



JOURNEY IN... YEAR TWO

THE NATURE OF GOD

ART

This lesson's Big Ideas:

- Our Unitarian Universalist faith asserts that each individual has a capacity for and birthright to an original experience of God. We seek no intercessors, no dogma, no special assignation of grace or salvation. God is immediately available to everyone.
- Prayer and meditation are ways to interact directly with God.
- There's a big difference between direct experience and indirect understanding.

Lesson Materials

- Image of a still life (as sacred or mundane as you like) or use the image on page 4.
- Kids should have drawing paper and colored pencils or markers ready for use.
- Images of prayer and meditation in art on page 5-9.

TEACHER REFLECTION AND PREPARATION

🕒 Ahead of time

Let me admonish you, first of all, to go alone; to refuse the good models, even those which are sacred in the imagination of men, and dare to love God without mediator or veil. Friends enough you shall find who will hold up to your emulation [...] Thank God for these good men, but say, 'I also am a man.' Imitation cannot go above its model. The imitator dooms himself to hopeless mediocrity. The inventor did it, because it was natural to him, and so in him it has a charm. In the imitator, something else is natural, and he bereaves himself of his own beauty, to come short of another man's.

- from R.W.Emerson's *Divinity School Address*

Our age is retrospective[...] It writes biographies, histories, and criticism. The foregoing generations beheld God and nature face to face; we, through their eyes. Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe? Why should not we have a poetry and philosophy of insight and not of tradition, and a religion by revelation to us, and not the history of theirs? Embosomed for a season in nature, whose floods of life stream around and through us, and invite us by the powers they supply, to action proportioned to nature, why should we grope among the dry bones of the past, or put the living generation into masquerade out of its faded wardrobe? The sun shines to-day also [...] There are new lands, new men, new thoughts. Let us demand our own works and laws and worship.

- from *Nature* by R. W. Emerson

Believe nothing, no matter where you read it, or who said it, no matter if I have said it, unless it agrees with your own reason and your own common sense.

-Buddha

Reflective question for teachers:

Where in your life have you sought and perhaps found an "original relation to the universe? What are your experiences with prayer and meditation?

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL LESSON

- Create simple displays of solid colored objects for younger kids. Create more complex still life models for older classes.

YOUR FIELD EXPERIENCES: FEEDBACK AND NOTES

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CHECK-IN

🕒 10 minutes

Allow one of the teachers to lead the group in a name game, an icebreaker, a get-to-know-you questions or a simple ‘How are things?’ moment. Spend more time if the group seems eager to connect with each other. Light the chalice and say:

We light this chalice as a symbol of our faith, the light of truth, and the warmth of love.

COVENANT

🕒 3-5 minutes

Review the discussion of how the group wants to be together. Update the notes, if necessary. Save the covenant for future classes.

- To share this document (or anything) on your screen, have it open on your computer, click the “Share Screen” button at the bottom of the Zoom window, and choose the item to share from the list.

PRIMARY ACTIVITY ONE: HIDDEN STILL LIFE

🕒 15 minutes

- In this activity, we’ll experience the difference between drawing something directly and drawing through someone else’s perspective and instructions.
- In advance of the class, one teacher should set up a small still life on a table or tray that can be shown with a camera to the group or you can use the image on page 4 of this lesson.
- Instruct them that they are ‘artists’ and that you are an ‘intercessor.’ Explain that an ‘intercessor’ is someone who ‘goes between’ us and something else. You, as the intercessor, will view the still life share your perceptions and instruct the artist in drawing the still life. The artist, without seeing the subject directly, will draw the still life based solely on what you share. Talk to the children and repeat details of the still life as they work .
- After a set period—perhaps 8-10 minutes—signal the children to stop working. Share the still life image on your screen. Invite the whole class to view the still life and review their drawings.
- Spend some time allowing children that want to share to hold their drawings up to their cameras for everyone to see. Ask children to switch to Speaker View and have the child sharing talk to stay in the large frame on everyone’s screen.

Wondering Together

Take some time to interpret this experience and make connections to the big ideas, using questions like:

- What was it like to have someone tell you what to draw?
- When you draw something, do you usually do the seeing for yourself, too? Why?
- What if I told you that what I saw and would describe was God. Would you want someone else to look and tell you what they saw, or would you rather look for yourself.
- If you were seeking God, trying to imagine God, would you rather **figure God out for yourself** or have someone else tell you what they saw when they were looking for God? Why?
- When it comes to our search for what is true, do you think that UUs would rather do the ‘drawing’, or the ‘seeing’, or do both for themselves?

PRIMARY ACTIVITY TWO **PRAYER AND MEDITATION IN ART**

🕒 10-15 minutes

- One teacher should plan to share the images on page 5-10 on their screens ahead of time. Open this PDF file and set the zoom so that the images fit the screen well and you can show them one at a time. When you get to this point in the lesson, share your screen and select the images one at a time. Invite discussion with questions like the following:
 - Is anyone helping the person pray or meditate?
 - How do you know they’re praying or meditating?
 - What do you think they are thinking about?
 - What’s similar between these two/three pieces of art?
 - What makes this piece of art different from the rest?

CLOSING AND LEAVE-TAKING

🕒 3-5 minutes

Let’s not use someone else’s prayer this time. We can make up our own.

On the first Sunday of this cycle, the group created a closing prayer for each other, one that encourages the kids to remember to trust their own direct experience of God and to remember each other as fellow travelers on the path. Use the words that were written down previously so that the group can have a consistent closing. Repeat this closing each week of the first unit, hands joined, in a circle (do this by having everyone hold their hands up at the edge of the view of their camera).

Unlight the chalice, saying these words: Though we extinguish the light of the chalice here, we know that the light of truth and the warmth of love go with us in our hearts.











