



# Contemplative Outreach

***Heart Intention Practice: Meditating with Body, Heart, Mind, Being***  
**with David Frenette**

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**Transcript**

One of the benefits of Heart Intention as an approach to meditation and practice is that it's an engaged practice available for us during activity. The Prayer of the Heart teachers would invite their students to pray unceasingly, to have the Jesus prayer in their consciousness, in their back pocket so to speak, throughout the day, no matter what was coming to them. And the key, the entry into unceasing prayer, or continuous practice is having a flexible approach to meditation that touches body, mind, heart, and pure being, so that we can move through those dimensions of ourselves, our human nature, and the divine nature in us, and also respond to life that touches us in different ways. Touches our heart, invites us into surrender, invites us into a more focused, engaged state of mind, and also a heartfelt mindfulness, and then pure being.

So let's just touch in on this topic for a while. And in order to do that, I invite you to call to mind the Heart Intention phrase that you are working with during this introductory course. Call to mind either the Jesus prayer, "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on us, Son of God, Amen." Or if you're working with a spiritual and less religious affirmation of unity, the one I'm suggesting to enter into Heart Intention is, "Life, radiating love, in being. Life is radiating love in being." Or the third option, the Christian mantra, "Yeshua, Maranatha, Hessed. Amen. Yeshua, Maranatha, Hessed. Amen." So call to mind one of those. [pauses] And as you do, bring your attention into your body, into your breath, as we've been exploring in previous recordings. "Yeshua" with your breath, anchoring your attention with the word. Or, "Lord Jesus Christ," with the name of God, if that is your approach in the Heart Intention. Anchor it with your breath now. [pauses] Or "Life, life, radiating love, amen. Life radiating love in being." With "Life," anchor your breath and your body, your attention.

And with that foundation, we can go a little further because Heart Intention begins with anchoring the breath, but it just begins there. It's the foundation. And let me describe why that's so. Having a heartfelt or mindful awareness of what our bodies and our breath, when

we're doing mundane activities like washing the dishes, or waiting for a bus, or serving a meal, tending to our spouse, writing letters perhaps even, these are the ordinary events of daily life. And so, I'm invited to remember my Heart Intention practice just as we did here a moment ago, anchor my attention in my breath, in my body, drop that anchor to the area behind my naval, and open my awareness to the present moment, the sacrament of the present moment, so that I'm washing the dishes with fuller attention, fuller presence, being present to the Presence. And we've explored this approach.

Now, our life in this modern world is not as simple as a monk's or a farmer's life from a few centuries ago. In other words, monks, the monastic tradition of whatever religion, but certainly in Christian contemplative mysticism, the monastic tradition is based in manual work, farming, or even baking cookies, or something like that, *because* the body can become a means of prayer with manual work, just in the way that we're describing with Heart Intention. With simple manual activities, there's the invitation and the reminder to come to presence through practice. But in my world now, I'm not a farmer. I'm often on the computer doing emails. And I do that with as much awareness and mindful presence as I am able to -- opening up the email, being with the sense of pause, the sacred pause while the computer loads, which is pretty fast these days, not like 10 years ago.

And then I see my email box, my inbox getting loaded with all kinds of emails, like many, many emails. And I can feel the stress being triggered in my body. The invitation, of course, is to go back to breath, and anchoring my heart and my being. But what about going further with the practice and moving into the second dimension of the Heart Intention phrase, with the calling forth and the focusing of the mind around, "Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy." So that when I begin to manage the email, my mind is focused and engaged in a steady stream of attentive presence. Rather than being present to the body, it's my mind now that needs to be focused. So the Heart Intention says use the second part of the phrase, "Maranatha, Maranatha, Maranatha, Maranatha, Maranatha." In order to focus your mind, grounded in the body. Use the second phrase, "Radiating, radiating, radiating, radiating, radiating."

You can almost see and hear and feel the mind, which is the perpetual-perception-and-thought machine being simplified from the manifold thoughts into the steady stream of the mind that can deal more effectively then with that one email in this moment.

So Heart Intention starts with the body, but then because there's so many complex mental tasks in our world, it has a second layer of practice to it. And then, in my little office, in walks my coworker who loads a bunch of tasks on me, and I can feel my irritation coming back and my resentment, for example. And my history of interaction with this person, we are filled in an interpersonal world, not only with intense intellectual tasks, but interpersonal history and exchange, so that the Heart Intention then allows me to go further with the practice, and center my attention into my heart, when I'm engaged with this person, or shortly after when they leave, and turn to my own sense of ultimate mystery, ultimate reality, with a deep surrender and a presence to the God of life and love and interconnection.

So I do that with Heart Intention by calling on love. The third phrase, or Hesed, loving kindness. As I drop my attention, what The Prayer of the Heart teachers say, "Put the mind into the heart." And this becomes a living reality with Heart Intention. It's not an abstract devotional exercise. It's a living reality of practice with consciousness and identity, which is, interestingly enough, rooted in the heart. If I introduce myself to you, I don't say, "Hi, I'm David." And I point to my head, I say, "No, this is me. I'm David. Glad to meet you." The sense of me-ness, the sense of deep personhood is rooted in the heart. And there's many new studies in the last few years about consciousness, and the way that consciousness has some residence, and some receptors, not only in the brain, but also in the heart.

So many, many, many spiritual traditions, not just The Prayer of the Heart in Christian contemplative mysticism, but many traditions, including Sufism, including forms of Tibetan Buddhism, including forms of Hinduism, have practices that resonate around the heart. And Heart Intention is like that.

