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## Course Description

Our personal interactions can be elevated to the level of *loving* service when we practice in the manner that Jesus did—with faith in God and in others, and selflessly as a unified balanced personality. Service might be done out of duty, but it is enhanced by a sincere intention to have empathy, patience, tolerance, forgiveness, and to affirm “It is my will that God’s will be done.” When we strive to *love* and *serve* as Jesus did there is a sense of *joy* and *peace* that truly passes understanding.

This course begins at the foundation—one’s attitude toward self—and then brings students around to a study of Jesus’ unified and balanced personality before taking a look at the example that Jesus set for the most effective *loving* service to others. Along the way, students will practice intentionally following Jesus’ example. There will be exercises that bring about greater personality balance and opportunities for practicing loving service in everyday life.

This course is designed to be taken slowly. It does not just teach the theory of loving service but provides opportunities for the real-life application of what is taught. Improving how one serves does not happen overnight. Throughout the course, there are recommended places to pause the lesson and practice integrating loving service so that you can more fully embrace this holistic approach.

## Meet Your Course Developer

Arlene Weimer, PhD, Clinical Psychology

I was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1943 into an orthodox Jewish family. My parents emigrated from Poland and Ukraine in the early 1920s while fleeing the pogroms (large, anti-Jewish massacres) that took place in those countries. I grew up with the value of doing mitzvahs (good deeds). I was drawn to visiting people who were sick and comforting them physically as well as emotionally. Around age five, I began listening as my mother expressed her grief over having lost her first child (a

daughter) to polio 15 years prior to my birth. My mother's well-being came first and I became overly altruistic, denying many of my own needs and unique identity.

When I was 17 years old, I rejected Judaism because of the fear and guilt perpetuated by a belief system that espoused a wrathful and strict God. I threw out God with religion. For 10 years I believed I could live a good life through education and humanitarian work.

In 1970 I received a PhD in Psychology and Gerontology, but despite my education, I was still struggling to know the truth about what contributes to well-being and happiness, and constitutes a well-lived life that all people share regardless of culture. So my husband (Buck) and I went on a three-year travel adventure that brought us to a personal experience of a loving God who was guiding and guarding us. In 1973 I was introduced to The Urantia Book by one of my students in a psychology class on Personality when teaching at Florida Technological University now Florida Institute of Technology . I immediately shared the book with Buck and both of us became lifelong students of its teachings.

Through the book, I found Jesus who showed me for the first time how to have a personal relationship with God. I began to feel the true joy of selfless service when I turned to God asking for guidance on who and when to serve others which allowed me to achieve a better balance between self-care and selfless service.

In 1974, we moved to Colorado where I worked at the Colorado State Hospital as Chief Psychologist of the Geriatric Division and taught psychology at the University of Southern Colorado. In 1975 we began hosting a weekly Urantia Book study group which we continue to the present. In 1978, while beginning to raise our three sons, I went into private practice as a licensed clinical psychologist to the present.

Buck and I have been involved in Urantian service organizations over the years and I was on the International Fellowship Committee. Our service work has taken us to several foreign countries in Asia, India, Nepal, Africa, Croatia, and South America. I also serve on Urantia University's Board and as a UUI Instructor, teaching several

online classes including “Jesus the Human Father” and “Spiritual Living,” and I have been one of the facilitators for the UUI Café.

Most Important: Click the NEXT button at the bottom of each and every Learning Unit page once you have finished reading the page.

## **Instructions to Students**

In this class you will be asked to:

- Complete the assigned readings and videos
- Respond to the questions in a journal
- Practice the using the Four Principles of Loving Service in real-life
- Engage in the meditation, prayer, and worship

This course is intended to be taken at a relaxed pace. Many exercises will take several days to complete in order to have opportunities to practice the skills in your normal environment. Recommended places to “pause” are found throughout the course.

## **Learning Outcomes**

During this course you will...

1. Consider the elements that elevate dutiful service to the level of being loving service.
2. Explore your own self-compassion and understand what affects your attitudes toward others.
3. Practice incorporating the Four Principles of Loving Service as illustrated by Jesus.
4. Learn about qualities of Jesus’ personality that led to effective service and grow in the development of those qualities yourself.



## I. Introduction

### **A Definition of Loving Service**

Service may be undertaken for a number of complex reasons. It can have a self-serving motive such as: it is fun and pleasurable, it provides a sense of pride, a person might be seeking approval or salvation, or simply because it is convenient. Some motives for service can even be caused by an avoidance of negative emotions like guilt, anger, shame, and anxiety. But loving service is an attitude which propels one toward selfless, joyful, and compassionate action. It is a natural outgrowth of divine love working through God's children.

Loving service is more than an act of benevolence, it is an attitude which elevates our actions and interactions, making the act of serving all encompassing and more satisfying. Those who develop an attitude of loving service follow in the footsteps of Jesus, the finest example of one who truly saw those whom he interacted with as his brothers and sisters. Through the intentional development of a relationship with our loving divine parent, we develop a desire to do good for others and engage in acts of loving service, with the intention of doing God's will.

## **Loving Service Mindset**

### **Finding our Place in the Family of God**

The Urantia Book emphasizes that the realization of our place in the family of God contributes to enhanced service. It states,

170:3.9 (1862.6) ...the consciousness of being a member of the family of believers leads inevitably to the practice of the precepts of the family conduct, the service of one's brothers and sisters in the effort to enhance and enlarge the brotherhood.

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The family of God begins with the parent-child relationship, which we experience with God. As children, we can feel secure in the love and overcare of our divine parent. We crave a relationship with God. In spending time with God, as it is with time spent with any loving parent, our relationship grows. As we learn to be conscious of this inner experience in each moment of the day, as we become aware that every action we take is a sacred experience when done in partnership with our divine parent, then God's love will work its way outward in our attitudes toward others.

As the Urantia Book states, "The experience of loving is very much a direct response to the experience of being loved" (2:5.8 (39.7)). Thus it is, that from the parent-child relationship stems the sister-brother relationship which we can share with all of humankind. As children of God, our minds would be well prepared for loving service if we can recognize and wholeheartedly embrace an understanding of all of humankind within the sister-brother framework. This relationship is brought to life in the doing of God's will through loving service. We may not have a direct line to God's will, but if we allow God to expand our awareness of truth, beauty and a

desire to do good to others, and then we base our decisions on those same values, we are on the path of loving service.

A part of loving service includes self-care—caring for ourselves physically, intellectually, emotionally, socially and spiritually. You, like everyone who you wish to serve, is a child of God, and as such are deserving of compassion and love. Your body needs to be cared for just like every other body. Your mind needs stimulation and rest, and your spirit needs the pleasures of time spent with God.

Your mind and your body are the tools that you have for serving in the world. A carpenter takes care of his tools; you too, should take care of yourself.

110:6.4 (1209.4) It is to the mind of perfect poise, housed in a body of clean habits, stabilized neural energies, and balanced chemical function...that a maximum of light and truth can be imparted....

Take that “light and truth” out into the world. Serve with your body, your mind, and your heart.

Within this mindset we become sincerely interested in getting to know and love others, and we become more passionate about, and effective at, serving them. This is made apparent by the life of Jesus, whose great and deep understanding of a person’s mind and heart resulted in loving service. Through the practice of loving service, we can become more skilled at recognizing and being responsive to other people's physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual needs. Like Jesus, who was a reflection of God’s love, we can learn to have a mindset of being merciful, forgiving, peacemaking and self-forgetful, while always respecting a person’s free will.

Fully realizing, accepting, and leaning into one’s place in the family of God happens in stages, and we can see aspects of how this acceptance is made apparent by

looking at the life of Jesus. His masterful portrayal of living in the family of God can be seen in his:

1. Living Faith
2. Faith in People
3. Trustworthiness and Loyalty
4. Moderation and Mindfulness
5. Self-Mastery

## **Self-Assessments**

These self-assessments will give you a better understanding of your strengths and provide you with a baseline for your present level of self-compassion. The Self-Compassion Assessment Scale will be repeated at the end of the course as a measure of progress.

Self-Compassion Assessment Scale  
by Kristen D. Neff

Self-compassion is related to many qualities of loving service. Studies have indicated that people who have higher levels of self-compassion are more empathetic, accepting, non-judgemental, authentic, respectful of and connected to others, caring, forgiving and open-hearted. Self-compassion increases one's awareness, processing and acceptance of one's feelings, and increases one's ability to make wise choices based on God's will.

The following scale will give you a sense of the extent to which self-compassion is a part of your life. Later in this course, techniques will be offered on how you can improve your self-compassion as part of engaging in loving service.

