



JOURNEY IN... YEAR TWO

THE NATURE OF GOD

KINESTHETIC

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

- YouTube videos queued up ahead of time to play and share screen with class. See links on page 3.

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

- For large groups, make the obstacle course short and sweet. This will allow time for each child to do the course.
- With younger children, you might want to keep the course the same for each child. With fifth and sixth graders, you might find it more interesting to alter the course a little for each child.
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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: BODY PRAYERS

🕒 20-25 minutes

- Share this Aramaic definition of prayer with the children: “prayer is the opening of oneself to the sacred, to be filled up, inside and out”. Introduce the idea that nearly all faith traditions involve the entire body in prayer. Ideally one teacher will set up their camera so that they can model some or all of these. Hopefully kids will be able to try the movements, too. Some of these verbal descriptions are shown in the video links. This experience should be taken seriously and personally. We must not allow mockery of another group’s beliefs; each person’s beliefs are are very important to them.
 - Christians often pray on their knees. Hand can be folded or pressed together at the level of the heart or the forehead. Catholic Christians make the sign of the cross on their bodies after prayer as a reminder.
 - Muslims prostrate themselves during prayer (the *Saalat*) five times daily. The positions are as follows: The worshipper begins in a standing position facing Mecca. Raise the hands to the ears and then cross them, right over left, over the heart (females) or below the navel (males). Bend over and place the hands on the knees, looking down at the feet. Stand straight, arms at the sides. Drop to the knees and prostrate fully, placing the hands and forehead on the floor, elbows up. Sit up on knees, eyes turned down.

Prostrate once again and return to the sitting position.

- Judaism also has a special way to bow during prayer. First, you stand. Then you bend at the knees, still keep the head and back erect. Next, bend forward at the waist until the back is parallel with the ground, all while straightening the knees. After a person reads a prayer or words from the Torah, listeners reach toward the scroll with their pinky finger and then kiss the finger.
- Buddhists often meditate in the half-lotus position. Seated, the sole of the left foot is place on the inside of the right thigh. The right foot is drawn over the left leg and tucked into the fold of the left knee, against the left thigh. Hands are placed palm up on the knees, often with the thumb and ring finger touching. Hands can also be cupped, right over left, thumbs touching, and held about four fingers' width below the navel.
- In our congregation, during prayer, some people bow their heads, some look up and some look straight ahead. Some people pray with eyes open, some eyes closed. Many people pray with their hands open loosely, palms up, in their lap. Next time you're in the Sanctuary for a Story or Family Sunday, look around and watch how people pray.

HELPFUL ONLINE VIDEOS OF PRAYER GESTURES:

- Jewish prayer hand gestures:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VVjP9mzOEE4>
- Muslim prayer prostration
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cBzAtcFcnVQ&feature=related>
- Roman Catholic prayer hand gestures: (watch up to to timestamp 2:43)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qKEyJ_CRzrU
- Pagan spiral dance (watch 2:00-3:00 to see transition from spiral in only one direction to two directions):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DgScQymHIXM>

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.