</sup> p107 Benner

<sup>63</sup> p108 Benner

<sup>64</sup> p72 Benner

<sup>65</sup> p93 Benner

<sup>66</sup> p90 Benner

transformation. Christian conversion is not merely encountering love. Nor is it developing new ideas about love. Nor is it committing my-self to trying to be more loving. Christian conversion involves becoming love<sup>67</sup>

*'Growth in love always involves movement beyond the hardened boundaries of the isolated self to the selves-in-relationship that make up community'*<sup>68</sup>

*'Love that comes from the heart of God connects us to his creation. (His) heart of love moves me from the isolation of self-interest to a connection with life that cannot allow any ultimate divisions'. 'It does not allow me to limit my interest to those within my tribe – whether those tribal boundaries are understood in religious, ethnic or national terms. Instead it leads to a sense of oneness with all human beings'. 'Love cannot exclude concern for (global) social justice. Nor can it exclude ecological concern for the planet.'*<sup>69</sup>

*'Love that comes from the heart of God connects us to all God's children. No longer can I close my eyes to the things that hold them in bondage. If God's heart has truly become mine, their bondage is mine. If one person suffers, all suffer'. (1 Cor.12:26) As Nelson Mandela says, "the chains on all my people were the chains on me". My identity is grounded in human solidarity.'*<sup>70</sup>

*'Christ teaches us that love is setting aside one's life for another' - 'not just saying yes to someone, but also saying no to self' in order to say yes. 'We want a spirituality of success and ascent, not a spirituality of failure and descent. But the way of the cross is the way of (failure,) descent and death'. 'Christian love only emerges from the journey through the cross. There are no short cuts that allow us to bypass the cross on the Christian spiritual journey.'*<sup>71</sup>

*'Love alone is capable of making a person willing to give up his or her own life in loving others.'*<sup>72</sup> *'Only love can free us from the tyrannising effects of fear. Only love can renew trust where it has been shattered. Only love can soften a hard heart. Only love can inspire acts of genuine self sacrifice.'*<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> p90 Benner

<sup>68</sup> p93 Benner

<sup>69</sup> p94 Benner

<sup>70</sup> p94 Benner

<sup>71</sup> p91 Benner

<sup>72</sup> p91 Benner

<sup>73</sup> p10-11 Benner

## **Ideas For Meditation And Action.**

### **Meditation – Cultivating A Place Of Safety**

‘Find a comfortable sitting position in your place of refuge. Allow yourself a moment to relax, then gently close your eyes. Let your awareness come to your breath, noting the sensations of rising and falling as the air moves in and out of your body. Allow the rhythm of your breathing to bring a sense of calm.

‘Take a few moments to scan your body from within. Beginning at the top of your head and very slowly moving downward, note the variety of sensations that are occurring in your body. Feel the top of your skull, your forehead, eyes, mouth, tongue, and teeth. Feel the bones and muscles of the jaw, neck, and shoulders. Take as much time as you need, noticing any tension or relaxation that arises as you focus your awareness on each area.

‘Allow your awareness to drift downward through the chest, back, arms, wrists, hands, and fingers. Let your attention move through the internal organs of the stomach, the kidneys, the intestines. Feel the lower back, the pelvis, the pressure of your buttocks on the ground. Be aware of the thighs, knees, ankles, feet, and toes. Keep noting any sensations you discover as you make your way through your body.

‘When you are finished, allow your attention to rest gently back on your breathing for a moment or two. After you have centred yourself fully in the breath, you may try the following meditation.

‘Ask your mind to allow an image of safety to emerge from deep within you. Allow an image to arise in which you feel absolutely, completely safe. It may be a place, a person, or a time in your life. Simply allow a picture to emerge in your awareness in which you feel totally protected, nurtured, and safe from all harm.

‘As the image arises, what does it look like? What do you notice about the colour, the temperature, and the texture? Are you alone or with someone? What do you feel when you are in that picture? Let the experience surround you like a soft garment, allowing yourself to linger for several moments, letting yourself feel the full comfort of being absolutely safe and protected.

‘After some time, choose a place in your body where you may anchor the image. Imagine that you are actually placing that image somewhere in your body, somewhere it will remain and stay with you always. It may be in your chest, your heart, your arms, legs, or hands - in short, anywhere you feel it will be most helpful, where you will have access to that image whenever you need it. Anchor it deep and strong in your body, so that it may be a constant companion.