Rate yourself on the [Self-Compassion Assessment Scale](#) by Kristen D. Neff.

## **Help with Enhancing Self-Compassion**

By sharing our inner, authentic life with loving, trustworthy, and accepting friends—confessing some of our negative thoughts and feelings—we grow in self-understanding, -compassion, -mastery and -forgetfulness. When we allow our negative thoughts to silently fester, we may judge ourselves more harshly than we judge others. A friend can help you “to see yourself as others see you,” widening your perspective and being more objective. In the act of sharing intimately we realize we are not alone and have similar responses to life situations—physically, emotionally, mentally, socially, and spiritually (48:6:25 (553.6)).

160:2:8 (1776.2) Isolation tends to exhaust the energy charge of the soul. Association with one’s fellows is essential to the renewal of the zest for life and is indispensable to the maintenance of the courage to fight those battles consequent upon the ascent to the higher levels of human living. Friendship enhances the joys and glorifies the triumphs of life. Loving and intimate human associations tend to rob suffering of its sorrow and hardship of much of its bitterness. The presence of a friend enhances all beauty and exalts every goodness.

## **Character Strength Survey**

The Character Strength Survey facilitates self-compassion by recognizing, appreciating, and developing our talents. Research has shown that each person has potential for success in specific areas. Knowing your strengths will help you express and accept your unique way of doing God’s will in lovingly serving others.

The VIA Institute of Character offers a well-designed and helpful online Character Strength Survey, which is a “simple self-assessment that takes less than 15 minutes and provides a wealth of information to help you understand your core characteristics. Most personality tests focus on negative and neutral traits, but the VIA Survey focuses on your best qualities.”

Go to the VIA site and take the 15-minute [Character Strength Survey](#). You will need to register with your email address.

### **Recommended place to pause**

*Take this course at a pace that is comfortable for you so as to incorporate it into your life.*

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## **II. Qualities of Jesus' Unified and Balanced Personality**

When considering how we can better live our lives, The Urantia Book revelators tell us to turn to the example of Jesus. This may seem like an impossible directive to some—they may wonder how they can possibly live up to the example of a Creator Son—but this underestimation of one's own potential may be caused by an emphasis on Jesus' perfection. But, it is pointed out in The Urantia Book that the defining feature of his personality was the balance that he struck within himself. "The unique feature of the Master's personality was not so much its perfection as its symmetry, its exquisite and balanced unification" (100:7.1 (1101.5)).

One of the ways in which Jesus was well unified was in the way he lived the balance between his human self and his divine self. This is a quality that we can achieve as well. Our divine selves—our budding souls, inner spirits, and connecting minds—are to be harmonized with the work and joys of being human. Balance of inner development and outer service will propel us down a path of ever-increasing and symbiotic spiritual growth, and efficacy in loving service.

There are some significant qualities of Jesus' inner life and outer service that support a balanced personality. These include:

1. Living Faith
2. Faith in People
3. Trustworthiness and Loyalty

4. Moderation and Mindfulness
5. Self-Mastery

Any of these qualities can be practiced and developed. By following the example of Jesus, we will come closer to that “symmetry” and “balanced unification” that was exhibited so splendidly during Jesus’ time as a fellow mortal.

## **Living Faith**

Jesus’ faith was the very foundation of his unified personality. He was in constant communion with the Father-God which kept the desire to do God’s will foremost in his mind, making him ever watchful for ways in which he could improve the lives of those around him. The care that he put into serving others, and the attitude of cheerfulness which he brought to his acts of service, made him a living model of God’s love. From his early days as he helped his family navigate emotional and financial hardship following the death of Joseph, to his last days of awaiting his arrest, Jesus was propelled toward acts of service by his living faith, an active “certainty” of the “guidance and protection of the heavenly Father” (196:0.9 (2088.4)). As children feel trust and security in the overcare of their parents, Jesus had complete trust and security in God’s love and watchcare.

Jesus’ faith grew organically over time in the same way that our faith grows as we nurture and engage with it. Over time, we may change the way in which we weave together our relationships with God and the act of service. But, for spirit-growth the two are mutually dependent and are necessary for maintaining a healthy, balanced mental state. Faith and service are the warp and the woof of weaving a superb human life. Jesus addressed this when he instructed people to “Seek first the kingdom of heaven” and when he placed, in *The Believer’s Prayer*, the words, “Your kingdom come; your will be done” (196:0.8 (2088.3)). We are to grow in faith and strive to do God’s will.

How to know and do God’s will is one of the great questions that truth-seekers will ask themselves. While there is no black and white answer to that question, *The Urantia Book* does share with us how Jesus carried out God’s will. As a unified personality, he was informed both by his faith and his human experience. The

revelators describe Jesus by saying, “Always did the Master co-ordinate the faith of the soul with the wisdom-appraisals of seasoned experience” (196:0:7 (2088.2)).

In doing the will of God—serving our brothers and sisters effectively and with love—we will need to exercise the wisdom of the mind and trust our Thought Adjusters to guide us. But throughout all of our activities, we will also need to be fully grounded in the faith that with God all things will be made right, that we are cared for, and that we walk with a partner throughout all of our days.

### Supplemental Resources

1. What the Apostles Loved Most About Jesus

### Assignments

1. Read “Marks of Religious Living” and “The Acme of Religious Living.” 100:6-7 (1100.3)
2. Complete the Personal Assessment Guide: Perfected Lines of Jesus Personality.
3. Respond to the following questions in your journal.
  - Which qualities of Jesus do you most admire?
  - Which of Jesus’ qualities do you feel you need to develop in order to be of loving service?
  - Which traits do you wish to develop in yourself?

### Faith in People

Jesus’ living faith in God moved him to embrace an attitude of trust, understanding that when following God’s will all will turn out well for the greatest number of people over the longest period of time. But Jesus also had faith in man, an attitude which caused him to have complete respect for individuals and to trust that they have, within themselves, the ability to grow spiritually, learn from their mistakes, make wise decisions, and express love and goodness toward others even when it is difficult, when their fears are triggered.



Jesus had this faith in each mortal since he knew the truth that we are children of God and that each one of us carries a part of God within us. Like the genetic imprint that all children carry as a result of their parentage—and which contains powerful properties that guide our material development—children of God carry within themselves the Father’s own Thought Adjusters, our personal guides to our spiritual growth. When an individual chooses to do God’s will, that individual gets the courage, guidance, and strength to accept, adapt and grow from life’s challenges. Jesus’ faith in man grew out of his faith in God.

Jesus, as a reflection of God’s wise and fatherly love, respected each unique personality and their free will. He listened with compassionate understanding while always looking for the best in the individual. “A father’s love need not pamper, and it does not condone evil, but it is always anti cynical. Fatherly love has a singleness of purpose, and it always looks for the best in man; that is the attitude of a true parent” (140:5:12 (1574.5)).

**What’s the difference between faith in God and faith in people?**

Faith in God refers, in part, to the knowledge that God will be with us through our experiences and help us to grow from them. It follows then, that faith in people refers to the knowledge that God is also within others and, when allowed, will help them to grow from their experiences. We should love them as our spiritual brothers and sisters and give them the freedom to make their own choices.

There is a distinction that must be made between faith in people and blindly trusting those who have not earned our trust. People can become better, but they are not yet at their best. They (like us) will not always make good choices and we should continue to exercise good judgment when interacting with them.

When Jesus saw a man mistreating his wife in public, Jesus intervened on behalf of the wife, while showing respect and compassion for the angry man. Jesus, getting the husband's attention, gave him the choice to talk privately. At the start of their conversation, Jesus disarmed the man not with a reprimand, but with an acknowledgement that the man is capable of admirable acts. Jesus said, "I venture to say that, if you found me out by the wayside, attacked by robbers, you would unhesitatingly rush to my rescue. I dare say you have done many such brave things in the course of your life" (133:2:1 (1470.2)). Then, with sincere interest Jesus invited the man to share. Jesus listened, asking questions to help the husband become more aware of how his wife triggered his embarrassment (shame) and consequent angry response. The interaction ended with the man promising to return to the practice of his spiritual path.

We aren't told how successful the man was in keeping his promise in the days, weeks, and years following this single conversation with Jesus—domestic abuse is a complicated and difficult pattern to break. But at least for that moment, Jesus' faith in the man's better nature brought relief to the struggling couple. People responded positively to his attitude of deep respect. We're told that those whom he connected with "had unbounded confidence in him because they saw he had so much faith in them" (171:7.5 (1874.8)). We are encouraged to do the same for ourselves and for others.

