



JOURNEY IN... YEAR TWO

THE NATURE OF GOD

SCIENCE & NATURE

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

- Two images of a cone from side and bottom.
- Web page with image of spinning cone.
- Compass, if a teacher has one to show.
- Copies of several religious texts: Bible, Koran, Torah, Tao Te Ching.

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?

**YOUR FIELD
EXPERIENCES:
FEEDBACK AND
NOTES**

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

🕒 10 minutes

Discuss how your group wants to be together and review your discussion from last week. Consider things like how you’ll open each week, how to know who’s turn it is to talk, how you’ll use Mute, and whether or not video feed is expected from each person. Update the notes that were saved from the first week. 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:
RECONCILING PERSPECTIVE**

🕒 10-15 minutes

- Each child’s parents will receive an email with an image attached before class time. The images are views of a cone, half of them will see it from the bottom (a circle) and the other half from the side (a triangle).
- Ask the children to look at their picture. Let one of them describe it to the group. Ask if anyone has a different way to describe their image and encourage them to discuss what they see and who is right.
- Reassure the group that they are seeing the same thing, maybe just not the same way. Help them figure out what it is. Show them this graphic of a cone that clearly shows it momentarily as a circle and then momentarily as a triangle, with different views as it spins. At least one teacher should have it ready on their computer before class begins, with the spinning cone lined up to view easily, so they can share their screen at this point.

<https://www.mathsisfun.com/geometry/cone.html>

Wondering Together

If any teachers have sacred texts such as the Qur'an, Bible, or Tao Te Ching, hold them up to the camera and show the children; if not, just talk about them and the religions that follow them. Introduce the idea that these books are religious texts that people believe are instructions to finding out about God.

- Do you think that these books about God say mostly the same thing or mostly different things?
- Can they all be right about God? Partly right? All wrong?
- Did you think that your friends that described the cone from another viewpoint were wrong?
- How can you tell if ideas or instructions are wrong or right?
- Does anyone already know something about God that might make them question someone who said something different?
- In our church, do we rely on written instructions to find God? How do you know? Do we rely on written stories and poems and ideas? Which ones?
- How can a person best figure out what they want to know about God?

Share this idea in your own words:

Some religions teach that there are things that explain God—maybe a teacher or maybe a book that we have to read before we can understand God. Some religions teach that their viewpoints of God are the only true ones. Unitarian Universalists think that each of us has our own understanding of the universe and its truths. Sometimes books like these give us ideas about how to look at the world and God, but we have to try things out for ourselves and see if they're true.

PRIMARY ACTIVITY TWO: OUR INTERNAL COMPASS

🕒 5-10 minutes

Have any of the children used a compass? How does a compass work? Ask your class if they know. We can't work together with compasses, but we can talk about what they are used for.

Wondering Together:

- How did you learn to use a compass?
- Which direction does a compass always point? Can a compass be wrong?
- Do all religions point toward God?
- If you had a compass inside you, what would it point to?

Share these ideas in your own words:

You have a compass inside you, too. It points toward Truth. You can learn how to use it to find out more about what you think about God. When you hear or see something about God, you can check your own compass to see if what you're hearing or seeing is true.

CLOSING AND LEAVE-TAKING

🕒 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 teacher allowed the children to create 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. "What can we say to each other and to the whole Universe when we leave this group to encourage each other to be courageous and trust our own hearts and minds to figure God out?"

Use the words that were written down last week 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).