‘When you feel you have the image planted within you, slowly allow your awareness to return to your breathing, letting the image become a part of you. No longer separate, it lives inside you. With each breath, allow the image to find a permanent home in your body. ‘After a while, continuing to let your awareness rest on the breath, you may gently open your eyes.

‘When you are finished, you may want to try drawing the image of safety that arose. With an easy and playful attitude, take a few minutes to visually record your experience of safety with some simple drawing materials like crayons or pastels.

Don't be afraid of not being an accomplished artist - just choose the most potent images and colours, and draw what you saw and felt.

'If you like the drawing, you may place it somewhere you can see it often, perhaps in your bedroom. Use it as an additional reminder of the place of safety you hold continuously within yourself.'<sup>74</sup>

### **Meditation – Exploring Fear in the Body**

'The next time you feel afraid, instead of watching for the danger outside yourself, focus instead on your breath for a moment. Using your breath as the centre of your attention, first let yourself become aware of the physical sensation of breathing as your abdomen rises and falls, as your lungs expand and contract. As you begin to relax, let the object of fear arise in your heart. With-out allowing the fear of it to overcome you, let whatever is causing fear to simply exist as an image in your mind, without judgment and with out trying to change or eliminate it. There is no need to protect yourself from this moment. At the same time, keeping your attention centred on the breath, let your breath become the mountain of equanimity, the place within you that remains un-moved.

'As the fear arises, we may simply note its coming: "Ah, fear, fear. There it is again." Then we may explore the feelings that arise: Where is the sensation , strongest? In the chest, the muscles, the belly? What additional images arise along with the fear? Watch where the fear stays longest, watch as it begins to recede. Simply investigate this fear, making peace with the sensations that arise. If we resist the urge to protect ourselves and move gently into the experience of fear, what other sensations or impulses arise?'

'As each h impression or sensation arises, silently acknowledge it to your self.. "Fear, fear" - or "tightness, tightness." You may also make a note of your thoughts:"Despair, despair" or "ruin, ruin." With each breath, begin to make peace with whatever you have been given, opening your heart to the possibility that this may not be a disaster but simply an unexpected variation in the colour or texture of your day. Perhaps there is no danger at all, merely a shift in sensations. Practice this for several minutes, observing how your body and heart respond as you bring mindful awareness to the sensations of fear.

'You may end this exercise with a meditation on equanimity. You may 'recite the serenity prayer: "God grant me the serenity to accept those things I cannot change; the courage to change the things I can; and the wisdom to know the difference."

'You may also repeat, silently within yourself: "May I be balanced and at peace. May I be undisturbed by the changing events of my life and the world around me. May I have faith in the strength of the spirit within me."

'Acknowledge to yourself that all created things arise and pass away - joys and sorrows, pleasant events, unpleasant events, friends, loved ones - even whole nations will come and go. 'May I learn to see the arising and passing away of all things with equanimity and balance. May I have faith in the spirit within me. May I be open, courageous, and peaceful.'<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> p35-36 Muller

<sup>75</sup> p36-37 Muller

## Meditation – On The Love Of God In The Bible

*We are like the fish, in a Sufi story, who anxiously swim around looking for water - till they realise they are swimming in it. Once we realise that we are immersed in 'the river of God's providential love,' we can learn to 'float in it'. To float we don't have to do anything - but let go. 'Floating is putting your full weight on the water trusting that you will always be supported.'* <sup>76</sup> *The confidence we need to have in order to let go - and float in the river of God's love - comes from 'letting God's love wash over me' and 'from soaking in the script-ural assurances of such love', 'not simply trying to believe them'.* <sup>77</sup>

'Meditation is like spiritual daydreaming. Rather than analyse a passage, simply soak in it. There is no need to do anything with the words you read. Instead let them do something to you. Let the words wash over your heart.'<sup>78</sup>

'Spend some time meditating on passages that speak of God's love.'

-  Psalm 23
-  Psalm 91
-  Psalm 131
-  Isaiah 43:1-4
-  Isaiah 49:14-16
-  Hosea 11:1-4
-  Matthew 10:29-31
-  Romans 8:31-39

## Meditation - On The Love Of God In The Life Of Jesus.

'Meditation on Jesus' life can help you further ground yourself in perfect love'.

