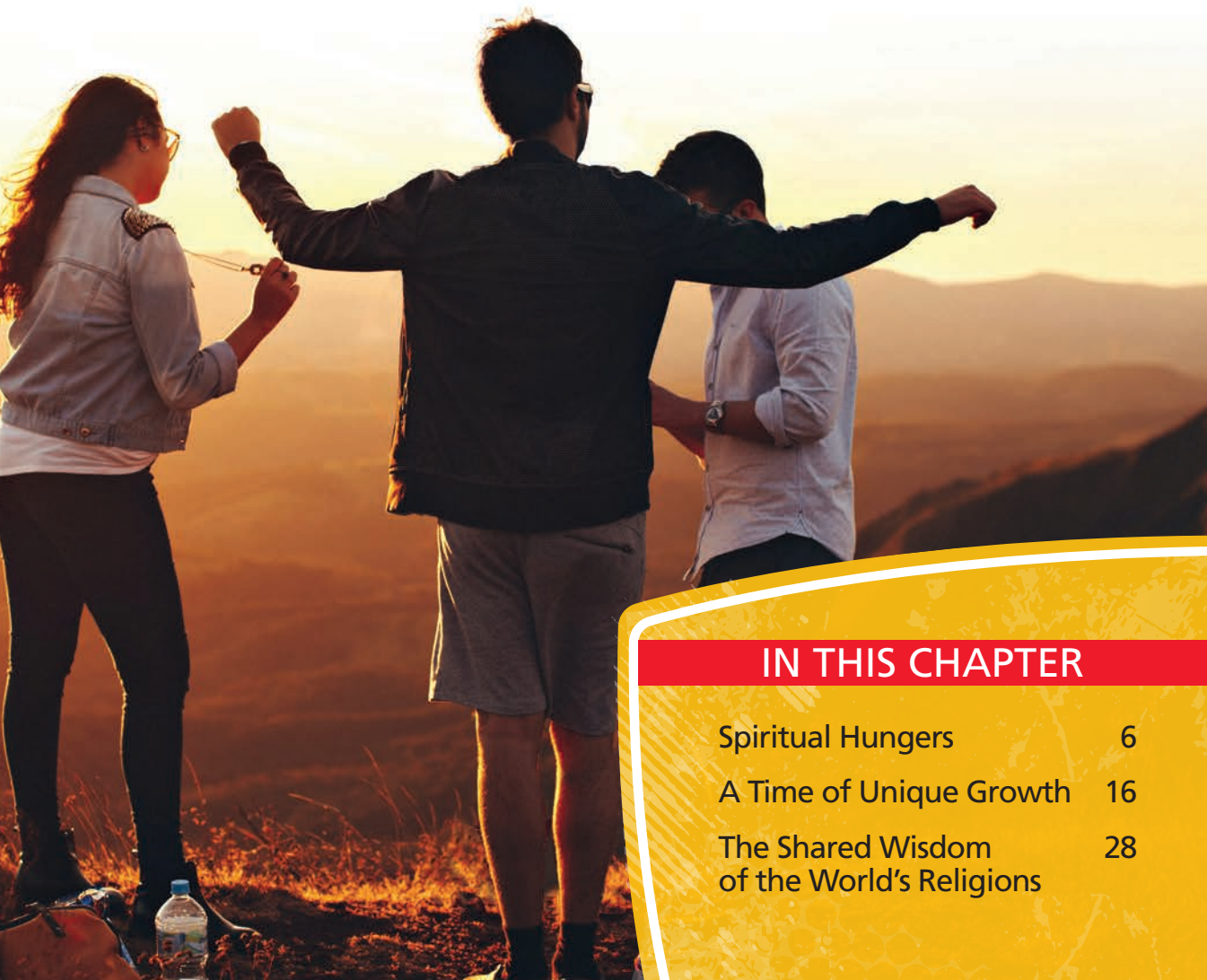


chapter

## 1

# Being Human:

## Hungering for Meaning, Goodness and Connection



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# Spiritual Hungers

Imagine participating in a study about **religion**. After you have answered all the questions about your values and practices, you are asked to identify your religious affiliation using a checklist something like this:

- agnostic (I don't know whether there is a god.)
- atheist (I do not believe a god or any gods exist.)
- Buddhist
- Christian (Catholic)
- Christian (Orthodox)
- Christian (Protestant)
- Hindu
- Jewish
- Muslim
- Native or Indigenous religion
- nothing in particular
- other

Which box would you check? Would you answer quickly, or would you have to think about it? Would your answer be the same or different from others in your family? A recent study by Springtide Research Institute® shows that 61 percent of young people (ages 13 to 25) in the United

States identify with a religion, leaving 39 percent who indicate they do not belong to a particular religion. This same study shows that almost 75 percent of young people say they are religious, suggesting that many who do not identify with a particular religion still find something valuable about religion.

