

September Theme

Vision: The Practice of Finding a Path Forward

FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

Books & Articles

- 'Coping When Your Life Vision Doesn't Go To Plan' by Teresa Shimogawa
<https://tinybuddha.com/blog/the-betrayal-of-expectations-coping-when-life-doesnt-go-to-plan/>
- 'Standing in the Shadow of Hope (Committed to the struggle without a vision of hope)' by Austin Channing Brown
<https://onbeing.org/blog/austin-channing-brown-standing-in-the-shadow-of-hope/>
- *Visionaries: People and Ideas to Change Your Life*, by Jay Walljasper & Jon Spayde

Videos & Online

- 'A Different Perspective': What does it take to no longer see a threat?
<https://vimeo.com/120438150>
- Check out the Spotify play list for music about creativity:
<https://www.soulmatterssharngcircle.com/spotify-lists.html>

Children's Books

- *Cilla Lee-Jenkins: Future Author Extraordinaire* by Susan Tan & Dana Wulfekotte
- *Vision of Beauty: The Story of Sarah Breedlove Walker* by Kathryn Lasky & Nneka Bennett
- *That Is My Dream!: A picture book of Langston Hughes's Dream Variation* by Langston Hughes & Daniel Miyares

Movies

- *Field of Dreams*, 1989 (PG)
- *World Peace Game* --
<https://vimeo.com/ondemand/60062>
- *Frida*, 2002 (R)

QUOTES FOR CONTEMPLATION

Vision without action is a daydream. Action without vision is a nightmare.
~ *Japanese Proverb*

Vision looks inward and becomes duty. Vision looks outward and becomes aspiration. Vision looks upward and becomes faith.
~ *Rabbi Stephen Wise*

The soul never thinks without a picture. ~ *Aristotle*

We are here to abet creation and to witness it, to notice each thing so each thing gets noticed. Together we notice not only each mountain shadow and each stone on the beach, but we notice each other's beautiful face and complex nature so that creation need not play to an empty house. ~ *Annie Dillard*

The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched - they must be felt with the heart.
~ *Helen Keller*

Your vision will become clear only when you look into your heart. Who looks outside, dreams. Who looks inside, awakens. ~ *Carl Jung*

Luke, you're going to find that many of the truths we cling to depend greatly on our own point of view.
~ *Obi-Wan Kenobi*

Once there were 3 bricklayers. Each one of them was asked what they were doing.

The first man answered gruffly, "I'm laying bricks." The second man replied, "I'm putting up a wall." But the third man said enthusiastically and with pride, "I'm building a cathedral."
~ *Author Unknown*

We're always talking about how we should live in the now and "be present." We shame ourselves for looking back at the past or into the future... It's a beautiful thing to be mindful of the present, but don't forget to honor yourself, your past, and how far you've come. Odds are, it's further than you think... I realized that I sometimes get so caught up with my big dreams... that I forget to recognize all the little dreams I've made come true!... We can get so caught up looking at where we should be, where we aren't, and where others are in comparison that we forget to appreciate where we've been and where we've come from.
~ *Rose Nguyen*

We are limited, not by our abilities, but by our vision.
~ *Author Unknown*

All human activity can be viewed as an interplay between two contrary but equally essential factors -- vision and repetitive routine... When one factor prevails at the expense of the other, the consequences are often undesirable. If we are bound to a repetitive cycle of work that deprives us of our freedom to inquire and understand things for ourselves, we soon stagnate, crippled by the chains of routine. If we are spurred to action by elevating ideals but lack the discipline to implement them, we may eventually find ourselves wallowing in idle dreams or exhausting our energies on frivolous pursuits. It is only when accustomed routines are infused by vision that they become springboards to discovery rather than deadening ruts. And it is only when inspired vision gives birth to a course of repeatable actions that we can bring our ideals down from the ethereal sphere of imagination to the somber realm of fact...
~ *Bhikkhu Bodhi*

What Does It Mean to Be a People of Vision?



Photo by Kelly Sikkema on Unsplash

In short, no vision is perfect. They are all flawed and limited. Every vision distorts even as it clarifies.

There's one quote we all need to remember this month. The author is unknown, but they've given us a great gift. Here it is: "What will mess you up most in life is the picture in your head of how it is supposed to be."

It's not the place one usually starts when it comes to the topic of vision. Most often, conversations about vision tell us to hold on tightly to our pictures of how it is supposed to be, not be suspicious of them. We're encouraged to "stay true to your vision." We're told, "Without vision, the people perish." We're warned that without a clear vision, we're vulnerable to whatever winds blow. And let's be clear: all of that is true. A clear vision anchors us. It gives us direction and hope. It is, indeed, a precious thing to which we should hold fast.

But as our quote of the month makes clear, all that holding fast is also dangerous. In short, no vision is perfect. They are all flawed and limited. Every vision distorts even as it clarifies. On top of that, life changes. Some doors close, new ones open. If you stay true to the vision of what's behind that closed door, you'll just end up spending your life banging your head against the wall. And as Unitarian Universalists, we also know that one vision isn't enough. As clear as our perspectives may be, we all know by now that none is complete. To see the entire view, we need everyone's vantage point.

So clearly being a people of vision is hard work. Knowing when to stay true to your vision and when to let go is a very tricky task. Figuring out when to keep your vision front and center and when to de-center it and make room for others intimidates the best of us.

Yet, here's the thing. If danger and hard work dominate the tone of this month, we will have done ourselves a disservice. Besides being dangerous, holding tightly to one single vision is also just no fun! We don't just *have to* see things from others' points of view; we *get to* see things from others' points of view! Learning about the visions of others isn't just a way of making up for your flawed perspective. It's also an invitation to see the world anew! And while having to let go of precious visions and dreams is painful, it's also exhilarating to evolve and grow.

