



STUDY GUIDE FOR
UNITY
AND WORLD
RELIGIONS



Unity Village, MO 64065-0001

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FROM THE DESK OF REV. PAUL JOHN ROACH

This simple study guide may be used individually, for discussion in small groups, or as a class study. The questions are designed to evoke deep reflection on your own spiritual understandings. Reading about world religions may be interesting, but they take on greater meaning when we can enrich our spiritual lives with some of their teachings and practices. What new awareness of the Divine do they evoke in you? It is always helpful to have a journal handy to write down your thoughts and ideas, especially for individual study.

The questions pertaining to each chapter from the book are based on five prompts:

- **Reflect:** Contemplate the core of your spiritual understanding.
- **Refine:** Examine how the teachings in this book have deepened, changed, or reinforced your understanding of Truth.
- **Connect:** Bring your awareness to the golden thread that connects world religions and the interconnectedness of creation and the creative process.
- **Affirm:** Decide what is true for you, and clearly affirm and declare it.
- **Act:** Explore ways to put what you know into practice.

These are loosely based on the five Truth principles reflected throughout the book and taught in Unity.

- **Principle One:** God is Absolute Good, everywhere present, the one presence and one power in the universe.

- **Principle Two:** Human beings have a spark of divinity within them, the Christ spirit within. Their very essence is of God, and therefore they are also inherently good.
- **Principle Three:** Human beings create their experiences by the activity of their thinking. Everything in the manifest realm has its beginning in thought.
- **Principle Four:** Prayer is creative thinking that heightens the connection with God-Mind and therefore brings forth wisdom, healing, prosperity, and everything good.
- **Principle Five:** Knowing and understanding the laws of life, also called Truth, are not enough. We must also live the truth we know.

As you approach each question, open your mind and heart to the intuitive wisdom and emotional intelligence within yourself. Intellectual study can be rewarding, but real transformation comes from contacting the core of deep wisdom and love within you.

May this study guide deepen your knowledge and understanding of the world's religions and the connections among them. May it also serve you on your personal spiritual journey.

Enjoy the adventure!

Rev. Paul John Roach

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PS: Feel free to make copies of this study guide for classes or small groups.

INTRODUCTION

To prepare for this work, consider where you are spiritually right now.

Reflect

Take time to reflect upon your own spiritual journey. How has it unfolded? Do you recall any tipping points or shifts in your awareness? How would you describe yourself in spiritual terms at this point in your life?

Refine

Think about the five essential Truth principles taught in Unity. Are there one or two that specifically appeal to you?

Connect

Identify any spiritual techniques or tools that are helpful in your life. While studying this book, identify others you might want to explore, including those from world religions.

INTRODUCTION CONTINUED

Affirm

Consider what prayer means to you. How do you pray?

Act

In your everyday life, how do you practice the spiritual truths that you know?

Notes:

CHAPTER ONE

UNITY AND CHRISTIANITY

Reflect

Take a moment to reflect on your relationship with Jesus and what the nature of *the Christ* means to you. What is your present understanding, and how do you interpret their interconnection?

Refine

What, for you, is the difference between the teachings *of* Jesus and the teachings *about* Jesus?

Connect

Describe the ways in which you connect to God or divine presence. Can the word *God* or other religious terms become barriers to your spiritual growth?

CHAPTER ONE: UNITY AND CHRISTIANITY CONTINUED

Affirm

Find and write down Bible quotations that support your spiritual practice.

Act

Following Jesus' command to "love one another," contemplate ways to do that. Challenge yourself to replace fear and anxiety with love and compassionate action.

Notes:

CHAPTER TWO

UNITY AND JUDAISM

Reflect

Jewish history has been one of perseverance against difficult odds. Consider some of the spiritual qualities that are helpful in dealing with your own difficulties.

Refine

Judaism practices a full-spectrum approach to life, the universe, and one's place in it. How does that compare to your own spiritual approach? Does your spiritual practice cover all areas of your life?

Connect

Do you find value in the covenants with God made by the Jews? Consider Charles and Myrtle Fillmore's own dedication and covenant. What would your own personal covenant look like?

CHAPTER TWO: UNITY AND JUDAISM CONTINUED

Affirm

God is One is a powerful affirmation. Explore how God can be both above all and within all. Does one appeal to you more? How can you use this understanding in your daily life?

Act

Jewish tradition talks about healing or mending the world. Do you believe it needs mending or healing? If so, what are some of the ways you could help achieve that?

