

Hey, friends. The kids did a great job introducing this topic by helping me name the seven dwarves. We're talking about all kinds of sevens today, and you should have received a handy reference sheet for the systems we're talking about with your order of service.

So, what are the seven wonders of the world? The seven wonders of the ancient world were named *themata* – which literally means “must see” – by Philo of Byzantium in 225 before the common era. These *themata* included the Great Pyramids at Giza, the statue of Zeus at Olympia, and the Lighthouse of Alexandria. In the year 2000 of the common era, a campaign was started to name the seven wonders of the *modern* world. These modern wonders included the Great Wall of China, the Roman Colosseum, and Machu Picchu. The Great Pyramids at Giza were granted an honorable mention, but the rest of the list was rewritten.

We're going to jump around just a little bit, but I promise it will make sense soon. Who is familiar with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs? For those of us who may not know, this is a model developed by Abraham Maslow in 1943. It is now frequently used in psychology as a part of a survey of psychological theories. The model is pyramid-shaped and initially had five levels: physiological needs, safety and security, love and belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization. In this system, needs had to be met in the order of the hierarchy.

Maslow saw that top tier – self-actualization – as a rarely-attainable state of being. He observed that people who achieved self-actualization tended to enjoy solitude, maintained few close relationships, resisted social norms, and valued spontaneity. Respect for others was an important factor in self-actualization.

In 1970, Maslow restructured the hierarchy. The new model is widely unknown and has **seven** levels of need – physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem, cognitive, aesthetic, and self-actualization. The first four of these fall into the category of *deficiency* needs and the last three *growth needs*. According to Maslow, deficiency needs had to be met in order to facilitate growth.

Maslow's system is not without criticism. The 1970 modification did somewhat undermine the message of the original work, and it is now widely agreed that needs are more of a system than a hierarchy. Holistic wellness is less of a video game where we “level up” and more a strategic balance of the physical, emotional, and spiritual.

Ok, so now, who is familiar with the chakra system?

The chakra system comes from Eastern traditions, specifically Hinduism and some forms of tantric Buddhism. The idea is that there are **seven** main energetic centers running through the body in alignment with the spine. Each of these energetic centers is associated with different qualities and characteristics. So, for example, the root chakra, the very first one at the base of the spine, is associated with a sense of being grounded and safe – much like Maslow's *safety and security needs*.

The charkas are less a hierarchy and more a system working together to maximize the effective flow of *prana*, or *vital life force*. When a chakra is blocked or dysfunctional, we might experience troubles associated with that chakra's functions. The throat chakra, for example, is associated with our communication and truth. Someone experiencing a block or dysfunction in

the throat chakra may have trouble advocating for themselves or living true to their authentic self.

The chakras work together but are ultimately independent of one another – one chakra being blocked does not necessarily impact another, but the block can impact an individual's general sense of wellbeing.

Now, who knows the **seven** principles of Unitarian Universalism? The current wording of the principles, which can be found on the back of your order of service, was adopted in 1985.

When the original version was drafted during the merger of the **Universalist Church of America** and the **American Unitarian Association** in the early 60's, it included some language that likely would not be well received these days. For example, the second principle:

“To cherish and spread the universal truths taught by the great prophets and teachers of humanity in every age and tradition, immemorially summarized in their essence as love to God and love to man.”

I'm not sure about y'all, but I only believe in God like three days out of the week, and she's going to have to take me to dinner first before we talk about love. So, I can imagine that I might not be here today if that was still in the principles, and things may be similar for some of you.

There were only 6 principles at the time of the merger, and we've come a long way since then. Do we know the first one in the current version? *We affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person* or, as in the children's version, *each person is important*.

When we hear that – that we all have **inherent** worth and dignity, that we are *enough* without even trying or proving a thing – what does that create?

For me, that establishes a certain sense of safety.

There is nothing – no action, no circumstance, nothing – that can undermine anyone's inherent worth and dignity.

We are all, at our core, the same and deserving of mutual respect largely because of that sameness. This concept calls to mind what some call *the golden rule*, which is found in some form or fashion in multiple traditions.

In Christianity, it presents as, "*Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.*"

In Wicca, "*I command thee thus, O children of the Earth, that that which ye deem harmful unto thyself, the very same shall ye be forbidden from doing unto another, for violence and hatred give rise to the same.*"

This baseline sense of safety is the foundation for both systems we spoke about earlier. Maslow named *safety and security* as the second most important need, and this is the need associated with the root chakra – the foundational energetic center at the base of the spine. In Unitarian Universalism, the very first principle creates this sense of safety by affirming that we all matter, and we all deserve to have our needs met.

So those are some beginnings, but what's the end game? Once our needs are met and our chakras are aligned, what's next? In the song *Seven Wonders* by Fleetwood Mac, Stevie

Nicks sings, *"If I live to see the seven wonders, I'll make a path to the rainbow's end. I'll never live to match the beauty again."* What is the rainbow's end? What's the goal?