So my coworker comes in, I find my emotions getting triggered, I find myself, as they leave, being protective of my day, and my resentment that comes up. And I bring my practice into my heart in order to surrender to the Divine, not bypassing the emotions, but going to the source of the emotions, the source of the resentment, in kindness, Hesed, or love, or the son of God, the kenosis, the self-emptying love that roots the sense of the presence that Jesus evokes into his source, his surrender into his source at the level of the heart.

And then, the beauty of this practice is that, once you get a feeling for it then you can rest in the culmination of the Heart Intention practice, the amen, or the release into pure being. So it starts with words, Heart Intention, moves into mindful heartfelt attention, in the breath and the body, has this option for engaged focusing of the mind, and the surrender of the heart. And then this release into pure being in which there is no word, no need to hang on to this release into pure being, or into this culminating phrase of "amen, so be it." Say it once in my heart, in my mind, in my being, and then rest.

So the fullness of this practice of Heart Intention is that it's flexible, it's nuanced, it's a little bit more developed than simple mindfulness or heartfulness, because our world is complex. Our world is not a monastic, agrarian world. We're very multifaceted, and complex tasks that would confront us during the day. So why not have a grounded and nuanced way of practice, meditation practice that can respond to the way life is?

So with Heart Intention, you start with the intention, and let me call forth a little screen share so we can be reminded of this [shares document on screen]. So in the screen share chart, you'll see joining meaningful words of intention with inner movements of consciousness, just as we've been speaking of, on the first row, the row A, letter A, intention is the Jesus prayer for those who are drawn to the salvific saving relationship with Jesus Christ, and the tradition of the Jesus prayer, Heart Intention encourages and allows for that. The practice is, "Lord Jesus Christ," and to drop, as it says in the final row, underneath in bold letters, drop one's calling on the name of Jesus into the body with the breath, "Have mercy on us," the second column to

move that practice phrase, "Have mercy on us. Have mercy on us." Engage it in the mind, so it's not just a single phrase, but it's a steady stream of calling out for God's mercy, with a focused, concentrative, and a direction of the mind.

The third column, "Son of God," to drop your attention and your surrender into the heart. This will become an experience rather than a concept, when we do a little bit of guided meditation in the live instruction that accompanies this video resource. "Son of God." Self-emptying kenosis, and then the fourth column, Roman numeral four, "Amen." resting and being.

And if your intention, your Heart Intention is the spiritual affirmation, "Life is radiating love in being," that can progress in the same way. Attention to body, engaging of the mind, surrender into the heart and resting and being. Intention as a Christian mantra, the mantra, "Yeshua, Maranatha, Hesus, Amen." And start with Yeshua in the breath in the body. Yeshua. Maranatha -- engage that prayer or mantra phrase, which means come spirit, or come God, Maranatha, Maranatha, Maranatha, Maranatha, Maranatha. Engage it in the mind so it's a directive. Surrender into the source of being itself, the mind of Christ, the uncreated light of God. Hesus, which means loving kindness, surrender into the heart, surrender into love, so that my exchange with my coworker, my relationship with them, even though they're out of the room, out of the office at this moment, but it's brought back to compassion and loving kindness, so that when I meet them again, I am not hanging on to an emotional residue, or I might even feel like the freedom to talk about the relationship, and communicate about how we can interact better, because I'm not caught up in resentment. I've surrendered into compassion for ourselves, each of us, and resting and being with the great release of amen.

So this is the introduction to Heart Intention. And if you feel drawn, or if you connect with this form of meditation practice, there's a little threshold that you go through in order to learn it, but I encourage you. It's a lot like sacred reading, or Lectio Divina, which is a little bit subtle and nuanced, as you get into sacred reading. There are a few principles to help guide you into the practice, where there too, you surrender your heart in affective prayer. You focus your mind into a simple reflection of personal engagement with the text or the spiritual book or the spiritual tenet that you're working with, all rooted in simple awareness and attention to be awake and alive, so that you can engage with a sacred text in a meaningful way.

The fullness of Lectio Divina is contemplation, resting in God. In other words, if you practice Lectio Divina, you'll find a great connection with Heart Intention, because it unfolds in a similar way, through different phases of relationship with God, bringing ourselves into the practice so that our human nature is transformed in the divine nature, in God's body, in the mind of Christ, into the heart of God, at the center of everything in the world, and the pure being that is spacious and vast, and present, and folding everything moment to moment.

This is what unceasing prayer or continual practice can be. It's not hanging onto the phrase all the time. It's letting this Heart Intention phrase, the one that *you're drawn to*, we're suggesting three different ones that you can choose from, the one that you're drawn to, letting that live in you and then bring forth your humanity in relationship with *your* sense of the divine, *your* sense

of the unity, and the oneness of all life, *your* sense of the salvation of the living relationship with Christ. Bring that into your life, into simple activities, washing the dishes, managing the email with a focused mind, relating to other people, coworkers, loved ones, and surrendering into being, which brings you back then to your sitting practice of Centering Prayer.

So the great call or invitation in the Christian mystical tradition is to “love the Lord, your God, with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” This is the invocation, or the greatest commandment that's mentioned many times in the canonical gospels. It hearkens back to the Jewish Bible, the Jewish scriptures. And this is what we are invited to do with Heart Intention. Love the Lord, your God, awaken to the sense of unity, and live that daily in our lives with repeated practice, remembering, opening up to the forgiveness of the Divine, when we've forgotten, and do this with all of our heart, with all of our soul and with all of our mind and with all of our body. And then love our neighbor as ourselves.

This is our next topic, contemplative service, and how Heart Intention can dispose us to God in us, serving God and other people, loving our neighbor as ourselves, because we have a living relationship, a unitive relationship based in the oneness of all being that's being fostered and practiced through Centering Prayer and the Heart Intention practice. Thank you.

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