



UUA Summer Seminary Discussion Guide

What is God?

By Kadyn Frawley, Ella Boyer and Jennica Davis-Hockett

Spiritual Preparation for Facilitators

This deep discussion focuses on the many ways we may talk about and experience the divine. Take some time to review [Existence of a Higher Power in Unitarian Universalism](#), watch the two Summer Seminary sermon videos and reflect on how you would respond to the discussion questions. Additionally, reflect on how you would respond to someone who is certain they have the right answer to the question “what is god?” How would you respond to someone who struggles with the concept of god?

Opening Reading and Chalice Lighting

On the Beach at Night By [Walt Whitman](#)

On the beach at night,
Stands a child with her father,
Watching the east, the autumn sky.

Up through the darkness,
While ravening clouds, the burial clouds, in black masses spreading,
Lower sullen and fast athwart and down the sky,
Amid a transparent clear belt of ether yet left in the east,
Ascends large and calm the lord-star Jupiter,
And nigh at hand, only a very little above,
Swim the delicate sisters the Pleiades.

From the beach the child holding the hand of her father,
Those burial-clouds that lower victorious soon to devour all,
Watching, silently weeps.

Weep not, child,
Weep not, my darling,
With these kisses let me remove your tears,
The ravening clouds shall not long be victorious,
They shall not long possess the sky, they devour the stars only in apparition,
Jupiter shall emerge, be patient, watch again another night, the Pleiades shall emerge,
They are immortal, all those stars both silvery and golden shall shine out again,
The great stars and the little ones shall shine out again, they endure,
The vast immortal suns and the long-enduring pensive moons shall again shine.

Then dearest child mournest thou only for Jupiter?
Considerest thou alone the burial of the stars?

Something there is,
(With my lips soothing thee, adding I whisper,
I give thee the first suggestion, the problem and indirection,)

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Something there is more immortal even than the stars,
(Many the burials, many the days and nights, passing away,)
Something that shall endure longer even than lustrous Jupiter
Longer than sun or any revolving satellite, Or the radiant sisters the Pleiades.

Check in Question

Name, pronouns if you wish and if god were a plant, what would the plant be?

Videos

[Summer Seminary 2016 Homily: Ella Boyer](#) (she/her/hers) & [Summer Seminary 2014: Sofia Avery Kapulski](#) (she/her/hers)

Discussion Questions

1. What spiritual beliefs do you have about god?
2. What do you feel is most sacred or holy to you?
3. How do faith and reason fit together?
4. How do you have a conversation with someone who has a very different view about god than you do?
5. Ella's sermon is about having an intimate relationship with god and Sofia's sermon is about seeing god as the sum of the big picture. How do you view the holy in the precious and in the profound?
6. What is your relationship with prayer?

Song

[Where do we Come From?](#) # 1003 Singing the Journey

Closing

In our Hungering for Meaning By Bruce Southworth, [Worship Web](#)
In our hungering for meaning,
In our aching for friendship,
In our yearning for justice,
In our heart's remembering of finer days,
May we look deep within the mystery of things
and gather our strength.

May each of us proclaim, as one of God's spies,
the graceful power of life and love
and so may we live in hope. Amen.