### **“Instruction for Teachers and Believers”**

159:3.1 (1765.3) At Edrei, where Thomas and his associates labored, Jesus spent a day and a night and, in the course of the evening’s discussion, gave expression to the principles which should guide those who preach truth, and which should activate all who teach the gospel of the kingdom. Summarized and restated in modern phraseology, Jesus taught:

159:3.2 (1765.4) Always respect the personality of man. Never should a righteous cause be promoted by force; spiritual victories can be won only by spiritual power. This injunction against the employment of material influences refers to psychic force as well as to physical force. Overpowering arguments and mental superiority are not to be employed to coerce men and women into the kingdom. Man’s mind is not to be crushed by the mere weight of logic or overawed by shrewd eloquence. While emotion as a factor in human decisions cannot be wholly eliminated, it should not be directly appealed to in the teachings of those who would advance the cause of the kingdom. Make your appeals directly to the divine spirit that dwells within the minds of men. Do not appeal to fear, pity, or mere sentiment. In appealing to men, be fair; exercise self-control and exhibit due restraint; show proper respect for the personalities of your pupils. Remember that I have said: “Behold, I stand at the door and knock, and if any man will open, I will come in.”

159:3.3 (1765.5) In bringing men into the kingdom, do not lessen or destroy their self-respect. While overmuch self-respect may destroy proper humility and end in pride, conceit, and arrogance, the loss of self-respect often ends in paralysis of the will. It is the purpose of this gospel to restore self-respect to those who have lost it and to restrain it in those who have it. Make not the mistake of only condemning the wrongs in the lives of your pupils; remember also to accord generous recognition for the most praiseworthy things in their lives. Forget not

that I will stop at nothing to restore self-respect to those who have lost it, and who really desire to regain it.

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159:3.9 (1766.5) In preaching the gospel of the kingdom, you are simply teaching friendship with God. And this fellowship will appeal alike to men and women in that both will find that which most truly satisfies their characteristic longings and ideals. Tell my children that I am not only tender of their feelings and patient with their frailties, but that I am also ruthless with sin and intolerant of iniquity. I am indeed meek and humble in the presence of my Father, but I am equally and relentlessly inexorable where there is deliberate evil-doing and sinful rebellion against the will of my Father in heaven.

159:3.10 (1766.6) You shall not portray your teacher as a man of sorrows. Future generations shall know also the radiance of our joy, the buoyance of our good will, and the inspiration of our good humor. We proclaim a message of good news which is infectious in its transforming power. Our religion is throbbing with new life and new meanings. Those who accept this teaching are filled with joy and in their hearts are constrained to rejoice evermore. Increasing happiness is always the experience of all who are certain about God.

159:3.11 (1766.7) Teach all believers to avoid leaning upon the insecure props of false sympathy. You cannot develop strong characters out of the indulgence of self-pity; honestly endeavor to avoid the deceptive influence of mere fellowship in misery. Extend sympathy to the brave and courageous while you withhold overmuch pity from those cowardly souls who only halfheartedly stand up before the trials of living. Offer not consolation to those who lie down before their troubles without a struggle. Sympathize not with your fellows merely that they may sympathize with you in return.

159:3.12 (1766.8) When my children once become self-conscious of the assurance of the divine presence, such a faith will expand the mind, ennoble the soul,

reinforce the personality, augment the happiness, deepen the spirit perception, and enhance the power to love and be loved.

## Assignments

Spend a few days practicing faith in people. Use [this worksheet](#) to guide you.

### **Recommended place to pause**

*Take this course at a pace that is comfortable for you so as to incorporate it into your life.*

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## **III. Trustworthiness and Loyalty**

Jesus' trustworthiness was grounded in his superb respect for others, his self-mastery and self-forgetfulness. He was courageously loyal, being committed to loving God and serving his fellow beings. His loyalty and trustworthiness were expressed in consistent, reliable actions, and being emotionally dependable and responsive to others. The more trustworthy we are, the greater our service.

28:6.16 (316.3) The privilege of service immediately follows the discovery of trustworthiness. Nothing can stand between you and opportunity for increased service except your own untrustworthiness, your lack of capacity for appreciation of the solemnity of trust.

As a brother-father, Jesus was responsible for fathering his siblings and helped them become independent. He was consistent in his actions and dependable in responding to the physical, financial, emotional, intellectual, social, and spiritual needs of his siblings and his mother. Some might say that Jesus sacrificed his youth to the care of his family, but dutiful sacrifice is not the attitude which Jesus bore while holding this responsibility—rather, it was loving service.

180:1.6 (1945.3) It is loyalty, not sacrifice, that Jesus demands. The consciousness of sacrifice implies the absence of that wholehearted affection which would have made such a loving service a supreme joy. The idea of duty signifies that you are servant-minded and hence are missing the mighty thrill of doing your service as a friend and for a friend. The impulse of friendship transcends all convictions of duty, and the service of a friend for a friend can never be called a sacrifice.

Jesus was often tried by his brother Jude, who had a tendency to get into trouble with the Roman authorities. In one instance, Jude confronted a Roman soldier who made a rude comment about a Jewish girl. This demonstration of disrespect resulted in his arrest. Jesus stayed with him during this time, argued on his behalf before the magistrate, and even though Jude would continue to find trouble for a while after this incident, Jude eventually calmed down and developed more self-control. But even well into adulthood, Jude “never forgot the patience and forbearance his brother-father manifested throughout the whole of this trying experience” (128:6.8 (1416.1)).

It was not just what Jesus did for Jude that he was remembered, but how he did it. Jesus served with loving loyalty, not grudging duty. Jesus was compassionate towards everyone, responsive to people’s needs, tenderhearted, merciful, forgiving, a peacemaker willing to be persecuted for righteousness sake. He was a trustworthy, devoted, loyal and loving friend to all, making loving service a supreme joy.



## Assignments

1. Read about The Solemnity of Trust and The Sanctity of Service. 28:6:13-19 (315.6)
2. Read Excerpts from “The Two Crucial Years” and “The Adolescent Years”
3. Reflect on the following prompt in your journal.
  - Two qualities of trust are consistent behavior over time and being emotionally dependable and responsive to other people's needs. With that in mind, consider an important relationship in your life and evaluate yourself on consistency and dependability on a 5-point scale 1 being the least and 5 being the most consistent in your behavior and being emotionally available and responsive to the needs of others.
  - In that relationship, consider what you can do to make progress in becoming more trustworthy.

## Moderation and Mindfulness

The balance between self (self-care) and selflessness is challenging to achieve and ever-changing. To be truly selfless we need to practice self-care by being mindful of

and compassionately responding to our own needs, while at the same time recognizing the needs of others.

There is a spectrum between self and selflessness. On one end is the experience of being overly selfless—caring about others with little respect and compassion for yourself. The Urantia Book warns "...the altruistic drive may become so overdeveloped as to work serious injury to the welfare of the self" (103:2:10 (1131.9)). Too much selflessness can result in doing too much for others. It can manifest as feeling used, angry, anxious, powerless, burned out, depressed, and not being true to yourself. The results may be reduced energy and time for engaging in loving service toward others.

On the opposite extreme is selfishness—being self absorbed, self-centered, withdrawing love, and acting without considering or respecting other people. There are underlying physical and psychosocial reasons why people act in this way, but selfishness is not an attitude that is healthy for the individual or the community. The Urantia Book reminds us that "Brotherhood is impossible on a world whose inhabitants are so primitive that they fail to recognize the folly of unmitigated selfishness" (52:6:4 (597.5))

But, in the middle of the spectrum lies a healthy balance between respecting and caring for oneself as well as others. When we are able to achieve a balance between selflessness and selfishness, we base our loving service on God's will—we are inspired by our highest values and enact the greatest good for the personalities involved. When making reflective, sincere decisions about how to balance our lives we experience more energy, well-being, joy, and peace of mind.

Developing a mindful awareness of how to balance our lives will go a long way in maintaining our own mental health and free us to engage in more loving service.

How can we approach the level of personality balance as was exhibited by Jesus?

Mindfulness, along with a prayer and worship habit, can help us to deepen our awareness and spirit-intuition about what an appropriate thought or action is at any given time.

Mindfulness is the practice of being open to all experiences in the present moment, with understanding sympathy and compassion for yourself and others. When we are mindful we are maintaining a non-judging, moment-by-moment awareness of our thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surrounding environment.

Mindfulness is not limited to formal meditation; it can be a part of daily life, as well. Being mindful in the moment, we are more objective and are compassionately aware of our thoughts rather than believing our fears about the future and regrets about the past. We respond more creatively to the present experience, and feel more grateful and at peace.

