



SMALL GROUP MINISTRIES

Relativism

You shall know the truth, and the truth will set you free. - *John 8*

Who will lose most through their works?
Those whose deeds in this world are misguided
and who yet think that what they do is right... - *Qur'an 18.103-104*

The sense of right and wrong is the starting point of Wisdom. - *Mencius II.A.6*

Opening and Chalice Lighting

Marvelous Truth, confront us at
every turn, in every guise, iron ball,
egg, dark horse, shadow, cloud of
breath on air,

Dwell in our crowded hearts, our
steaming bathrooms, kitchens full
of things to be done, the ordinary
streets.

Thrust close your smile that we
know you, terrible joy.
- *Denise Levertov, Singing the Living Tradition Hymnal #500*

Quiet Reflection

Listening is a magnetic and strange thing, a creative force. The friends who listen to us are the ones we move toward. When we are listened to, it creates us, makes us unfold and expand.
- *Unknown*

Sharing/ Check-In

Take two or three minutes to share how you are spiritually, psychologically, emotionally, and physically. You can speak or you can pass. We want to know how you are in this moment.

Relativism

Relativism is sometimes identified (usually by its critics) as the thesis that all points of view are equally valid.

Although there are many different kinds of relativism, they all have two features in common.

1. They all assert that one thing (e.g. moral values, beauty, knowledge, taste, or meaning) is relative to some particular framework or standpoint (e.g. the individual subject, a culture, an era, a language, or a conceptual scheme).
2. They all deny that any standpoint is uniquely privileged over all others.

Pope Benedict XVI has propounded about the dangers of relativism, of not believing that not only there is truth, but also that one can seek to understand it. As he noted in 2002, "I would say that today relativism predominates. It seems that whoever is not a

relativist is someone who is intolerant. To think that one can understand the essential truth is already seen as something intolerant."

As he said as Cardinal Ratzinger, "[Relativism] is letting oneself be 'swept along by every wind of teaching.' (It) looks like the only attitude (acceptable) to today's standards. We are moving towards a dictatorship of relativism, which does not recognize anything as for certain and which has as its highest goal one's own ego and one's own desires."

Break/Quiet Contemplation

Sharing/Deep Listening

Speak about this topic in any way that is comfortable to you. If you choose to use the questions, focus on just one or two, as this will allow you to go deeper into the topic.

- What are your thoughts on Relativism? Do you believe there are “essential or universal truths” or is everything relative?
- What part does self-interest play in your determination?
- Do you think Relativism is responsible for what some say is our failure to deal with such issues as the disruptive Homeless in our church setting? Does it matter or when does it matter? Why?
- Do you think there are “universal truths” that should guide us all? For example, a Universal Bill of Human Rights or The Ten Commandments?
- What part, if any, do the UU Principles play in your thought process?
We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote
 - The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
 - Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;
 - Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
 - A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
 - The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
 - The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;
 - Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

Discussion

This is a time to supportively respond to something another person said or to relate additional thoughts that may have occurred as others shared.

Checkout/ Likes & Wishes

What did you like about this meeting? What would you like to see change at future meetings?

Announcements

**Closing Reading/
Extinguish Chalice**

Our faith and knowledge thrive by
exercise, as well as our limbs and
complexion.

If the waters of truth flow not in
a perpetual progression,
they sicken into a muddy pool of
conformity and tradition.

The light which we have gained
was given us not to be ever staring
on, but by it to discover onward
things more remote from our knowledge.

Where there is much desire to
learn, there of necessity will be much
arguing, much writing, many opinions.

Give me liberty to know, to utter,
and to argue freely according to con-
science, above all liberties.

And though all the winds of doc-
trine were let loose to play upon
the earth, so truth be in the field,
we do injuriously to misdoubt her strength.

For who knows not that truth is
strong, next to the Almighty, she
needs no policies, no stratagems, to
make her victorious.

Let her and falsehood grapple;
whoever knew truth put to the
worse in a free and open encounter.

- *John Milton*