

**An excerpt from the sermon “Likeness to God” by William Ellery Channing.**  
*It has been adapted to use inclusive language.*

I affirm, and would maintain, that true religion consists in proposing, as our great end, a growing likeness to the Supreme Being. Its noblest influence consists in making us more and more partakers of the Divinity. Religious instruction should aim chiefly to turn people's aspirations and efforts to that perfection of the soul, which constitutes it a bright image of God.

It is only in proportion to this likeness, that we can enjoy either God or the universe. That the pure in heart can alone see and commune with the pure Divinity, was the sublime instruction of ancient sages as well as of inspired prophets. It is indeed the lesson of daily experience.

It is plain, too, that likeness to God is the true and only preparation for the enjoyment of the universe. In proportion as we approach and resemble the mind of God, we are brought into harmony with the creation; for, in that proportion, we possess the principles from which the universe sprung; we carry within ourselves the perfections, of which its beauty, magnificence, order, benevolent adaptations, and boundless purposes, are the results and manifestations.

This likeness does not consist in extraordinary or miraculous gifts, in supernatural additions to the soul, or in any thing foreign to our original constitution; but in our essential faculties, unfolded by vigorous and conscientious exertion in the ordinary circumstances assigned by God. To resemble our Creator, we need not fly from society, and entrance ourselves in lonely contemplation and prayer. Our proper work is to approach God by the free and natural unfolding of our highest powers, of understanding, conscience, love, and the moral will.

**An excerpt from “Unfolding Our Powers,” an essay by Rebecca Parker**

Education develops full aliveness. It is not an adjunct to religion. Education is religious practice, a practice by which people attain to their God-likeness. Thus, in Unitarian Universalist tradition, the spiritual practice at the heart of our religious understanding is education. Education's purpose is much broader than acquiring knowledge and skill, or becoming adapted to society and able to function in it. Education is for the unfolding of our powers, the full realization of our human-ness, which is the same as the full growing of a soul, the growing of our being into our God-given, divine nature.