

Twenty Questions About Unity

(The following is from the pamphlet *Twenty Questions and Answers About Unity* published by the Association of Unity Churches.)

1. What is Unity?

Unity is positive, practical Christianity. It teaches the practical application in everyday life of the principles of Truth taught and exemplified by Jesus Christ, as interpreted in the light of modern-day experience by Unity School of Christianity and the Association of Unity Churches. Unity is a way of life that leads to health, prosperity, happiness, and peace of mind. The Association of Unity Churches, in cooperation with Unity School of Christianity, has established centers of study and worship throughout the world where people study and practice the Unity way of life.

We believe that all people are created with sacred worth. Therefore, we recognize the importance of serving all people within the Unity family in spiritually and emotionally caring ways. We strive for our ministries, publications, and programs to reach out to all who seek Unity support and spiritual growth. It is imperative that our ministries and outreaches be free of discrimination on the basis of race, gender, age, creed, religion, national origin, ethnicity, physical disability, or sexual orientation. Our sincere desire is to create spiritually aware organizations that are nondiscriminatory and that support diversity.

In our effort to reach out to all people as did our Way-Shower, Jesus Christ, we support: the modification of our facilities to make them accessible to all people, regardless of physical challenges; the translation of our materials into Braille and other languages; and respect for the wonderful variety of human commitments and relationships.

We encourage ministers, teachers, and others within Unity to honor the strength of diversity within their spiritual communities. It is with love and in celebration of our unity, in the midst of our wondrous diversity, that we affirm this position.

2. What are the basic tenets of the Unity teachings?

See Unity Beliefs

3. Does Unity believe in the divinity of Jesus Christ?

Yes, Unity teaches that the spirit of God dwelt in Jesus, just as it indwells every person; and that every person has the potential to express the perfection of Christ, as Jesus did, by being more Christ-like in everyday life.

4. What are Unity's distinctive characteristics?

Unity students are encouraged to align with the spirit of the Christ within for personal guidance and direction that will best enhance their spiritual growth. The Unity ministry provides a safe and sacred space for study, participation, fellowship, support, transformation and awakening to the joy of living in God's world. Each Unity ministry is supported by the freewill offerings of

those who share its vision.

Unity affirms the freedom of each individual to advance spiritually according to his or her own level of understanding. Respect for and faith in the spirit of God in every person makes it unnecessary to set down fixed creeds or impose limiting beliefs. Each individual is encouraged to follow the Unity teachings in determining personal responses in his or her life.

5. What is the Association of Unity Churches?

The Association of Unity Churches is comprised of approximately 915 member ministries and satellite ministries on the North American Continent; through the World Outreach Department of Unity School there are approximately 65 international ministries informally affiliated with the Association of Unity Churches. Each ministry is under the leadership of a licensed or ordained Unity minister, or authorized spiritual leader. The emphasis in Unity organizations is on spiritual activities, such as worship services, healing meetings, prayer groups, counseling, study classes, and youth development, including Sunday school and programs for young people of all ages. Since acknowledging God's presence in each person is part of Unity's spiritual purpose, social functions are also an important part of Unity organizations.

6. What is Unity School of Christianity?

Unity School is the world headquarters for the Unity movement founded by Charles and Myrtle Fillmore. After Myrtle Fillmore's remarkable healing utilizing prayer and affirmations, many who were seeking help became interested in how she accomplished this healing. From small prayer circles in living rooms, Unity grew. The first issue of UNITY magazine was published in 1889. The teaching of the practice of prayer, through classes and correspondence, led to the establishment of Silent Unity, the Unity School for Religious Studies Continuing Education Program and Ministerial Education Program and the Retreat programs. Through its threefold ministry of prayer, publishing, and education, Unity School serves millions of people in more than 150 countries. Unity School publishes inspirational magazines, books, audio and videocassettes, CDs, and pamphlets for adults and children.

7. Who are Unity students?

Unity students are those individuals who have found a deeper understanding of God, of themselves, and of their world through the practical methods presented in the Unity teachings. Often this has come about as a result of some very trying and seemingly hopeless experience. Unity students include many who are readers of the various publications; others attend Unity services and classes, finding in such attendance a spiritual "home" in which they are strengthened in their spiritual unfoldment. They are from all walks of life, and of all races, creeds, and nationalities.

8. What is the relationship of Unity to other churches?

Unity puts into practice a true ecumenical approach. Unity sees itself as a vehicle for instruction, inspiration and prayer support for spiritual seekers, regardless of their religious affiliation. Rather than a denomination, locked in tight parameters that restrict, Unity views itself as an ever-

expanding expression of love, light, and peace. Therefore, it freely shares its teachings with all churches. Unity believes in the oneness and freedom of all people. Emphasis is always on the similarities rather than the differences in the human spiritual expression.

