

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website
SMALL GROUP MINISTRY
What About God?
Main Line Unitarian Church, Devon, PA

Opening Words & Chalice Lighting:

But how does saying that God made the universe -- and never mind asking where God came from -- how is that more satisfying than to say the universe was always here?

~ *Carl Sagan*

Believing there is no God means the suffering I've seen in my family, and indeed all the suffering in the world, isn't caused by an omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent force that isn't bothered to help or is just testing us, but rather something we all may be able to help others with in the future. 'No God' means the possibility of less suffering in the future.

Believing there is no God gives me more room for belief in family, people, love, truth, beauty, sex, Jell-O, and all the other things I can prove and that make this life the best life I will ever have!

~ *Penn Jillette*

Check-in: *How are you today?*

Focus Readings:

In his book, "The God You Never Knew", Marcus Borg describes two root concepts of God, one *Transcendent*, and the other *Immanent*:

The first root concept of God conceptualizes God as a supernatural being 'out there,' separate from the world, who created the world a long time ago and who may from time to time intervene within it. In an important sense, this God is not 'here' and thus cannot be known or experienced but only believed in (which, within the logic of this concept, is what 'faith' is about)...Some accept the existence of such a being, and some reject it. But it is the notion of God as a supernatural being 'out there' that is being accepted or rejected.

In the second root concept of God, God is the encompassing Spirit; we (and everything that is) are in God. For this concept, God is not a supernatural being separate from the universe; rather, God is a nonmaterial layer or level or dimension of reality all around us. God is more than the universe, yet the universe is in God. Thus, in a spatial sense, God is not 'somewhere else' but 'right here.'

Another concept of God is that of "a work in progress", a concept or entity that "comes into being" as the Universe unfolds -- an "*Evolving*" God. According to Lewis Mumford in his book "The Conduct of Life":

Our logic is at fault in assigning God to the wrong end of the cosmic process. The universe does not issue out of God, in conformity with his fiat: it is rather, God, who in the long processes of time emerges from the universe, as the far-off event of creation and the ultimate realization of the person toward which creation seems to move. God exists, not at the beginning, but at the end...God is the faint glimmer of a design still fully to emerge, a rationality still to be achieved, a justice still to be established, a love still to be fulfilled.

Groucho Marx once said: "I would never join any club that would have me as a member." In similar fashion, would you ever want to believe in a God that you, yourself, as a simple human being could ever fully comprehend?

Focus Questions:

1. Do you believe in God or are you an atheist or an agnostic?
2. Western religions are, for the most part, monotheistic. Is there something more credible about the belief in one god versus several gods? If reduction in the number of gods from several to one is an important milestone, what about the concept of further reduction from one to none?
3. How would you categorize Humanism? Is a Humanist necessarily an atheist?
4. If you do believe in God, is your God “*Transcendent*,” “*Immanent*,” “*Evolving*,” or something else?

Check-out/Likes & Wishes: How did this session go for you?

Closing Words & Extinguishing Chalice:

You know,” said Port, and his voice sounded unreal, as voices are likely to do after a long pause in an utterly silent spot, “the sky here’s very strange. I often have the sensation when I look at it that it’s a solid thing up there, protecting us from what’s behind.”

Kit shuddered slightly as she said:

“From what’s behind?”

“Yes.”

“But what is behind?” Her voice was very small.

“Nothing, I suppose. Just darkness. Absolute night.”

~ *Paul Bowles, The Sheltering Sky*

Do not say, I follow the one true path of the Spirit, but rather, I have found the Spirit walking on my path. For the Spirit walks on all paths.

~ *Khalil Gibran*