From a financial standpoint, the goal might look like financial stability or a secure retirement. It could look like a specific number of dollars in the bank or another material goal. It could mean being in a place financially where we are able to give to charitable causes that matter to us.

Spiritually, perhaps that looks like what some call enlightenment or liberation. It could mean coming to a place on our spiritual journey where we are mostly content and unattached. In many traditions, the enlightened become teachers, passing on their knowledge to others.

Emotionally, maybe the rainbow's end is inner peace and healthy coping mechanisms. And then, when we consider that human beings are wired for socialization, maybe the rainbow's end is being surrounded by a loving community that will support us when our inner peace is threatened, or our healthy coping mechanisms exhausted, and reciprocating that love support when we are able.

We need all these elements, all these systems, to achieve holistic wellness, our highest good, or fulfillment. The end goal in all systems is, if not in so many words, the same: *respect for the interdependent web of existence of which we are all a part.*

In Maslow's modified hierarchy, progress through the levels of need eventually led to one additional level: transcendence. *Transcendence* does not fall into the categories of deficiency or growth but stands alone as an advanced state of being.

In his 1971 work, *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature*, Maslow states: “*Transcendence refers to the very highest and most inclusive or holistic levels of human consciousness, behaving and relating, as ends rather than means, to oneself, to significant others, to human beings in general, to other species, to nature, and to the cosmos.*” That’s a ton of words, right? What Maslow is saying here is that self-actualization goes *beyond* the self. When we can go beyond the self in the service of others, we can experience greater fulfillment than before.

The caveat here is that it is part of the hierarchy – we cannot reach transcendence if our own needs are not met; we cannot give from an empty cup.

The crown chakra, the only chakra outside of the physical body, found just above the top of the head, is concerned with connection to Divine Source, which is not external to us, but a part of our own being. In this system, we are all cut from the same Divine cloth.

More than only inherent worth and dignity, we all have inherent qualities of Godde.

When we respect one another, we are honoring the Divine nature of our fellows, and, in doing so, we are also honoring the Divine nature of ourselves.

That kind of takes *do unto others* to a whole new level, right?

So, with that in mind, what does the rainbow’s end become?

I know that for me, the rainbow’s end looks a lot like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s beloved community. According to Coretta Scott King, “*In the Beloved Community, caring and compassion drive political policies that support the worldwide elimination of poverty and hunger and all forms of bigotry and violence.*”

The beloved community places people over policies or profits. The beloved community is the ideal we strive for when we talk about respecting the interdependent web of existence of which we are all a part. It does not mean that we are all the same, that we are all UUs or liberal or that we all believe exactly the same thing – it means we respect one another and the different systems that help define what we call sacred or wonderful.

It means compassion for one another as fellow travelers on this journey supersedes anything that might divide us.

The beloved community is full of people like my friend Devin, who has graciously agreed to let me use her as an example.

My friend Devin and I both graduated from Karns High School in 2011. Devin is a straight woman who once sat opposite me in our Junior AP English class during a debate about marriage equality. During the debate, she held a Bible and referenced it frequently in her defense of what she called “traditional marriage.” Devin is passionately conservative, and we radically disagree on nearly everything.

Devin is also the person who dropped everything with barely any notice to see a once in a lifetime U2 concert with me and is always open to healthy dialogue about things we disagree about.

Several weeks ago, I posted a poem with some heavy content on my blog. Devin read it and commented, *“Keep on rocking, lady! The Universe is not finished with you and your story.”*

“The Universe is not finished with you and your story.”

The beloved community is full of people like my friend Devin, who, even though we do not agree politically or spiritually, even though she likely meant *God* or *Jesus*, chose to say *Universe*, because that is a word I often use for what is sacred to me.

There is space for what everyone calls sacred in the beloved community. There is space for everyone in heaven, enlightenment, self-actualization – there is space for everyone at the rainbow's end when we can transcend our differences to show up in support of one another.

Of course, this *is* a Unitarian Universalist community, so any implications of this message are merely suggestions, and we must each decide for ourselves what to do with them. Just as the seven principles, the seven wonders and Maslow's hierarchy were rewritten to better suit changing needs, we must name our wonders for ourselves, decide what our rainbow's end looks like, and sometimes reevaluate.

I invite you to ponder what *your* rainbow's end might be, and how it speaks to your deepest values and commitments.

I challenge you to treat every day as if it is the rainbow's end, and approach it with wonder - living as true to your values and highest good as you are able, for the beauty is that you can never be matched. The world needs you, your wonder, and your light.

Blessed be.

Benediction: May we all feel safe holding space for what we call sacred and making space for that which our fellows call sacred as well. May the love we experience here

follow us as we continue our journeys, and may we remember that The Universe is not finished with us and our stories. Go in peace and return in love. Blessed be.