9. Is there any connection between Unity and Unitarianism?

No, there is no connection, although there is sometimes confusion because of the similarity of the names. Many beliefs are held in common, including the importance of individual freedom in the quest for Truth. This very freedom, however, makes it difficult to determine the basic differences. In a very general way, it might be said that the two differ mainly in their beliefs regarding Jesus Christ and the Trinity. Unity places great emphasis on spiritual healing, while this is not practiced by Unitarians as a rule. In turn, Unitarians place great emphasis on social and political action.

10. Is Unity an offshoot of Christian Science?

No. Unity and Christian Science, as well as many other New Thought groups, had their beginnings in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Many of the leaders in these groups studied under the same teachers. There are similarities in the teachings of Unity and Christian Science, including the importance of prayer, the practice of spiritual healing, and some fundamental theological points. Also, both have great publishing operations. However, the application of principles, the methods of teaching, and the organization of the two movements are quite different.

11. What is the place of the Bible in Unity?

The Bible is Unity's basic textbook. It is accepted as a body of history, as a moral and ethical teaching, and as a great literary work. Beyond this, Unity finds deep significance in the Bible through its metaphysical interpretation, wherein names of places and people and their experiences symbolize the unfoldment of human consciousness. Through the study of Unity, the Bible is made more meaningful to individuals. Scripture comes alive when it is understood as a clear and helpful guide for today's experiences. The Bible reveals the spirit of Truth and the word of God. Holy Spirit, working individually through those who study Scripture and listen within, is the final authority in spiritual awakening.

12. Does Unity practice baptism and communion?

Yes, symbolically. Whereas baptism by water represents the cleansing of the consciousness, spiritual baptism signifies the inflow of the Holy Spirit. No person can truly baptize another. Baptism is a mental and spiritual process that takes place within the individual as he or she aligns with the spirit of God.

Spiritual communion takes place through prayer and meditation in the silence. The word of Truth is symbolized by the bread, or the body of Jesus Christ. The conscious realization of God-life is symbolized by the wine, or the blood of Jesus Christ. Unity practices communion by appropriating, or partaking of the spiritual energy represented by these elements.

In Unity services, ritual is de-emphasized as a general rule, so that full attention may be devoted to the teachings and their practical application.

13. What is the significance of the blood of Jesus Christ?

The blood of Jesus Christ represents the spiritual energy of God-life that purifies or redeems the body through a cleansing and renewal of the consciousness by the spoken word. Regarding the "spilled blood," or the "ransom of many," the emphasis in Unity is not so much on the death of Jesus as on His life. He did not relieve us of the necessity of working out our own salvation, but His example and teachings show us the way.

14. What about the Crucifixion?

Unity teaches that the cross symbolizes the crossing out of all false beliefs. Here again, emphasis is on life and living, through the resurrection rather than on the Crucifixion.

15. Does Unity accept the virgin birth?

Unity accepts the virgin birth as an experience in the spiritual unfoldment of each individual. Thus the virgin birth is spiritually interpreted as the birth of the Christ consciousness (the awakening of the awareness of God's Spirit within) in the purified soul.

16. Does Unity look for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ?

Unity understands the Second Coming as the individual expression of the Christ consciousness. This is not an event to be anticipated in the future. It is happening here and now, through prayer, meditation, study, and application.

17. How does Unity regard the Trinity?

Unity interprets the religious terms Father, Son, and Holy Spirit metaphysically, as three aspects of mind action: mind, idea, and expression. This is the process through which all manifestation takes place.

18. What does Unity teach about sin and salvation, heaven and hell?

Sin is our separation from God in consciousness, caused by our belief in the "devil" or a power other than God, the good. This belief leads to our unwise use of our God-given powers and abilities. Salvation is now-not something that occurs after death. It happens whenever we turn our thoughts (repent) from fear, anxiety, worry, and doubt, to thoughts of love, harmony, joy, and peace. The "fall" takes place in consciousness whenever we fall into negative habits of thinking.

Heaven and hell are states of consciousness, not geographical locations. We make our own heaven or hell here and now by our thoughts, words, and deeds.

19. Does Unity believe in reincarnation?

Many Unity students accept the concept of reincarnation (re-embodiment after a period of soul rest). This allows us to attain new understandings in a new life experience, so that we can eventually express perfection and demonstrate eternal life. This is our ultimate goal. Unity's real emphasis is on regeneration, not reincarnation. When we achieve this goal, as Jesus did, it will no longer be necessary to reincarnate. The belief that we could ever be reembodied into a lower form of life is not accepted by Unity.

20. What are the advantages of attending Unity?

To attend Unity is to be assured that one will be kept constantly in the remembrance of his or her own inner Christ potential. This awareness, plus the practical principles for living a happy and successful life, is experienced at Sunday services and weekday classes. By joining with others, it is possible for the local Unity ministry to provide expanding services, such as Sunday school, a radio and/or TV ministry, community outreach, prayer and support groups, and counseling. It is very helpful for individuals to have a place where they can be involved in putting these teachings into practice in serving others. Through the local ministry's affiliation and participation in the Association of Unity Churches, such individuals are part of a global movement which forms a base on which to stand as we build a better world together.

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