

Session 15: The Theology of Joy

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Session Metadata	
Session	15
Title	The Theology of Joy
UU Source	Earth-Centered Spirituality
Unit	5th Source: Earth-Centered Spirituality
Head / Hands / Heart	Heart
Has Exercise	No
Has Ritual	No
Has Spiritual Practice Presentation	Yes
Special Blocks	None

Preparation

Email to Participants

Our next session is on [date]. We've learned from spiritual teachings of earth-centered traditions and reflected on the struggle to live in harmony with a natural world and the trauma of human living in today's world. Now it's time to call out one specific word in this source:

“Spiritual teachings of earth-centered traditions which **celebrate** the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.

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Celebrate! Of course. Nature itself teaches that the spiritual life doesn't always have to be somber.

Researchers at the Yale Center for Faith and Culture claim, however, that “modern culture is marked by joylessness.” This absence of joy creates a vacuum that stress and worry rush in to fill. The result is a “flattening out” and a “graying” of human experience. The antidote to this spiritual stagnation, according to these Yale researchers, is intentionally bringing more joy into our lives, our families, and our communities.

Readings

- For the two weeks prior to this session, spend some time at the end of each day writing about what has given you the greatest joy that day.
- Read this [“We Need Joy”](#) by Rev. Peggy Clark.
- Listen to this very short call by [Madame Ghandi](#)****for focusing on joy in the face of oppression.
- Watch [“Brené Brown on Joy: It’s Terrifying”](#) (six minutes)
- Read [“Black Joy”](#) by Kimberley Quinn Johnson, UU World, Spring 2022 and [“Black Joy is Black Resistance”](#) by Brodderick Greer in the Huffington Post, June 2015.
- Watch Ross Gay read from his book, [The Book of Delights](#).

If you have the optional books, please read:

- “A Gospel Chorus” by Maury Eldrige (p. 25) from *To Wake To Rise: Meditations on Justice and Resilience* edited by William G. Sinkford.
- From *Voices from the Margins: An Anthology of Meditations* edited by Jacqui James and Mark D. Morrison-Reed: “The Stars Are Dancing” by Om Prakash (p. 94).

Reflection Questions

- How is joy a spiritual pursuit? When has it transformed you? What would it be like if we took this source’s mandate to “celebrate the sacred cycle of life” seriously?
- Is joy terrifying as Brené Brown suggests?
- Greer ends “Black Joy” with “We will not be crushed because we know that while the history of white supremacy is long and triumphant, white supremacy itself is not the last word; joy is.” What is your relationship with joy in the work of antiracism?
- There are times when experiencing joy seems almost impossible: depression, trauma, profound grief. Have there been times in your life when joy was absent? How did that change your views of and relationship with joy?
- Inspired by “We Need Joy” by Rev. Clark, when do you choose to be embraced by joy?

We will read *Let Your Life Speak* by Parker Palmer for Session 18 (in three sessions) so you may want to check to see if you have a copy and if not, [**order one here**](#) or from your favorite bookseller.

Check into our [**UU Wellspring Facebook**](#) [*****Page](#) for Spiritual Practices and UU Wellspring Community!

May you be blessed with abundant joy!

Session Plan

Chalice Lighting and Silence

Read aloud “On the Brink” by Leslie Takahashi Morris (p.25 and below) from *Voices from the Margins: An Anthology of Meditations* edited by Jacqui James and Mark D. Morrison-Reed. Printed here by permission of the author.

On the Brink All that we have ever loved and all that we have ever been stands with us on the brink of all that we aspire to create: a deeper peace, a larger love, a more embracing hope, a greater generosity of spirit, a deeper joy in this life we share . — Leslie Takahashi Morris

Music for today is the [Linus and Lucy theme](#) by Vince Guaraldi.

Let’s take a few minutes of silence to bring ourselves fully into this circle.

Check-In

What are you carrying in your heart? How is your spiritual practice or spiritual companioning going?

Covenant Review

****Note to Facilitators:****Use whatever process your group has established to stay current with the covenant.

Is there anything about the covenant that we should address?

Spiritual Practice Presentation

Reflection

- Looking back at the joy journal you’ve kept over the past two weeks, what surprised you?
When have you felt particularly joyful? Has journaling about joy changed you?
- Is joy terrifying as Brene Brown suggests?

- Quinn Johnson ends “Black Joy” with “We will not be crushed because we know that while the history of white supremacy is long and triumphant, white supremacy itself is not the last word; joy is.” What is your relationship with joy in the work of antiracism?
- There are times when experiencing joy seems almost impossible: depression, trauma, oppression, profound grief. Have there been times in your life when joy was absent? How did that change your views of and relationship with joy?
- Inspired by “We Need Joy” by Rev. Clark, when do you choose to be embraced by joy?

So What?

How does this reflection relate to your spiritual journey? What are you inspired or challenged to do next?

Gratitude and Closing

Have everyone focus on the chalice. Each person, as moved, says one or two words about something from this session for which they are grateful or how they are feeling in this moment. After everyone has said a word, close with a brief statement of thanks and appreciation, such as, “For all this and more, we are grateful.”

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