



# YOU ARE MY BELOVED CHILD

This meditation asks youth to be still and be open to God's acceptance, just as they are.

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## Overview

We are all children of God, and we do not have to do anything to earn God's grace. Though we often struggle to feel accepted in society or to feel self-acceptance, God accepts us exactly as we are.

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## Scripture

### Matthew 3:16-17

And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."

### Galatians 3:16

In Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith.

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## Quotations

"I like you just the way you are."

— *Mr. Rogers*

"Love isn't a state of perfect caring. It is an active noun like 'struggle.' To love someone is to strive to accept that person exactly the way he or she is, right here and now - and to go on caring even through times that may bring us

pain.”

— *Mr. Rogers*

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## Introducing the Practice

Feeling accepted – by our friends, our family, our selves – is not always an easy thing. Between the judgment of our peers and our own self-criticism, there are many voices that weigh us down and make us feel like we aren’t good enough. When we feel this way, we must remember God’s unconditional love and grace, and we must know that we can experience this unconditional acceptance by turning to God in prayer.

There are few people in our modern time that better convey such unconditional acceptance and love than Fred Rogers, commonly known as “Mr. Rogers.” Mr. Rogers is famous for his children’s TV show “Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood” which was on television from 1968-2001. Throughout the TV show, Mr. Rogers tackled many difficult topics with young children such as divorce, race relations, and war through honest explanations, stories, and make believe play. Mr. Rogers’ underlying philosophy was simply to spread love as genuinely as possible by fully accepting and loving each other without qualification. He had an especially profound love for children, and he believed that every child needed to be loved and accepted in order to grow into a spiritually healthy person. Mr. Rogers was an ordained Presbyterian minister, and he viewed his work on the children’s show as his ministry.

Mr. Rogers reminds us that we are all invited to experience the unqualified acceptance from the God who is Love. Before God we do not have to pretend to be anything more than we are. We don’t have to pretend like we are perfect or that we never doubt our beliefs. We do not have to do anything to earn the grace and acceptance of God. God already accepts you. God already offers his loving grace to you. In the words of the theologian Paul Tillich, “Accept that you are accepted.”

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## Preparing for the Practice

Have everyone spread out to find a comfortable place to sit where they can still hear the voice of the person guiding the practice.

## The Spiritual Practice

Begin by gently, simply centering and quieting your soul in whatever way works best for you. Close your eyes and fall into the silence where the living God speaks.

Offer your honest self to God at this time. Let go of all labels you hold about yourself. Let go of all the things you wish you could be. Let go of your efforts to earn acceptance from others. Sitting now in the presence of God, just be your perfectly imperfect self. (2-3 minutes of silence)

In the waters of the river Jordan, Jesus was claimed by God as God's own child. As Jesus emerged from his baptism, the voice of God resounded all around saying "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased." How do you think Jesus felt when he heard this? What do you think this meant to Jesus? (3-4 min of silence)

While we are not children of God in the same way that Jesus is the eternally begotten Son of God, we learn from Saint Paul that we are in fact children of God through adoption. In faith, God claims each of us as his own child as well.

Open your heart and hear the voice of God saying to you, "This is my beloved child with whom I am well pleased." (2-3 min of silence)

How does it feel to be claimed by God? How does it feel to know God accepts you and loves you as his own child? That you belong to God? (3-4 min of silence)

Know that you are accepted by God just as you are. Know that, with you, God is well pleased. You do not have to do anything to earn God's love.

For the next few minutes meditate quietly, whispering this phrase from the 23rd Psalm as you breathe in: "The Lord is my Shepherd" and whispering the second half of the verse as you breathe out: "I lack nothing." (3-5 min of silence)

As creatures created by God, we are fundamentally good. As children claimed by God, we are loved.

Amen.

*Duration: 15-20 minutes*

## Discussion Questions

1. How did this meditation feel for you?
2. Do you think Jesus ever struggled with self-acceptance when he was constantly being rejected by people?
3. Why is it hard to feel accepted by God?
4. How do you think God's acceptance of you differs from your own self-acceptance or the acceptance from your peers?