'Let the following brief scenes lead you into meditative daydreaming. Picture yourself in each situation. Observe, listen and note all the sensory elements of each scene. Notice your feelings. And pay close attention to Jesus. Allow the experience to begin to teach you about being deeply loved. And as you do so, begin to face the fears that have held you back from surrender to this love.

'Matthew 19:13.15. Join Jesus as people bring little children to him to be blessed. Hear the disciples as they scold the parents, telling them not to bother the Master. Then hear the words of Jesus: "Let the little children alone and do not stop them coming to me; for it is to such that the kingdom of heaven belongs." Picture yourself

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<sup>76</sup> p61-63 Benner

<sup>77</sup> p79 Benner

<sup>78</sup> p32-33 Benner

coming to Jesus as one of those little children. Crawl up on his knee and feel his touch as he lays his hands on you and blesses you.

'Matthew 22:1-14. Read these words about the invitation to a wedding feast as if they were an invitation to you to bring all the lame, broken and fearful parts of yourself into the banquet of love being prepared for you by the God of perfect love. Dare to bring these neglected parts with you. There is a space reserved for each, and each is welcome in the circle of God's love. Allow these neglected parts of yourself to enjoy the warmth of God's love as they are honoured with special treatment.

'Mark 6:45-52. Join the disciples in the boat as they face a mounting storm. Notice Jesus walking on the water toward you. Hear his words of comfort: "Courage! It is I. Do not be afraid." Then observe as he gets in the boat with you and the others, and as the wind-and your fears-suddenly decreases.

'Luke 12:22-32. Listen to these words of Jesus as if they were spoken for the first time directly to you. Pay close attention to what Jesus says about how valuable you are to him. Hear his love for you, and notice how it feels to bask in this love. Feel yourself rest in the love of a Lover God who promises to care for your every need and give you much more than you could ever dare to expect.'<sup>79</sup>

### **Meditation - On A World With And Without Love.**

'Take some time to think about the difference love makes in your life. Allow the following to help you do so.

'Reflect on a world without love - a world with human beings not made in the image of God and a world into which God did not enter or to which he did not reveal himself. Allow yourself to imagine the despair of life in such a world without love.

'Contrast this to the world in which you live. Allow the Spirit to bring to your mind the panorama of people who have loved you or prayed for you across your life. Think about what each has taught you about the nature of Love.

'Then reflect on the ways you have experienced God's love directly and personally. Picture yourself soaking in this love, and notice what changes within you.

'Finally, ask God to help you identify ways you still hide from his love. Think of how you could spend more time snuggling with Jesus, allowing his love to heal your deepest pockets of shame and brokenness. Ask also for his help in identifying the weak and inferior parts of yourself that you are reluctant to invite into the banquet of love God wishes to host within you. And ask him to show you the next steps he wishes to lead you to on the transformational journey of surrender to Perfect Love'.<sup>80</sup>

### **Meditation - On The Growth Of Love In Our Own Lives.**

'The story that can best help you reflect on the question of transformation through and into love is your own. Take some time to think about your own journey of transformation into the loving heart and character of God.

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<sup>79</sup> p50-51 Benner  
<sup>80</sup> p86-87 Benner

'Try to be brutally honest in answering the following questions. Pretending is not the same as being. Accept no substitutes for the heart of the God who is love and who wants to make his heart ours.

1. What difference does God's love of you make in your life and relationships? Is your love of others increasing? If not, consider whether you really know God's love or merely know about it.
2. Is God's love moving you beyond the comfortable sphere of caring only for your own kind of people to deeply care for all people? As God's heart becomes your heart, expect that his love of the whole world (John 3:16; 1 Timothy 2:4) will become your love.
3. How would you describe your own love of God? Is it growing, and is devotion increasingly your motive for obedience? Or is it limited or nonexistent? If the latter, does something in your spirit respond to God's Spirit with longing for a real love relationship with God? What steps might you want to take to respond to such a longing?'<sup>81</sup>

**Meditation - 'Treat others as you would be treated yourself.'** <sup>82</sup>

People of all religions, all over the world know that - there are no short cuts; that there are no quick fixes; and that we cannot hope to develop community unless we 'do unto others as we would have them do unto us'