One might speculate that the human Jesus practiced mindfulness alongside his constant communion with the Father. We don't need to look far to see how Jesus engaged in selflessness—he served others each day as he passed by. But he also engaged in self-care by taking himself and his apostles away for periods of rest and instituting Wednesday as a day of rest. True, there were late nights when he stayed up to talk with eager souls, but his mindful awareness allowed him to be flexible in time allotment when needed, and capable of drawing a firm line when it was required.

His mindfulness—his constant communion with God—made it possible for him to make wise decisions concerning relationships and practical aspects of life.

#### Process of Mindful Thinking

Be aware of negative thoughts.

1. Do your thoughts inhibit compassion? Do you have thoughts that are self-critical, judgmental, generalizing, catastrophizing, or that could be described as black and white thinking?

2. What emotions are you experiencing? Do you have feelings that involve anxiety, shame, guilt, or anger?
3. Do your thoughts involve physical sensations that are associated with specific emotions? Do you experience anxiety, heart palpitations, shakiness, stomach upset, muscle tension, or headaches?
4. Do your thoughts affect your behavior? Do you indulge in thoughtlessness, selfishness, or saying hurtful things? Do you rush through your day with little regard for your needs? Do you have self-destructive habits or harmful addictions?

Be aware of positive thoughts.

1. Do your thoughts enhance compassion? Do you engage in thoughts of gratitude, acceptance of what is not in your control, and thoughts that reach for a higher Truth?
2. What emotions are you experiencing? Are you feeling calm, peaceful, joyful, or loving?
3. What physical sensations and behaviors are you engaging with? Are you mindful of the moment and balancing selfless service with self-care?

While engaging in worship, prayer, and mindful meditation you might find it valuable to focus on one of these topics:

- Feel the parent-child relationship with God
- Share your inner life with God
- Express gratitude
- Consider the human relationships of which you are a part
- Envision yourself through Jesus' eyes

Envision someone else through Jesus' eyes

Be mindful of your inner critical voice and shift it to an understanding and compassionate voice

Through mindful thinking, a person can become more aware of an imbalance of thoughts—thoughts that skew too much to the negative and cause people to fail to see the worth of themselves or others, or thoughts that skew too much to the positive and cause a person to fail to see areas in need of improvement. By paying attention to how we experience the moments of our days we can more thoughtfully engage with questions like:

- “What do I need in order to be a more balanced person?”
- “What is a balanced way to perceive this situation?”
- “What is a balanced response?”

### Supplemental Resources

Prayer and Worship quotations from the Urantia Book

There are many free and paid apps that support people in mindfulness. Insight Timer and Calm are two examples.

### Books

- *The Miracle of Mindfulness* by Thich Nhat Hanh
- *Living Untethered* by Michael Singer
- *Mindfulness for Bipolar Disorder* by William R. Marchand, M.D
- *How God Changes Your Brain* by Andrew Newberg, M.D. and Mark Waldman
- *Minding the Body, Mending the Mind* by Joan Borysenko
- *The Power of the Mind to Heal* by Joan Borysenko

### Assignments

#### Balance Between Selfishness and Selfless Service

1. Try [this quiz](#). This is a tool that you can use, along with your own spiritual awareness, to gain some insight into the current state of your balance between selfishness and selflessness.
2. Respond to the following questions in your journal.

- What are some internal and external conditions that predispose you to act out of selfishness rather than loving kindness?
- Consider ways in which you would like to grow in balancing self-care and selfless service. Give examples in your daily life.
- Envision yourself as a balanced personality. Write about the activities you would engage in to take care of your own needs and rejuvenate yourself. How would you spend your time in selfless loving service?
- What do you do to take care of your physical, emotional, intellectual, social and spiritual needs?

### **Recommended place to pause**

*Take this course at a pace that is comfortable for you so as to incorporate it into your life.*

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## **IV. Self-Mastery**

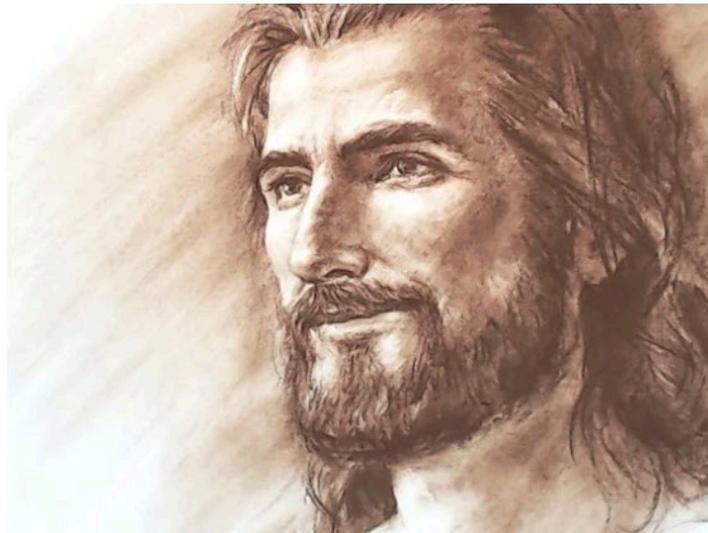
Self-mastery is the degree to which we, as humans, have control over our animal urges and emotions and the extent to which we act out of our higher spiritual nature by loving each other even as God loves us. Achieving self-mastery is a process that involves developing one's self-awareness, self-understanding, self-control, self-forgetfulness, and a growing desire to know God. "Self-mastery is the measure of man's moral nature and the indicator of his spiritual development" (143:2.3 (1609.4)).

Self-mastery is evident through the increasingly useful and joyful service we offer our fellows in this world and the next (155:6.14 (1733.2)). Those who have embraced the life of the spirit and who seek to know God will make moral decisions and enact spirit values in their everyday lives, bearing the fruits of the spirit (193:2.2 (2054.3)).

## Fruits of the Spirit

Loving service  
Unselfish devotion  
Courageous loyalty  
Sincere fairness  
Undying hope  
Confiding trust  
Merciful ministry  
Unfailing goodness  
Forgiving tolerance  
Enduring peace

To achieve these ends, the best example to follow is the life of Jesus. As he became increasingly aware of his divine self, he came to be of greater loving service to others. Because he was a master of himself he was able to consistently forget himself in conformity to God's will, always affirming "It is my will that your will be done."



Jesus' balanced and unified personality showed moderation in all things. He was "practical in all his ministry," free from "eccentric tendencies," was "surcharged with

divine enthusiasm, but he never became fanatical." He was "courageous but never reckless," "unique but not eccentric" and "so well-poised because he was so perfectly unified" (100:7 (1101.5)).

Developing self-awareness results in progress toward self-mastery and a desire to know and do God's will. Self-understanding helps us discern the factors that contribute to our human inconsistency between knowing and living the fruits of the spirit.

Some factors that retard our ability to live the fruits of the spirit are:

- neuro-chemical imbalance (110:6.4 (1209.4));
- residual animal traits (48:5.8 (551.3));
- negative thoughts and emotions (48:7 (556.1))
- lack of self-respect (159:3.3 (1765.5));
- and negative social/environmental factors.

Similarly, self-understanding helps us become aware of the factors that support us in living the fruits of the spirit and can include these arenas:

- physical health;
- emotional well-being;
- intellectual activities;
- social interaction;
- and spiritual satisfaction.

These practices can help us more effectively respond to life's difficulties in the masterful way Jesus did. They will aid us in our quest to: 1) progress in our own self-mastery, 2) commune more deeply with God, and 3) serve more completely with love.

Throughout his life, Jesus met the everyday experiences of disappointment, sorrow, and uncertainty with the same method: he allowed himself to experience his emotions, he shared them with a trusted confidant, and he talked with his father in

heaven. By cultivating the fruits of the spirit, Jesus was able to courageously face extraordinary trials with stalwart determination.

One of the most striking examples of Jesus' extraordinary self-mastery occurred in the Garden of Gethsemane just before his arrest. Jesus fully knew that if he continued down the path of doing his Father's will he would experience terrible physical pain. In addition, his friends, family, and followers would experience deep sadness at his death. In this moment, when Jesus was "so heavy-laden and sorrowful," his self-mastery balanced with an engaged emotional experience (182:3.1 (1968.2)).

In this instance, we see Jesus turning to his Father in heaven, the one friend who truly understood what would take place that evening. He prayed, "Father, I know it is possible to avoid this cup—all things are possible with you—but I have come to do your will, and while this is a bitter cup, I would drink it if it is your will" (182:3.2 (1968.3)).

