

Does God exist?

My six-year old self felt certain. Of course he does. Blind faith prevailed because I trusted my parents, who raised me in the Catholic Church. They wouldn't lie about important things like God or Santa Claus.

My twelve-year old self felt expansive. God was bigger than Catholicism — many paths, one truth. Buddha came from God. Muhammad, too. Everyone was a child of the same creator. I would make this point, ruffling cousins' logical fallacy feathers. I would point out the cognitive dissonance of their dogma until our heads felt like snow globes and they asked to go home, crying and praying for my soul.

After leaving my abusive husband, and the church of my childhood, I felt abandoned by the man-made construct of God, but my faith in the Divine and serendipitous nature of the Universe expanded. God was *The Secret*. The source of my manifestation. A physical energy made up of quarks and strings and infinite dimensions. Scientists became my prophets.

My understanding of God has been as malleable as metal. Forged by circumstance and transformed through cognition. It's strong when I need it to be and I can melt it down and reshape it when needed. It's a tool for navigating this quirky existence.

And yet, my sense of God's presence has never waived, even though my definition adapts and morphs. The Divine. The Universe. The Tao. All attempt to describe the unwavering knowing that sits comfortably in my heart, yet none can come close to accurately defining my connection.

Only now am I circling back to my childhood certainty and feeling comfortable proclaiming my faith — yes, God exists. I know this with every fiber of my being, on a cellular level where words escape me. But that's okay. I don't need to convince you. All I need to do is rest, sit still in the silence, and be calmed by my connection to something bigger than myself.

Andrea Goulet
UUCG Glen Allen, VA
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Take this sunset, I said to myself. There is no soul in it. It is just something that clouds do to a source of light. And what are clouds? They are nothing but moisture suspended in the earth's atmosphere. And what is this sea that reflects the sunset? It is just a great waste of waters, bleak and desolate. Not one thing that composes this sunset is aware of the sunset. Not even the sun, for the sun is nothing but a ball of fire. And my eyes that see all this, what are they but water and dust, briefly blended for the short space of a human

lifetime, so that this insignificant blob of protoplasm that I call myself may see something that isn't altogether there?

But isn't it altogether there? I immediately asked myself. If I am not seeing this sunset with my eyes alone I am seeing it with a sense of wonder and joy of beauty, and the solace of it is slowly pervading me even while I stand and look. I am seeing it with what I can only call my soul. If I do not call it that, I cannot call it anything; yet there it is. I cannot define it--no, but this sunset as a thing of beauty is definitely real. Indeed, the sunset is not only in the sky; it is in my soul.

Rev. A Powell Davies (UU minister)

I remember once I stood near a pear orchard late at night. I had been taking a walk by myself at midnight. The blue-black shapes of the trees gathered in rows beckoned to me. The air was damp but warm and laden with the scents of nocturnal herbs I could not name. Crickets soothed me. The stars were in their full glory over the orchard which was set away from the orange glare of the streetlamps. For some moments I stood there, when suddenly I was "struck" as if I were a temple bowl-gong. I shivered in the warm air, overcome with the "that-ness" of everything, knowing my "me-ness" was not an isolation but a continuity with the stars which appeared to me as fragrant pears ripe for the picking. I no longer knew where I left off and "everything else" began. I was filled with such a sense of joy, joy that "I" was alive to experience that moment at all, that I no longer felt myself to be the son of Elisa and Louis of Detroit, but the co-equal companion of them, and all women and men and children, and each tree and every dear star, and the vast processes of life and death and, yes, "God."

Rev. Mark Belletini (UU minister)

I am god. Or more correctly, we are god.

I've been drawn to the idea of the collective unconscious for some time as a way to understand my intuition when I'm reading tarot cards. I feel like I'm drawing from an infinite well of energy ebbing and flowing from the wide universe. What if it's more? What if that infinite well of energy is god? And what if it's that piece of "stardust" that we all have in our DNA? What if we are each part of god? What if god is just all of our energy reunited into a whole?

I've also thought/felt for some time that we are not humans with a soul, but we are spirits experiencing a human existence. If god's (or the soul's) purpose is to perfect love, to be the essence of pure love, then how does the soul become a more perfect expression of love's true essence?

