

# The Only Thing Worth Doing

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 [wccm.org/weekly-readings/beyond-the-prison-of-the-ego](http://wccm.org/weekly-readings/beyond-the-prison-of-the-ego)

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**An excerpt from Laurence Freeman, *A SIMPLE WAY: The Path of Christian Meditation* (Tucson: Medio Media, 2004), p. 5, 21-22.**

In the practice of meditation, we are not bringing our petitions into prayer, but we are paying attention. We are not making intentions: we are giving our attention. Attention is not furrowing your brow and getting tense as in the act of concentration. [ . . . ] Concentration cannot be sustained for very long. Attention, however, is how we are meant to live all the time.

Jesus invited us to follow him. To direct our attention to what he is absorbed in. To pay attention to one thing we have to take the spotlight off ourselves. This is both the simplest and the most difficult thing in the world. Yet once we taste it and get the hang of it, it is the only thing worth doing. Selfishness and self-centeredness then become increasingly undesirable states of mind. Loving others becomes not so much a duty but a default setting that we are hardly aware of doing.

Meditation, as all the wisdom traditions in the world tell us, engenders compassion. This is the simple, radical, wonderful call of the Christian disciple. To stop thinking about yourself and so to discover who you truly are, to expand beyond the prison of the ego into the all-embracing mind of Christ.

**After meditation: “The Way It Is” by William Stafford in *THE WAY IT IS: New and Selected Poems* (Minneapolis: Graywolf Press, 1998), p. 42.**

## *The Way It Is*

There's a thread you follow. It goes among  
things that change. But it doesn't change.  
People wonder about what you are pursuing.  
You have to explain about the thread.  
But it is hard for others to see.  
While you hold it you can't get lost.  
Tragedies happen; people get hurt  
or die; and you suffer and get old.  
Nothing you can do can stop time's unfolding.  
You don't ever let go of the thread.