Even while struggling in the Garden of Gethsemane to make the decision to leave this life and his apostles, Jesus chose to give up his human life in doing God's will rather than use his creator powers to save himself. After a lifetime of doing the Father's will, he was able to call on his faith, overcome fear, and forgive his executioners at the height of his crisis on the cross (187:2.4 (2007.3)). This was the supreme act of consecrating his will to God in being a living expression of God's mercy and love.

The true test of a person's self-mastery is demonstrated in how one responds in the face of difficulties and crises (100:2.7 (1096.4)). When our worst fears are triggered we tend to protect ourselves, mindlessly reverting to selfish habitual practices of a lifetime. In those times it is very difficult to do God's will and be loving. When we make decisions and act out of negative human emotions of fear, anger, guilt, and shame it is difficult for us to connect with and discern God's love and will, and do good to others in loving service.

Of course, most of the loving service that we engage in will not be so extreme as Jesus' death on the cross, but that shift from fulfilling a sense of duty to that of loving service does require an extra effort. It means pausing your own agenda to consider the real needs of others. It means setting aside your own desires in consideration of the greater good. It means honestly confronting and mastering your own imperfections while acknowledging your weaknesses and strengths. When you balance your humanity with the desire to serve, you can engage in thoughtful, spirit-led responses to others.

An example from my practice as a clinical psychologist

A middle-aged female client, who will be referred to as V, was stuck in feelings of grief after the death of her mother who she depended on for comfort and advice. She was inconsolable, crying daily, had difficulty sleeping and getting out of bed in the morning, and she wanted to die. Feeling shame about her feelings resulted in an increase of isolation—V was no longer reaching out to family and friends for support. But when she began counseling, it was helpful for her to have a trusted person to share her inner life with. V began to explore her feelings of anxiety, confessed her anger that her mother could have lived longer if she would have taken better care of herself. She also expressed guilt about her own irritability while serving as her mother's caretaker.

Through the process of sharing her feelings with a compassionate friend and developing more self-understanding, V began to have more compassion for herself. She had felt "terminally unique"—that no one else was as "crazy" as she was and that no one had grieved as long as she had. But as she began to understand the grieving process and learned that other people had similar emotional pain, V was able to normalize her experience of prolonged grief. When she first came to me, V held a belief that if she stopped grieving it would mean she didn't love her mother. This belief was one of the thoughts keeping her stuck in grief. I challenged this false belief by asking if her mother would question her love if she was happier. Of course, she said her mother loved her and wanted her

to be happy. V began to look at herself through the eyes, mind, and heart of a loving and all-forgiving God, and she renewed her faith practice.

Over the past two years V has made progress in using her faith and self-compassion in becoming more of a master of her self-critical inner voices, and has reduced her guilt, anger, and anxiety. She now is able to more quickly become aware of her negative ruminations. V can gather her inner strength by asking, "What does God want me to do?" Her feelings of joy have increased as she focuses on being kinder to her husband, more balanced in taking care of herself, setting boundaries with her daughter and four grandchildren, honestly sharing with a trusted friend, and serving customers at work several days a week.

For us to follow Jesus we must develop self-mastery. Jesus bluntly warned of the difficulties, dangers, and disappointments one may expect as his disciple. Faith and spiritual values, combined with self-awareness and compassionate self-understanding, lead to the devotion, loyalty, commitment and, consequently, the trustworthiness needed to represent Jesus and his love to the world. To know the peace of Jesus is to understand the satisfaction of a God-knowing individual who has achieved "learning of how to do the will of God."

#### Supplemental Resources

1. Fruits of the Spirit
2. Relaxation and Wellness Guided Meditation by Belleruth Naparstek

#### Assignments

Practicing the Presence of God is a spiritual exercise that challenges us to remain focused on God during an everyday task or chore, throughout the moments of our waking life. According to Brother Lawrence, the humble author of the spiritual classic, *The Practice of the Presence of God*, the presence of God is "a simple attentiveness and a general loving awareness of God... or to speak better, a silent and secret, constant intercourse of the soul with God." We can see that the many styles of meditation all contribute to this higher state of being and the habitual awareness that God is always with us as we go about our daily living.

First, read through these descriptions of different meditation styles.

In developing the practice of the presence of God, there are meditation styles that help to develop this ability, such as:

1. Focus – refers to the ability to concentrate on, or direct our attention to, a particular object, person, or the task at hand. This is different from the practice of mindfulness in which a person develops an expansive awareness of the physical body's momentary experiences. The practice of focus is also associated with movement meditation or the practice of combining the act and goals of regular meditation with calm, repetitive movements and positions.
2. Quieting the mind – is akin to the meditative practice of focusing the mind and developing the ability to concentrate on a single object, thought, or task. In quieting the mind, a person can more easily achieve a state of flow with the activity in which they are engaged. The flow state is associated with the inhibition of task-irrelevant stimuli or thoughts and self-referential thinking.
3. Open heart – is the meditative practice of cultivating a state of loving-kindness towards others and caring for their happiness and well-being. We feel, think, and demonstrate good will to all.
4. Loving service – is the outer meditative practice of actively doing good for others. We bring an open, loving heart into all our relationships and interactions with others. Open-hearted meditation leads one into open-hearted action.
5. Mindfulness – refers to the practice of “open awareness” of one's whole sensory and mindal experience from moment to moment. One develops the ability to stay attentive to the arising and passing of momentary sounds, sights, sensations, and thoughts.
6. Ideally, mindfulness is used together with the practice of concentrating the mind. Mindfulness helps one to know when the mind has wandered whereas some degree of concentration is needed to be able to focus one's attention on what arises in our experience.

*But the greatest of all methods of problem solving I have learned from Jesus, your Master. I refer to that which he so consistently practices, and which he has so faithfully taught you, the isolation of worshipful meditation. In this habit of Jesus' going off so frequently by himself to commune with the Father in heaven is to be found the technique, not only of gathering strength and wisdom for the ordinary conflicts of living, but also of appropriating the energy for the solution of the higher problems of a moral and spiritual nature. But even correct methods of solving problems will not compensate for inherent defects of personality or atone for the absence of the hunger and thirst for true righteousness.*

~ 160:1.10 (1774.2) ~

Take some time to engage in meditation. Consider which style you would like to practice. Some specific meditation exercises are listed below, but there are many exercises that people benefit from.

Meditation for mindfulness helps people develop an awareness of the moment.

- Sit comfortably and take 10 slow deep breaths.
- Objectively observe your thoughts and feelings as if you were on a train watching the sights as you passed by.
- As you become aware of a thought, open your eyes and write it down. Do this for 5 minutes.
- Continue to observe your thoughts. If your thoughts relate to other people, compassionately visualize letting them go by surrounding them with healing love and light.
- If the thoughts are non-personal and material, visualize them flowing down a stream on a leaf, or flying by as a bird.
- Do this for 10 minutes.
- Finally, take some slow deep breaths and slowly open your eyes, yawn several times and stretch like a cat.

Meditations for Loving Kindness help people to open their hearts to others.

This meditation was developed in the style of Vipassana Buddhist teachers Jack Kornfield, Tara Brach, and Sharon Salzberg, and Tashia Dawa.

- Yawn 10 times, breathing slow and easy between yawns. (Yawning relaxes every part of your body, stimulates alertness and concentration, enhances consciousness and introspection).
- Picture someone you love or care deeply about.
- Now observe your thoughts and feelings as if you were their loving, forgiving, compassionate, objective parent or dear friend.
- When you are aware of negative thoughts and feelings, refocus on observing your thoughts and feelings with compassion as if you were watching a beloved child.
- Write about your experience.

### **Recommended place to pause**

*Take this course at a pace that is comfortable for you so as to incorporate it into your life.*

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## **V. Exploring Loving Service**

The difference between serving out of duty and serving out of love lies in your attitude toward the person being served. Service might be done out of duty, but it is elevated by a genuine and observable sense of caring, compassion, patience, and love. Now that we have laid this foundation for loving service through the development of one's own unified personality we will now turn our attention to the outward practice of loving service: service toward others. Gather your thoughts on what you think loving service entails while giving consideration to this basic outline.

When you engage with any person, remember these three things:

- You are talking to a child of God. Have faith in that person with a recognition that a part of God lives within them just as God lives within you; that part of God is working tirelessly to guide them through life. Ask God to help you find the most effective approach for serving them.
- Consciously listen to that person and ask questions. Be aware of your own perspective while trying to empathize with the person who is speaking. Ask questions that help you understand what is literally being said and also what impact that has on the person's inner being.
- Offer encouraging words, practical advice, and discern how you can wisely share the gospel message. Praise the strengths found in that person and ask if you can share your thoughts. Help that person to feel valued.