I think/feel it's through the experience of being human and being imperfect. Feeling the pain of severing from perfect love and the drive/will to work, to heal, to remember, to strive to attain perfect love is how the soul evolves. Soul lessons, I believe, can't be abstract imaginings of what it might feel like, I think they must be embodying the lesson in a whole, all the senses blazing, kind of way.

So, how might I live this human life differently if I am god, living in a human body, to learn how to embody loving energy to perfect my spirit? And I can see that you, too, are god, with this same purpose?

- 1. Stop looking for god. God is in me and everyone and everything around me.*
- 2. Remember that I chose this human experience to learn and grow, with full awareness that humans are all imperfect.*
- 3. Learning the lessons of improving my imperfections is my soul purpose, and so is everyone else's.*

4. *Be aware that at my core, I am god and I am loving, and so is everyone else.*

Linda Sanders

I walked slowly back to my dorm room and a few hours later, I wrote about the experience, attempting to understand it and its meaning for me. At the same time, I had a sense that the moment was, in some deep way, unknowable. **Beyond** understanding. I knew I could not will such a moment to happen again. That it was a gift beyond my power to recreate.

~The Reverend Cyndi Simpson, the Second Unitarian Church of Omaha, NE

August 21, 2017. Oregon Eclipse Fest.

A date and place forever burned into my heart.

Solar eclipse, at totality, shared with 50K+ people, along with a plethora of diverse and high-up religious leaders from around the world.

I'll be the first to admit that my expectations of the eclipse itself were minimal. I went for friends, my family, the diverse music, sense of community and beautiful art.

The eeriness of dusk settling back in at 10 am in the morning was odd and distinctly palpable. The air becomes cool and eerily still. As the moon incrementally crept closer and closer, the sense that there would be a distinct difference from 99% to 100% totality was still low.

100% totality hits. In the split second it takes to remove the glasses, I'm still sure it won't be that spectacular.

Glasses off. You witness the moon, an EXACTLY PERFECT fit, in between us and the sun. The enormous tidal wave of knowing that I know nothing about our universe and life hits. Tears don't stop rushing and I am overcome with the deepest sense of serenity, faith, unconditional love and sheer appreciation for the gift of my life in that very moment.

It was at this very minute that everything was changed. A ripple that would forever have a fingerprint on how I interact with life and those around me. The moment that, even in the darkness, showed me such a visceral light. The knowing in the not knowing. The loving in the wide open space of mystery.

~Shonna Edwards - UU Member at UU Fellowship of Central Oregon - Bend, OR

A Winter Moment

Early morning light illuminates tree tops

Seagulls glide through frosty air

Few leaves cling to the branches of the gummi berry tree

Quiet magic

Donelda Rose South Fraser Unitarian Congregation member-Surrey B.C. Canada

Two Haikus...Honouring the direct experience of Mystery

Mystery answers.
We think we understand but
this is our true home.

Hidden mystery
shows the nature of all things
in its own good time.

Kim Dawson, Kelowna Unitarian member
Kelowna, BC, Canada

Slip Into The Silence

When you slip into the Silence, do you slide down to the deep vibration of intention powering our expanding bubble universe, with the powerful quantum flux creating a base, where all dimensions and fields of force are unified?

Then after you rest and re-charge your being, do you ride the waves of energy up from that base to where symmetry breaks, and dart along the freshly created fields of force through expanding dimensions of space and time, while the energy wave fronts collapse into entangled eddies of swirling galactic matter?

Along the way back to the agreed upon reality of now, do you pause to sing with the sentient stars, a pulsing concerto of creation carried outward on the solar winds?

At last, do you arrow through earth's atmosphere like a comet into the sea, to rock wave tossed in the cradle of life?

Finally, washing up upon the sand, do you rise and climb the tree of life, to that place along evolution's branch, where you inhabit your body once again?

Then, do you go forth and show others how to sing their song, adding to the fugue of joy and love that is striving to envelope this world?

Ah yes, I see that you do all these things. Welcome to the path through the Silence, my fellow traveler!

By Mark R. Whitney
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