

September 2018
Faith: The Practice of Authenticity

Faith isn't a matter of affirming certain rational propositions (establishing authenticity), but of acting in a certain way. - Soren Kierkegaard

Introduction

What do you put your *faith* in? What is it that you believe without external verification, without *authentication*? Religious faith is often defined as “a belief in things unseen.” Traditional theists have a faith that “God” will always be present and acting for their good, and they support that faith by Scriptural text and by their interpretation of their worldly experience, such as seeing the work of a Creative Intelligence in the design of the biological world and in the beauty of the physical world. We Unitarian Universalists “seek truth in love” and we base our beliefs (which are more individual than collective) on our personal experience, on wisdom shared by others, and on sacred texts from different traditions.

Unlike the dogma and doctrines that are the foundations for many religions, the U-U Principles* that guide our behavior are directed towards attitude and process as much as they are towards verifiable facts. We adopt the belief in the *worth and dignity of every human being* as a starting point. And almost all our Principles concern relationships – they are guidelines on how to be with others and with the larger realm of Being.

Yet don't we operate from a core belief, a faith, in the authenticity of our own experiences? And that includes our experience of ourselves as well as of the world we inhabit. To form and sustain any honest relationship we need to show up as our most authentic selves, emotionally honest and available, broken and needing others, cracked, to let the light shine in. When we pretend that we are invulnerable, pious and perfect we deny our own reality, to ourselves and to anyone we try to relate to.

To have Faith in ourselves, in our value as human beings, our goodness in acting, doesn't require a Certificate of Authenticity but rather a belief and acceptance of ourselves as imperfect, struggling, caring people, gathering in community to share the journey of life. May this year be, for all of us, one of authentic journeying towards truth, with faith, and in love.

Questions, for reflection and discussion

What do you believe are the foundational truths in your life, those beliefs that are at the core of your being?

Do those truths result from your personal experience, external evidence, or are they items of *faith* that you have incorporated without a need for authentication?

In what situations do you feel most *authentic*? Least *authentic*?

Do you need faith in yourself in order to recognize, to accept, your own authenticity?

This month's theme was composed by Gary Strichartz and the Worship Associates.

Is a belief in your authenticity necessary for you to feel *faithful*?

Do you think it's easier to have faith in something when you're acting individually or when you are part of a group?

If our belief requires authentication, how do we engage *Mystery*?

Quotes

We have to dare to be ourselves, however frightening or strange that self may prove to be. - May Sarton

"Real isn't how you are made," said the Skin Horse. "It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become Real."

"Does it hurt?" asked the Rabbit.

"Sometimes," said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful. "When you are Real you don't mind being hurt."

from *The Velveteen Rabbit*, by Margery Bianco

There is no shame in expressing your authentic feelings. Those who are at times described as being a 'hot mess' or having 'too many issues' are the very fabric of what keeps the dream alive for a more caring, humane world. Never be ashamed to let your tears shine a light in this world.
- [Anthon St. Maarten](#)

Authenticity is a collection of choices that we have to make every day. It's about the choice to show up and be real. The choice to be honest. The choice to let our true selves be seen. - [Brené Brown](#)

I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else. — C.S. Lewis

Being deeply loved by someone gives you strength, while loving someone deeply gives you courage.— Lao Tzu

Only in the darkness can you see the stars. — Martin Luther King Jr.

Follow your bliss and the universe will open doors for you where there were only walls.— Joseph Campbell

You cannot swim for new horizons until you have courage to lose sight of the shore." — William Faulkner

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Sources

* UU Principles and the Sources: <https://www.uua.org/beliefs/what-we-believe/principles>

<https://iamfearlessoul.com/12-beautiful-and-inspiring-quotes-on-faith-love-and-hope/>

<https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/hope-and-faith>

<https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/authentic>

...and an almost infinite number of sites that exist on any search engine.

Faith, friends, we are all in this together.