Now watch [this video](#)

In this video, which I developed for Urantia University in 2017, I describe the way in which Jesus was a father to his siblings. It is an excellent example of one form of service. Find a comfortable place to settle-in and watch this video while reflecting on what makes this an example of loving service, and consider what kind of opportunities you have for loving service in your life.

## Assignments

1. Read the eight beatitudes of both brotherly and fatherly love. Paper 140:5 (1573.3) (optionally, you could read all of Paper140)
2. Read, "The New Commandment." Paper 180:1 (1944.4)
3. Answer the following questions in your journal.

- Why are the first four faith attitudes of brotherly love a prerequisite for the remaining four reactions of fatherly love?

- Take each of the four attitudes of brotherly love and give examples of how you manifest them in your life.
- Take each of the four reactions of fatherly Love and give examples of how you manifest them in your life.

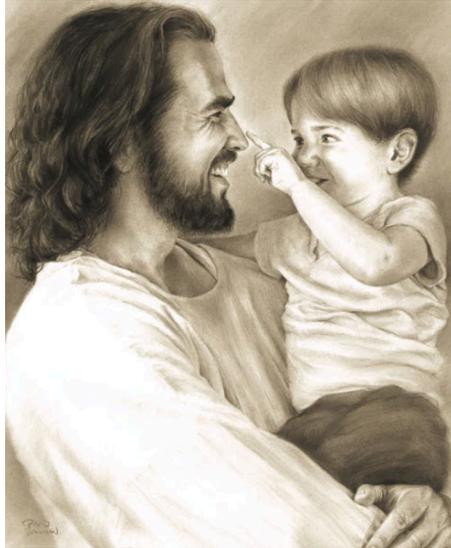
### **Recommended place to pause**

*Take this course at a pace that is comfortable for you so as to incorporate it into your life.*

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## **VI. Four Principles of Loving Service**

Loving service is what the revelators are referring to when they write about “righteousness.” We’re told that when we think of Jesus, we should “Think not so much of his sinlessness as of his righteousness, his loving service” (5:4.15 (68.3)). This morality in action is what we are called to do. It goes beyond the simple adherence to a set of rules, and it even goes beyond service that is carried out because of an obligation or a duty, or because it is fun or convenient. Acts of service, we’re told, were carried out “vaingloriously” by some pharisees and scribes, but this is not what the revelators mean when they refer to righteousness and loving service (170:3.1 (1861.8)).



Rather, we are challenged to foster the steady growth of our inner relationship with God and practice loving service, so that the extent to which our acts of service are truly loving will reach new levels. Jesus taught that once we have, by faith, entered the kingdom of heaven, there are “progressive steps of righteousness which every believing child must ascend in order to grow up to the full stature of the robust sons of God” (170:3.2 (1861.9)). We begin as tadpoles today and, with practice, we become truly loving toward all of humankind.

This practice of loving service takes the form of adopting a Jesusonian attitude toward service. Overarching all of Jesus’ interactions with others, he was always present in the moment—he was self-forgetting so that he could be responsive to the needs of those in front of him. Within that framework, there are four principles that were present in Jesus’ interactions with people.

#### Four Principles of Loving Service

1. Being an understanding, sympathetic, and compassionate listener
2. Asking questions to open people up
3. Offering practical advice

4. And always bringing forth, in some form, the gospel message—that they are children of a loving Father God, and will be saved by faith which manifests in loving service to all humankind.

## The Story of Fortune

The story of Fortune, the young man who was afraid, is a great example of how Jesus ministered to someone who had multiple problems and was in great despair. Fortune had feelings of inferiority, helplessness, self pity, and confusion about how to experience any sense of happiness. He was isolated in the hills, failing to be comforted by others, grieving the loss of his father who had died when he was 12 years old, as well as other life difficulties. Through this story, we can see how Jesus walked through the four principles of loving service.

In these next units, you will read about Fortune and apply the four principles of loving service to his interaction with Jesus, and then you will take a more in-depth look at each of the principles and intentionally incorporate them into your life.

### **Fortune, The Young Man Who Was Afraid**

The story of Jesus coming upon a young man named Fortune provides fertile ground for seeing the four principles of loving service in action. Read through these paragraphs and be prepared to answer questions about how these principles are used by Jesus in his interaction with Fortune.

#### Four Principles of Loving Service

1. Listen with Understanding and Compassion
2. Engage by Asking Questions
3. Give Practical Advice
4. Share the Gospel

From "The Young Man Who Was Afraid"  
130:6 (1437.1)

The young man was disinclined to talk, and so Jesus made a second approach to his soul, saying: "I understand you come up in these hills to get away from folks; so, of course, you do not want to talk with me, but I would like to know whether you are familiar with these hills; do you know the direction of the trails?and, perchance, could you inform me as to the best route to Phenix?"

Now this youth was very familiar with these mountains, and he really became much interested in telling Jesus the way to Phenix, so much so that he marked out all the trails on the ground and fully explained every detail. But he was startled and made curious when Jesus, after saying good-bye and making as if he were taking leave, suddenly turned to him, saying: "I well know you wish to be left alone with your disconsolation; but it would be neither kind nor fair for me to receive such generous help from you as to how best to find my way to Phenix and then unthinkingly to go away from you without making the least effort to answer your appealing request for help and guidance regarding the best route to the goal of destiny which you seek in your heart while you tarry here on the mountainside. As you so well know the trails to Phenix, having traversed them many times, so do I well know the way to the city of your disappointed hopes and thwarted ambitions. And since you have asked me for help, I will not disappoint you."

The youth was almost overcome, but he managed to stammer out, "But — I did not ask you for anything — " And Jesus, laying a gentle hand on his shoulder, said: "No, son, not with words but with longing looks did you appeal to my heart. My boy, to one who loves his fellows there is an eloquent appeal for help in your countenance of discouragement and despair. Sit down with me while I tell you of the service trails and happiness highways which lead from the sorrows of self to the joys of loving activities in the brotherhood of men and in the service of the God of heaven."

By this time the young man very much desired to talk with Jesus, and he knelt at his feet imploring Jesus to help him, to show him the way of escape from his world of personal sorrow and defeat.

Said Jesus: "My friend, arise! Stand up like a man! You may be surrounded with small enemies and be retarded by many obstacles, but the big things and the real

things of this world and the universe are on your side. The sun rises every morning to salute you just as it does the most powerful and prosperous man on earth. Look — you have a strong body and powerful muscles — your physical equipment is better than the average. Of course, it is just about useless while you sit out here on the mountainside and grieve over your misfortunes, real and fancied. But you could do great things with your body if you would hasten off to where great things are waiting to be done. You are trying to run away from your unhappy self, but it cannot be done. You and your problems of living are real; you cannot escape them as long as you live.

"But look again, your mind is clear and capable. Your strong body has an intelligent mind to direct it. Set your mind at work to solve its problems; teach your intellect to work for you; refuse longer to be dominated by fear like an unthinking animal. Your mind should be your courageous ally in the solution of your life problems rather than your being, as you have been, its abject fear-slave and the bond servant of depression and defeat. But most valuable of all, your potential of real achievement is the spirit which lives within you, and which will stimulate and inspire your mind to control itself and activate the body if you will release it from the fetters of fear and thus enable your spiritual nature to begin your deliverance from the evils of inaction by the power-presence of living faith. And then, forthwith, will this faith vanquish fear of men by the compelling presence of that new and all-dominating love of your fellows which will so soon fill your soul to overflowing because of the consciousness which has been born in your heart that you are a child of God.

"This day, my son, you are to be reborn, re-established as a man of faith, courage, and devoted service to man, for God's sake. And when you become so readjusted to life within yourself, you become likewise readjusted to the universe; you have been born again — born of the spirit — and henceforth will your whole life become one of victorious accomplishment. Trouble will invigorate you; disappointment will spur you on; difficulties will challenge you; and obstacles will stimulate you. Arise, young man! Say farewell to the life of cringing fear and fleeing cowardice. Hasten back to duty and live your life in the flesh as a son of God, a mortal dedicated to the ennobling service of man on earth and destined to the superb and eternal service of God in eternity."

## Assignments

Respond to the following questions in your journal.

- In the story of Fortune, how do you see Jesus using the four principles of loving service?
- Share an example of how you have used, or how you would like to use, one of these principles in your own life.
- What particular thoughts, feelings and actions help you make the individual person in your presence a priority
- (optional) What is the difference between helpful and unhelpful sympathy? Give examples.