<b>The Golden Rule</b>	<i>Hinduism</i> 'Never do to others what would pain you' <i>Panchatantra</i> 3.104	<i>Buddhism</i> 'Hurt not others with that which hurts yourself.' <i>Udana</i> 5.18	<i>Zoroastrianism</i> 'Do not to others what is not well for oneself.' <i>Shayast-na-shayast</i> 13.29
<i>Jainism</i> 'One who neglects existence disregards their own existence' <i>Mahavira</i>	<i>Confucianism</i> 'Do not impose on others what you do not yourself desire.' <i>Analects</i> 12.2	<i>Taoism</i> 'Regard your neighbour's loss or gain as your own loss or gain.' <i>Tai Shang Kan Ying Pien</i>	<i>Baha'I</i> 'Desire not for anyone the things you would not desire for yourself.' <i>Baha'Ullah</i> 66
<i>Judaism</i> 'What is hateful to you do not do to your neighbour.' <i>Talmud, Shabbat, 31a</i>	<i>Christianity</i> 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you'. <i>Matthew</i> 7.12	<i>Islam</i> 'Do unto all people as you would they should do to you.' <i>Mishkat-el-Masabih</i>	<i>Sikhism</i> 'Treat others as you would be treated yourself.' <i>Adi Granth</i>

'In Taoism the call is *descriptive*. 'Regard your neighbour's loss or gain as our own loss or gain.' In Jainism the call is *instructive*. 'One who neglects existence disregards their own existence'. In Hinduism, Buddhism,

<sup>81</sup> p102-103 Benner

<sup>82</sup> Adapted from In-Situ Community Education p 12-13

Zoroastrianism, Confucianism, Judaism and Baha'i the call is *imperative* and it is framed *in negative terms*. 'Never do to others what would pain you.' 'Hurt not others with that which hurts yourself.' 'What is hateful to you do not do to your neighbour.' 'Do not impose on others what you do not yourself desire'. 'Desire not for anyone the things you would not desire for yourself.' While In Christianity, Islam and Sikhism the call is *imperative* and it is framed in *positive terms*. 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you'. 'Do unto all people as you would they should do to you'. 'Treat others as you would be treated yourself.'<sup>83</sup>

Consider your answer to these questions:

1. What version of the saying can you relate to best?
2. How do you interpret this saying?
3. Why is it important to you?

### **Meditation - 'Not as you are treated – but as you would be treated.'**

Now, 'to treat others as we would like to be treated' is, as we all know, not at all easy. But 'to treat others as we would like to be treated' when others have 'not treated us as we would like to be treated' is excruciatingly difficult to do. Yet *'treating others as we would like to be treated' is at the very heart of compassionate community work!*

Some modern psychologists like Sigmund Freud would say 'to treat others as we would like them to treat us' when others have 'not treated us as we would like to be treated' is *impossible*.<sup>84</sup> But other modern psychiatrists, like Viktor Frankl, would say *it is not only possible, but it is most imperative where it would seem most impossible!*

'We who lived in the concentration camps can remember those who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number but *they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from us but the last of human freedoms - the freedom to choose our spirit in any circumstance*.'<sup>85</sup>

While Sigmund Freud tell us to 'love thy neighbour as thy neighbour loves thee', rather than 'love thy neighbour as thyself', Mahatma Gandhi insists that taking 'an eye for an eye' will only end up creating a short-sighted society in which the blind lead the blind.

The Buddha, Siddartha Gautama, gently reminds us, '*Hatred never ceases by hatred, but by love alone is healed. This is the ancient and eternal law of the universe*'.<sup>86</sup>

And Martin Luther King, the great 20<sup>th</sup> century civil rights campaigner, warns us 'never to succumb to the temptation of becoming bitter. *As you press for justice, be sure to move with dignity and discipline, using only the instrument of love*.'<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Adapted from *In-Situ Community Education* p 12-13

<sup>84</sup> S. Freud *Civilisation And Its Discontents*

<sup>85</sup> p 7J.Kornfield *The Art of Forgiveness, Lovingkindness and Peace*, Rider ,Sydney, 2002

<sup>86</sup> p 5 Kornfield

<sup>87</sup> p 82 Kornfield

So the art at the heart of community work is learning to overcome hatred with love.

Consider your answer to the following questions:

1. What do you think about the idea of 'overcoming hatred with love'?
2. How do you feel about using only 'the instrument of love' yourself?