And maybe that's the most important vision of all this month. Not that of a stern-faced people sticking to their single vision through thick and thin. But that of a playful people exchanging visions and helping each other encounter new and larger worlds. A people who don't just ask each other "Are you staying true to your vision?" but who also say with a smile, "What *new* vision is calling to you?"



Photo by Nathan Dumlao on Unsplash

KIDS' CORNER

How Great Is Your Imagination? Find someone to read this meditation to you. Get relaxed and let your imagination go!

Opening: Sit upright as you are willing and able.

In-breath: Tighten all of your face muscles and body muscles but not so tight that it is uncomfortable. Take a look at your friend's scrunchy faces. Out-breath: Release and relax (Repeat a few times)

Part I: Close your eyes, if you feel comfortable doing so.

Imagine being in a magical place that makes you feel safe and happy. There are beautiful flowers and trees, butterflies, bees, and magical creatures. In this place you can eat whatever you like, sleep when you want to, and you never feel yucky. Open your eyes. How does it feel to be in that place? How does your magical place look?

Part II: What friends or family would you like to join you in this place? Close your eyes again and imagine them there. Imagine that you are playing and enjoying each other in this magical place of mystery and wonder. What games do you play, what do you do together, what do you eat? How does your friend or family member feel being in that place?

Part III: Now, think of those who aren't so happy right now. Think of a person or people who might be sad, hungry, suffering, cold, and/or scared. Sometimes it is hard to figure out what to do for others when they are in pain, we often don't know how to pray for other or how to help them. You can do this meditation when you can't figure out how to help others. Close your eyes again. Invite those people who are suffering into your magical place of wonder and awe. You, your family and friends, and your new friends are so happy to be in your magical place. Play games, eat whatever you want, rest whenever you want to. Imagine that you are all so happy to be together and in this place of magic. Open your eyes again. Wouldn't it be nice if this place of magic and wonder were real? Wouldn't it be nice if we could just invite all of those who hurt into our place of happiness and joy? Say a prayer: I wish that all of those that suffer can experience joy and happiness.

Your Vision Mentor

Our visions of the possible and the good are most often given to us, or at least greatly shaped by others. They come as gifts that are cultivated, inspired and midwived by those we consider visionaries or mentors. So, who are your vision mentors? What poet, preacher, spiritual teacher, artist, activist or musician helps you hold on to your vision of the possible and the good?

Use this month to honor them and refresh their vision in your mind's eye. Re-read the book they wrote. Pin up your favorite quote or picture of theirs. Memorize their poem so you can more easily keep it close. Whatever your method, find a way to keep them front and center this month, paying attention to new ways they are calling to you or propping up your hope and commitment.

Find a buddy to do this with. Tell them about the book, quote, poem or piece of art you've chosen. Share how they became your "vision mentor" and the impact they have made on your life.



PERSONAL REFLECTION

As always, don't treat these questions like "homework" or a list that needs to be covered in its entirety. Instead, simply pick the single question that speaks to you most and let it lead you where you need to go. The goal is to figure out what being a part of a people of creativity means for you and your daily living. So, which question is calling to you? Which one contains "your work"?

1. What vision has been with you since you were a child? How has it both changed and remained the same?
2. What vision do you want to pass on to your kids, grandkids or those who look to you for guidance?
3. How is the season of fall a time of vision for you? How does this season of harvest and turning of leaves allow you to "see" differently?
4. What might it mean to use a new form of perception to connect with the sacred? Many of us lean on our visual sight and analytical thinking to perceive and engage the holy. But how might listening or touch open an entirely new door? What about allowing your intuition to help you "see"? Or letting the muse of creative expression open up a new horizon? Many also suggest that vision is clearest when we look out with a "beginner's mind." What new form of "vision" is calling to you?
5. Wayne Dyer writes, "If you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change." What in your life needs another look? What if you started with the things you are most sure about?
6. Is your vision of how your life is "supposed to be" in your way? Could clear vision require letting go of the visions to which you currently cling?
7. Have you ever had a "vision?" A spiritual revelation, mystical experience or premonition? Have you shared it easily? Or kept it to yourself?
8. Loren Eiseley reminds us, "It is a commonplace of all religious thought, even the most primitive, that the [person] seeking visions and insight must go apart from [their] fellows and live for a time in the wilderness." *What might "stepping apart and going into the wilderness" look like in your life?*
9. Is the speed and pace of your daily routine blurring your vision? Could the secret to finding clear sight be slowing down?
10. **What's your question?** Your question may not be listed above. As always, if the above questions don't include what life is asking from you, spend the month listening to your days to hear it.

JUSTICE CORNER

Join the Social Justice Team in our All-Church Read of *Daring Democracy: Igniting Power, Meaning, and Connection for the America We Want*, by Frances Moore Lappé and Adam Eichen. Copies are currently available in the church Book Shop, and Rev. Tim will offer the sermon 'Healing the Heart of Democracy' on September 23 to kick it off. Discussion dates will be published in the Adult Religious Exploration brochure coming out on September 9.

Americans are distraught as tightly held economic and political power drowns out their voices and values. Frances Moore Lappé and Adam Eichen offer a fresh, surprising response to this core crisis. This intergenerational duo opens with an essential truth: It's not the magnitude of a challenge that crushes the human spirit. It's feeling powerless—in this case, fearing that to stand up for democracy is futile. With riveting stories and little-known evidence, they demystify how we got here, exposing the well-orchestrated effort that has robbed Americans of their rightful power. But at the heart of this unique book are solutions.

All contents adapted from the Soul Matters Sharing Circle resource materials for September 2018.

2672 E Alluvial Ave
Fresno, CA 93720
www.uufresno.org
559.322.6146