### **Recommended place to pause**

*Take this course at a pace that is comfortable for you so as to incorporate it into your life.*

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## **VII. Listen with Understanding and Compassion**

In Jesus we see a superb example of a compassionate listener. This should come as no surprise, for the Urantia Book states that, as a mercy-dominated Son, “compassion is his very nature” (140:8.11 (1580.6)). His understanding of the imperfections of our human natures was complemented by his awareness of the family of God. “He saw most men as weak rather than wicked, more distraught than depraved. But no matter what their status, they were all God’s children and his brethren” (196:2:9 (2093.3)). Jesus was able to be so compassionate and understanding because of the extent to which he was comfortable with himself. It was not Jesus’ perfection of character that formed his sympathetic attitude, but his understanding of the difficulties that people face.

Research finds this to be the case as well, beginning with compassion toward oneself. Some people struggle with having compassion toward themselves, toward

others, or both, but tapping into this sympathetic attitude is a Jesusonian way of living. Self-awareness with self-compassion is a source of both personal and interpersonal strengths and is correlated with one's ability to have compassion for others. It is based on acknowledging our common humanity in that we all have imperfections, negative emotions, painful losses and challenges in life.

To learn more about self-compassion, watch this video by author and associate professor of Education Psychology (University of Texas – Austin), Dr. Kristin Neff.

### The Three Components of Self Compassion

(To see a written summary of the three components, visit [self-compassion.org](http://self-compassion.org).)

On her website, Neff refers to the vicissitudes of life by saying, “The more you open your heart to this reality instead of constantly fighting against it, the more you will be able to feel compassion for yourself and all your fellow humans in the experience of life.” (Neff, [Self-Compassion.org](http://Self-Compassion.org)) When we have self-compassion and self-respect we are motivated and have energy to change and master ourselves. This improves our health, well-being, and enables us to become more loving. The path to compassion is understanding and self-acceptance. If we could truly know ourselves and others through Jesus' mind and heart we would be filled with compassion and love.

Comfort with oneself lays the foundation for lovingly lending a sympathetic ear toward others, which is one of the most valuable ways that we can show compassion toward others. The revelators describe this in Jesus by saying, “Those who derived most benefit from his personal ministry were overburdened, anxious, and dejected mortals who gained much relief because of the opportunity to unburden their souls to a sympathetic and understanding listener...” (132:4.2 (1460.6)).

Through his listening, Jesus helped people to feel heard and valued. For some, the ability to speak their thoughts aloud may have helped them to work through their thoughts and emotions to understand them better. When we are comfortable with

ourselves, and when we are aware of the human condition of imperfection, then we too, can be released from our inner critical voices and engage fully with people.

### Conscious Listening

While there is lots of emphasis placed on people's ability to speak well, there is far less attention paid to the art of listening. The following are helpful practices in the art of conscious listening.

First, prepare for conscious listening by relaxing and centering yourself while being aware of any fears and discomfort that you might have. Say a prayer to deepen your intention of listening with understanding compassion and to strengthen your intention to do God's will for the highest good.

Second, to understand the depth and nuances of what a person is trying to communicate, it is important for you, the listener, to have a quiet mind, giving full attention to the person who is talking. Be aware of your mind's tendency to wander, since you are unable to listen during those moments. You will sometimes need to refocus on listening to the person in front of you.

Third, be mindful of your own feelings, thoughts, biases, and judgements which may interfere with pure listening. It is helpful to shift your thoughts and feelings to understanding compassion while acknowledging the person's strengths and goodness.

Lastly, relax and trust the spirit's voice to guide you toward responding in loving service.

### Supplemental Resources

1. *Self-Compassion: The Proven Power of Being Kind to Yourself* by Kristen Neff (2011) - Available for free on the Internet Archive
2. *The Mindful Self-Compassion Workbook* by Christopher Germer and Kristin Neff
3. *Radical Acceptance – Embracing Your Life with the Heart of Buddha*, by Tara Brach (2003)
4. *Strengths Finder* by Tom Rath (2015)

5. Watch *The Science of Self-Compassion*
6. Watch *The Sacred Art of Listening* with Tara Brach

## Assignments

Dr. Kristen Neff's website includes several exercises for increasing self-compassion. Do at least two exercises of your choice. The exercises are listed below.

1. [How would you treat a friend?](#)

How do you think things might change if you responded to yourself in the same way you typically respond to a close friend when he or she is suffering? This exercise walks you through it.

2. [Self-compassion break](#)

This exercise can be used any time of day or night and will help you remember to evoke the three aspects of self-compassion in the moment you need it most.

3. [Exploring self-compassion through writing](#)

Everybody has something about themselves that they don't like; something that causes them to feel shame, to feel insecure, or not "good enough." This exercise will help you write a letter to yourself about this issue from a place of acceptance and compassion.

4. [Supportive touch](#)

In this exercise you will learn how to activate your parasympathetic nervous system by using supportive touch to help you feel calm, cared for and safe.

5. [Changing your critical self-talk](#)

By acknowledging your self-critical voice and reframing its observations in a more friendly way, you will eventually form the blueprint for changing how you relate to yourself long-term. This exercise will help you learn how to do it.

#### 6. [Self-compassion journal](#)

Keeping a daily journal in which you process the difficult events of your day through a lens of self-compassion can enhance both mental and physical well-being. This exercise will help make self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness part of your daily life.

#### 7. [Identifying what we really want](#)

Remember that if you really want to motivate yourself, love is more powerful than fear. In this exercise, you'll reframe your inner dialogue so that it is more encouraging and supportive.

#### 8. [Taking care of the caregiver](#)

This exercise will allow you to keep your heart open and help you care for and nurture yourself at the same time you're caring for and nurturing others.

### **Engage by Asking Questions**

As Jesus engaged with people, he never failed to learn who it was that he was talking to. He asked people questions to gain insight into people's thinking. This served a double purpose of providing people with an "understanding listener" to whom they could "unburden their souls" (132:4:2 (1460.6)), and after gaining insight into people's material conditions and their inner attitudes, he was better positioned to offer helpful practical advice and could approach the gospel in a way that was appropriate for their pre-existing beliefs.

For those who are unaccustomed to it, asking follow-up questions can be challenging to do. You may feel as though you've already learned all that you need to know based on what has already been said, or you might make assumptions about a person's emotions and experience—asking further questions might feel like asking “dumb” questions.

In the podcast episode titled, “How to Really Know Another Person,” by Hidden Brain, psychologist Tessa West talks about how people tend to overestimate their own ability to know what others are thinking. She states that the only way to really know what is going on in the minds of others is to ask them questions, and she offers some tips on how to ask effective questions.

Listen to [Hidden Brain, "How to Really Know Another Person"](#)

Recommended minutes 31:53–38:40

It takes time to serve in this way, but it pays off to invest this time in the people we are serving. Read the example below and consider the kinds of questions that are asked.

The experience of one Urantia Book student...

I was volunteering at my son's after school robotics club and there was one boy who was continuously fidgeting with the pieces that are used to make the robots. While other students listened to a lengthy set of instructions, this boy's hands flew around these pieces. The volunteers would not have minded that the boy was fidgeting, but when it looked like he might eventually wear out one of the pieces, a parent near me told him to stop. He didn't. A little while later I held out my hand for him to place the item into and he didn't even acknowledge my presence. Thankfully, the instructions came to an end and I was able to sit down next to the boy. While he fidgeted with the item in question, I learned that he wasn't at the club by choice—his mom was making him go. I learned that he wanted to be at home playing his clarinet which he had also played the year before.

By taking the time to ask questions I could now sympathize with his situation and he was no longer “the problem boy” but a boy with his own set of interests. I think that he could see that I cared about him. When, at the end of our conversation, I told him that he would, in fact, have to hand over the item, he did so willingly. Throughout the afternoon, he continued to need much more intervention than the other kids, but the rapport that had been established between us made a world of difference.

In this case, the Urantia Book student does not focus her questions on the object that she wants removed from the boy's hands—she does not ask, “Why do you need to hold on to this? Why can't you fidget with something else?” She does not even ask, “Why aren't you listening to me?” Instead she temporarily diverts from the problem and focuses on the humanity of the boy. She focuses on questions that are relationship building and reflect her attitude toward him. This has the effect of increasing the effectiveness of her service and improving the experience for both herself and the boy.