### **The Disciplines Of The Heart.**

Overcoming hatred using the instrument of love in the struggle for justice requires learning the disciplines of the heart : <sup>88</sup>

<b>The disciplines of the heart.</b>	
<b>1.</b>	<b>Grieving</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>Giving Up</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>Forgiving</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>Letting Go</b>
<b>5.</b>	<b>And Loving</b>

#### **1. The discipline of grieving.**

If we are to learn to love in the midst of hate - or any other form of perfidy or duplicity – we need to grieve the tragedy of loving without being loved, as we would like, in return.

Grieving is the natural human response to loss. It helps feel the pain of the loss. And, in feeling the pain, helps us acknowledge, integrate, and accept the reality of our loss.

If we do not grieve well, we may get stuck in denying the reality, trying to negotiate our way through a situation that was already decided long ago, or raging against our fate. If we get stuck in denying the situation we are in, trying to negotiate our way out, or raging ferociously against our fate, we simply will not be able to deal with the reality well.

There are many ways to grieve. Some of us prefer to sit with it in silence. Some of us prefer to talk it out. Some of us prefer to sing it through. And others of us prefer just to wail away. Whichever way we prefer to do it, our grief is usually drenched with tears!

#### **A meditation on grieving.**

Create a comfortable atmosphere. If possible in semi-darkness. Sit on your own, or with a friend. Once seated, attend to your breathing. Take one hand and hold it gently to your heart, as if you are holding a precious but fragile human being in your

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<sup>88</sup> This section is based on J.Kornfield The Art of Forgiveness, Lovingkindness and Peace, Rider ,Sydney, 2002

hands. You are- your self. As you continue breathing, bring to mind a loss you grieve. Let the story of the loss unfold. Allow the feelings associated with it to surface and flow. Let the feelings they have come one by one. Hold them. Name them. And honour them. Touch them tenderly. Treat them kindly. Then let their tears begin to take them away.

*'When after heavy rain the storm clouds disperse,  
is it not that they've wept themselves clear to the end?' Ghalib<sup>89</sup>.*

## **2. The discipline of giving up.**

The idea of giving up is generally repugnant to people working for social change. But in order to work for change well we need to give up many things along the way. Among the many things we need to give up along the way is all hope of a better past.

Maybe things could have been better; maybe they should have been better; but though we might be able to change the future for the better, we simply cannot change the past.

We must not forget the past. We must remember it order to learn from it. But we cannot live in the past anymore than we can live in the future. We can only live in the present.

It is only as we give up all hope of creating a better past, and live our lives as faithfully as we can in the present, that we give ourselves a chance of creating a better future.

### **A meditation on giving up.**

Create a comfortable atmosphere. If possible in low light. Sit on your own, or with a friend. Once seated, attend to your breathing. Remember a moment of disappointment in the past. Take a piece of paper and write down the event that occurred. Reflect on the event - what happened and what the impact of it was. Then, on a separate piece of paper, write down the main lesson you learned from it. Put the two pieces of paper side by side – the event and the lesson. Choose to give up trying to change the event, but take the lesson to heart. Put the piece of paper on which you wrote about the event to one side; but hold onto the paper on which you wrote the lesson you learned.

*It is only as we give up all hope of creating a better past,  
and live our lives as faithfully as we can in the present,  
that we give ourselves a chance of creating a better future.*

## **3. The discipline of forgiving.**

We know that we can't change the past. We know that can't undo the pain.

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<sup>89</sup> p 58 Kornfield

However, some of us try to heal the pain we have suffered by inflicting pain on the people who made us suffer. As if *their* suffering more would somehow result in *our* suffering less.

But the desire for *revenge* usually only serves to *increase* the suffering of the victim. If we do not forgive our tormentors, we will continue to be tortured by our resentment.

*Forgiving is not forgetting. We must remember suffering and learn from our suffering. We shouldn't associate with our tormentor, unless we are sure they won't torment us.*

*Forgiving is not fooling. To the contrary, its smart. Its a way of maintaining our sanity. As we forgive the unforgiveable we release the love that alone can heal the wounds.*

#### **A meditation on forgiving.**

Create a comfortable atmosphere. Set the scene with a small candle. Sit on your own, or with a friend. Once seated, attend to your breathing. Start by visualizing the ways you have hurt others. See the pain you have caused others - knowingly or unknowingly. Feel the sorrow, shame, guilt and regret you feel about this. Picture each person that comes to mind, one by one, sense their suffering, and say:

*'I remember many ways I have hurt others. I recognize the pain I have caused. I ask for your forgiveness, I ask for you forgiveness, I ask for your forgiveness'.*