Notes:

CHAPTER THREE

UNITY AND ISLAM

Reflect

Take time to reflect on the dramatic tensions that exist in Islam and other religions between love and judgment, or righteous struggle and peace. How can these apparent dichotomies be reconciled?

Refine

Islam has a highly structured set of beliefs and practices. Unity is much less structured. What do you see as the advantages and disadvantages of both approaches?

Connect

Islam is often misunderstood by non-Muslims. Can you find commonalities between Islam and your own spiritual path?

CHAPTER THREE: UNITY AND ISLAM CONTINUED

Affirm

Muslim prayer is very God-centered. How does that compare to your own approach to prayer and the Divine?

Act

The Muslim tradition offers specific guidance for putting one's faith into action. Which of the Five Pillars of Islam appeal to you? How can you use these teachings to better your life?

Notes:

CHAPTER FOUR

UNITY AND HINDUISM

Reflect

Reflect on the Hindu idea that God is formless and takes many forms. What is your understanding of this?

Refine

Hinduism could be described as highly eclectic and all-encompassing, yet it retains a core identity. Is this true of Unity or your own spiritual path? What is the core for you?

Connect

The goal of Hinduism is *moksha* or freedom. What does this mean to you, and how might you obtain it?

CHAPTER FOUR: UNITY AND HINDUISM CONTINUED

Affirm

Hinduism has many great affirmative statements and mantras. Create a mantra and practice using it on a daily basis.

Act

Are there specific teachings or practices in Hinduism that particularly appeal to you? If so, which ones and why? Do you see a way to use these teachings or practices to benefit others?

Notes:

CHAPTER FIVE

UNITY AND BUDDHISM

Reflect

Does the Buddha's response to suffering make sense to you? What have you learned from times of suffering in your own life?

Refine

The Buddha realized personal pleasures did not bring lasting joy and found a deeper purpose in life. Examine your own purpose for living. What brings you joy?

Connect

How do you relate to the idea of no-self? Likewise, how do you relate to the idea of Buddha nature? Can they coexist?

CHAPTER FIVE: UNITY AND BUDDHISM CONTINUED

Affirm

Emptiness and spaciousness are key concepts in Buddhist teachings. What would your meditation practice look like using these concepts?

Act

Buddhism places great emphasis on generosity and compassion. How can you emphasize these qualities in your interactions? What does this look like?

Notes:

CHAPTER SIX

UNITY AND TAOISM

Reflect

Is it true that what cannot be named is often closer to ultimate Truth than what is described or defined? In other words, do language or labels sometimes get in the way of direct experience?

Refine

The soft overcoming the hard is a central idea in Taoism. Does this idea appeal to you? If so, or if not, why?

Connect

Yin and yang have become well-known terms in the West in recent years. What do they mean for you? How can they inform your practice?

CHAPTER SIX: UNITY AND TAOISM CONTINUED

Affirm

Do you have a favorite verse from the Tao Te Ching? Can you express the essence of it in your own words?

Act

The Tao says there is nothing to perfect. Can you find comfort in who you are and act with confidence?

Notes:

CHAPTER SEVEN

SMORGASBORD

Reflect

How do the ideas of the Perennial Philosophy and the golden thread within all religions help you navigate the smorgasbord of humankind's many approaches to the Divine?

Refine

Most spiritual traditions honor creation and nature in some way. How do you live from the divine order of creation, the natural world, and the creativity within you?

Connect

Given the multiplicity of paths, practices, and techniques available in religion, which ones feel right for you?

CHAPTER SEVEN: SMORGASBORD CONTINUED

Affirm

Love is the foundation for all religions. How do you express love?

Act

If you had a message for all people, what would it be?

Notes:

CONCLUSION

THE FUTURE OF RELIGION

Reflect

The book mentions inequality, artificial intelligence, and climate change as issues affecting the future of religion. How do you see these issues affecting religion? Are there others you can name?

Refine

What does the term “spiritual but not religious” mean to you?

Connect

How do we honor the world’s ancient religious traditions while remaining open to new ideas unfolding in the modern world?

CONCLUSION: THE FUTURE OF RELIGION CONTINUED

Affirm

Looking toward the future, what affirmation would you create and teach to your children and grandchildren?

Act

What personal commitment are you prepared to make to bring what you believe into practice?

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NOTES



ABUNDANT BLESSINGS,

Rev. Paul John Roach

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