#### Supplemental Materials

["Learn to Ask Good Questions to Keep the Conversation Going"](#) by Elizabeth Perry

#### Assignments

In your interactions over the next few days, practice listening with understanding compassion and engaging by asking questions. You might do this while talking to your child, parent, co-worker, or friend. Keep track of your interactions on this worksheet.

First, listen with compassion.

Then, ask thoughtful questions that will help that person become more aware of their thoughts, feelings and actions, and that move them toward a deeper understanding of their higher motives and values.

## Recommended place to pause

*Take this course at a pace that is comfortable for you so as to incorporate it into your life.*

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### VIII. Give Practical Advice

Jesus offered practical and immediately helpful suggestions looking toward the correction of their real difficulties as well as words of comfort and consolation relating to forgiveness, compassion, peace of mind, and loving relationships.

The Urantia Book relates the story of Anaxand, a young Greek man who worked under a “cruel and unjust foreman” (130:2.4 (1430.2)). When the young man asked Jesus why “the Gods” do not “remove” the foreman from the workshop, Jesus suggested that by placing Anaxand and the foreman together, Anxand had an opportunity to help the foreman grow. Jesus says, “Since you know the ways of kindness and value justice, perhaps the Gods have brought this erring man near that you may lead him into this better way” (130:2.4 (1430.2)). Jesus’ advice helped to shift Anaxand’s attitude toward his work situation from viewing it in a negative light, to a positive light.

In order to give practical advice, it is important to understand the source of a person's troubles. On a physical level, is there an electrochemical imbalance based on lack of sleep, hydration, nutrition, exercise, illness, and medication side effects? On an emotional/mind level, are there feelings relating to loss and mixed emotions such as hurt, anger, guilt, shame, and anxiety? Listening with understanding compassion is critical in helping the individual process and accept their feelings, helping people to move toward forgiveness of themselves and others.

An Example from My Own Life...

The importance of practical advice was apparent in my own experience with a 74-year-old neighbor who was prone to panic attacks. Her history of having been molested as a child likely contributed to her Fight or Flight Response (feelings of panic) to perceived danger, so I advised her that movement would reduce the adrenaline and cortisol flooding her body. I asked her about activities that she has done that help her feel most calm. She responded that she enjoys gardening and calming music. With that in mind, I encouraged her to engage in those activities while listening to Zen meditation music.

Unfortunately, she later developed Parkinson's disease and was rapidly deteriorating with signs of dementia, increased falls, and anxiety with panic attacks. She felt powerless, out of control, overwhelmed, and was isolating. Compounding this, she lived alone and COVID made it more difficult for her to see family and friends. Her physical handicaps made it more difficult for her to do the physical activities that I had recommended and her anxiety increased.

One day her son, who lives out of town, asked me to check on her since she was sounding disoriented and having a panic attack. When I visited her, I asked her if she was thirsty, hungry, and when she took her medications. She was thirsty and hungry, and confused about which medication she was supposed to take. I could see that there were some very practical measures that could be taken to improve her situation.

In this example, the questions that I asked my neighbor were central to the practical advice that I gave her. Earlier in our relationship I did not assume that I knew what would help to alleviate her panic attacks, but I asked her what kinds of activities were calming. Later, after she had begun to deteriorate, I began with simple questions about her present condition. I asked if she was hungry or thirsty, and I inquired about her medications. The questions helped me to offer the best advice possible for improving her situation.

Practical advice might also be given that is less material and has more to do with one's inner life. An example of this is found in Jesus' dealings with his brothers.

Jesus' brother, Jude, tried the patience of everyone in the household. The Urantia Book even states that Jesus was frequently "embarrassed by Jude's belligerent exploits" (128:7.4 (1417.3)). But when two of Jesus' other brothers suggested "casting him out," Jesus refused. Jesus may have suspected that there was more to Jude than a young man lacking in self-control; he was also a young man who had lost his father at a delicate time in his life. He was, possibly, a young man in pain and in need of additional role-model support. With this background in mind, Jude becomes easier to forgive.

The Urantia Book states, "When their patience would be severely tried, Jesus would only counsel: 'Be patient. Be wise in your counsel and eloquent in your lives, that your young brother may first know the better way and then be constrained to follow you in it'" (128:7.4 (1417.3)). Jesus' practical advice held the family together until a time when Jude could develop a more balanced character.

While you may be brimming with a desire to give advice, there are some things to keep in mind before you do so.

Sometimes people really do just want a person to listen, so ask if advice would be welcome. You might say:

Can I offer another perspective?

Would you like help with that?

Is it ok if I share a thought or two?

This may or may not work for you, but...

Also, consider if you have enough information to give valuable advice. Make sure that you've learned about that person's situation, that your advice is relevant, and that it takes into account their perspective, not just your own.

## Share the Gospel



The Gospel of Jesus is...

“...the fact of the heavenly Father’s love and the truth of his mercy, coupled with the good news that man is a faith-son of this same God of love.”

~ 132:4.2 (1460.6) ~

Jesus shared the gospel message everywhere he went, bringing to people an awareness that they are children of a loving Father and we are all a part of the family of God. He also encouraged his disciples to do the same by saying, “Go, then, into all the world proclaiming this gospel of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of men to all nations and races” (191:4.4 (2042.1)). How can we, as disciples of Jesus, do as he commanded? How can we wisely bring the gospel to others when we live in a secular society or a society with a different religious culture?

Jesus did not use a cookie-cutter approach to sharing the gospel with people; like the other elements of loving service, sharing the gospel should be catered to the individual who is being served. For example, when Jesus was speaking to the young man, Anaxand, about the difficult foreman, Jesus used words that Anaxand would be comfortable with. He catered to Anaxand’s Greek, polytheistic background, by

saying, "...perhaps the Gods have brought this erring man near that you may lead him into this better way" [emphasis in bold is mine] (130:2.4 (1430.2)).

Jesus knew that his disciples would need to share the gospel by "various and sundry methods" (132:4:2 (1460.6)). He told them, "ever 'be wise in your choice of methods for presenting the good news to the different races and tribes of mankind'" (191:4:4 (2042.1)).

If circumstances make it difficult to literally share the message of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, then try another approach. The Urantia Book says that as Jesus spoke to people while traveling through the Roman Empire, he was "minded to say or do something to make that life richer and more worthwhile [emphasis in bold is mine] (132:4.1 (1460.5)).

Unique approaches to the gospel can be found by asking questions that help you to understand an individual well enough to know one way in which that person connects to God, and then encourage that activity. You don't need to give people your ideas about God, it's enough to let them develop their own, but do try to appreciate and lift up whatever kind of connection they experience.

God can be found in a great many enriching activities. People can connect to God when they find peace in nature, when they make time for family and friends, when they prepare healthy food and take care of their bodies, when they courageously try something new, when they are stalwart in determination during difficulties—all of this can be encouraged in people's lives. And perhaps, you can even suggest that they dig deep within themselves to enhance their love, peace, and strength.

## Assignments

In your interactions over the next few days, practice thoughtfully giving advice when advice might be welcome, and find ways to wisely share the gospel. Remember that in order to tactfully engage with this second half of the Four Principles of Loving Service you must begin with the first half. Familiarize yourself with the perspective of the person who you are talking to by asking questions and listening with compassion. Then you will be better prepared to serve that person's highest needs.

Keep track of your interactions on this [worksheet](#).

## **Recommended place to pause**

*Take this course at a pace that is comfortable for you so as to incorporate it into your life.*

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## **IX. Talking to Jesus Meditation**

After having read Jesus' interaction with Fortune, and after having practiced the Four Principles of Loving Service yourself, what is one piece of advice you might give to yourself for further developing this skill? Meditate on this through the use of the Four Principles. First, imagine that you are talking to Jesus, who is listening to you with understanding compassion. Talk about your experience of trying to develop this skill and imagine his face and responses as you speak. Imagine that he asks you a question or two to go deeper into your inner life. Then, consider what he might say to you in the form of practical advice, and then rest into the moment when he shares the gospel with you.

### **Conclusion**

A loving service mindset, rooted in self-mastery, grows indefinitely. As you practice self-mastery, you will expand your personal relationship with, and faith in, God, your faith in people, trustworthiness, moderation and mindfulness. These deep roots will support your expression of loving service outward to all of your spiritual brothers and sisters.

*Loving service* is an ongoing life practice. Throughout your time here on Earth and well beyond, you can continually grow in your ability to be of loving service. However, like a garden needs constant attention to grow, so too must you intentionally engage the habits of loving service—compassionate listening, asking

questions, giving practical advice, and sharing the gospel. Your loving service practice will not be perfected in the near future, but you can make real progress in loving each other as God loves us, and as reflected in Jesus' life and teachings.