Continue by visualizing the ways others have hurt you. See the pain others have caused you - knowingly or unknowingly. Feel the sorrow, anger and resentment you feel about this. Picture each person who comes to mind, and, as your heart is ready, say to them:

*'I remember many ways others have hurt me. I have carried this pain in my heart long enough. To the extent that I am ready, I offer those who hurt me forgiveness. I offer you my forgiveness, I offer you my forgiveness, I offer you my forgiveness'.*

Forgiving is not a weak reaction, but it is a strong courageous constructive response. As it says in the Gita:

*'If you want to see the brave, look for those who can forgive.'<sup>90</sup>*

#### **4. The discipline of letting go.**

Letting go is just letting things be as they are. Not holding onto anything that would hold us back from moving on and becoming the human/humane person we are called to be. 'When we learn just to let things be as they are they gradually lose their power over us'.

Letting go is not cutting off. It is not cutting ourselves off from ourselves. From our memories or our responsibilities. It is not cutting ourselves off from others. From our families or our communities. But it is letting go of our disappointment and despair.

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<sup>90</sup> p 26 Kornfield

### **A meditation on letting go.**

Create a comfortable atmosphere. Set the scene with a small candle and a metal bowl. Sit on your own, or with a friend. Once seated, attend to your breathing. Remember some reactions that you feel it is time to let go of. Name them (eg sadness, resentment, anxiety, anger, etc). Hold these feelings with tenderness in your heart one more time. Then, when you are ready to let these feelings go, write them down. When the list of feelings you want to let go of is finished, think about the benefits that will come from letting these feelings go - once and for all. Take paper on which you have written the list of feelings you want to let go of, set them on fire with the candle and burn them burn in the metal bowl. At the same time, take the paper that you put to one side, on which you had written about the event you wanted to give up on, and burn it to ashes in the bowl. As the smoke rises like incense say *'Let it go. Let it go. Let it go.'*

*'If you let go a little, you will have a little happiness.*

*If you will let go a lot, you will have a lot of happiness'. Ajahn Chah<sup>91</sup>*

### **5. The discipline of loving.**

*Loving is treating others - not as we have been treated - as we would like to be treated.* It is extending the same kind of acceptance and respect and resolute positive regard to others that we would like ourselves. It is creating the same kind of opportunities for others to participate in community - and realise their potential - as we would like ourselves.

### **A meditation on loving.**

Create a comfortable atmosphere. Set the scene with a small candle. Sit on your own, or with a friend. Once seated, attend to your breathing. Begin with yourself. Picture yourself and pray for yourself repeatedly:

*'May I be filled with loving kindness for myself.'*

When you are ready, move on to people you like. Picture them and pray for them repeatedly:

*'May I be filled with loving kindness for you.'*

If there are any particular feelings of gratitude you feel for them, just give thanks. When you are ready, move on to people who you don't like. Picture them and pray for them repeatedly:

*'May I be filled with loving kindness for you.'*

If there are any particular feelings of irritation you feel for them, hold them gently.

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<sup>91</sup> p 54 Kornfield

*'Like a caring mother holding the life of her only child so with  
a heart of loving kindness hold all beings as your beloved children.'*

Buddha<sup>92</sup>

On the wall of the home for the dying Mother Teresa had a liturgy for loving:-.

### **Anyway.**

**People can be unreasonable, illogical and self-centred.  
Love them anyway.**

**If you do good, people will accuse you of selfish motives.  
Do good anyway.**

**The good you do today will be forgotten tomorrow.  
Do good anyway.**

**People really need help but may attack you if you help them.  
Help people anyway.**

**If you are successful, you win false friends and true enemies.  
Succeed anyway.**

**What you spend years building may be destroyed overnight.  
Build anyway.**

**Give the world the best you've got; it may never be enough;  
But give the world the best you've got anyway.**

*Anonymous*

### **Contemplation In Action - Trust Your Intuition**

'The following is an exercise many people have used with much success. Resolve to go through an entire day trusting that your intuitions are reliable. As you approach each situation, ask yourself the questions - If I knew (my intuition) was trustworthy, how would I handle this moment? What could I say that would be true? What would be the right action to settle this situation with safety and clarity? Once we begin to imagine that we have all we need to answer the questions of life, it is amazing how quickly our fears melt away.'<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> p70 Kornfield

<sup>93</sup> p32 Muller