Regardless of which religious affiliation box you would select on a checklist, this course is for you. It has been designed with awareness of, and respect for, young people regardless of religious tradition. It is not the intent of this course to convince students who are not Catholic to become Catholic; rather, the course provides an opportunity to learn about the faith of your school and also your own faith if you are Catholic. But no matter what your current beliefs are, learning more about the Catholic approach to faith and life can be a rich experience.

Before considering the specific beliefs and practices of the Catholic faith, also called **Catholicism**, this

**religion** An organized system of beliefs, rituals, and ways of living that gives expression to a particular people's faith in a god or gods.

**Catholicism** The beliefs, rituals, and practices as lived out by those who identify with the Catholic religion.

course explores religion more broadly. It considers common hungers that people experience and explores this question: What does religion provide that makes it valuable in people's lives? This sets the context for the course's exploration of Catholic Christianity.

People belong to a religion generally because it feeds the hungers of the human heart and mind. Just as we have physical hungers that require nurturing our body, we have hungers related to the parts of ourselves that aren't material or physical. We refer to those as **spiritual** hungers. We'll turn now to exploring three of those hungers: the hunger for meaning, the hunger for goodness, and the hunger for connection.

## Hunger for Meaning

Davin met his friends Monica and Charlie for lunch at the neighborhood deli. Halfway through their sandwiches, Charlie asked: "So how is everyone doing? Like how are you really doing?"

Davin took a deep breath before replying. "Well, if I'm really honest, I've been feeling down lately.



**W**hat does it mean to say that someone is religious or belongs to a particular religion?

**spiritual** Relating to the nonphysical, or nonmaterial, aspects of human life and experience.

Image in public domain

## Helen Keller on the Best Things in Life

Helen Keller, who lost her eyesight and hearing in early childhood, shares a powerful reflection on spiritual experience in her autobiography, *The Story of My Life*:

I used to wish that I could see pictures with my hands as I do statues, but now I do not voften think about it because my dear (heavenly) Father has filled my mind with beautiful pictures, even of things I cannot see. . . . How happy your little Helen was when her teacher explained to her that the best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen nor even touched, but just felt in the heart. Every day I find out something which makes me glad.

One could imagine that Helen could easily have become angry, isolated, or cynical. Instead, her spiritual hungers were nurtured by people who loved her, and Helen's resulting love, joy, and gratitude inspired everyone around her.





It feels like all I've been getting is bad news. First, I bombed the math test a couple of weeks ago. Then we got the news that my uncle Desmond has cancer. Then there was that school shooting down south and the terrible floods up north. It's sometimes hard for me to even want to get out of bed these days."

"Oh no, Davin!" Monica exclaimed. "Will your uncle be okay? Isn't he the uncle you always go hunting with?"

"Yes, that's him," Davin responded. "I don't know yet how bad it is. They're not saying much. He's going in for more tests, and there's probably going to be chemo or radiation. I didn't really want to talk about all this negative stuff, but I needed to tell someone. Since you are my two best

friends, I hope it's okay that I shared it with you."

"Of course, it is," Charlie said.

"And you're not the only one feeling down. Life can seem overwhelming sometimes, but I have faith that God is there to help us through things like this. Just let us know how we can help you."

"I don't know about God," Monica chimed in. "I can't see why a loving God would let all this bad stuff happen. But I believe the universe wants the best for us, whether there is a God or not. Don't lose hope!"

Davin smiled at his friends. "Thanks, guys. It's really hard to be positive right now. I'm not sure what I believe in, but your support means a lot. Thank you."

We all want our lives to make sense, to have meaning. This is one of the deepest desires of the human heart. Most people find this meaning by believing in something bigger than themselves. Monica and Charlie both believe in something that helps them see the meaning in their lives and the lives of others. Charlie expresses his faith in God, a supreme being that he believes loves and cares for every person. Monica has faith in the goodness of the universe, believing that if we work on being our best selves, good things will result. Davin is still figuring out what he believes in, but he hungers for something that will give him strength and hope in dealing with the challenges of life.

Hungering for life to have meaning is a common human experience. When we feel that our life doesn't have meaning, we can easily despair or feel sad. We all want to know that what we do matters. We also want to know that the things we experience—both good and bad—have a purpose. Even if that purpose isn't clear, it is possible to have faith that it will become clear over time.

### Meaning Leads to Faith

The hunger for meaning leads to the idea of faith. Faith means putting your trust in something or someone. Having confidence in this thing or person gives meaning and purpose to a person's life. Understood like this, faith doesn't even require belief in a supreme being. It can mean believing in nature, the human race, your country, or even yourself. The point is that our hunger for meaning points to the belief in something bigger than ourselves.



**D**o you believe in something bigger than yourself? If so, what role does this belief play in your life? Does it give meaning to your life?



## Hunger for Goodness

A few weeks later, Davin, Monica, and Charlie were working on a history assignment together. They had just read *The Hiding Place*, by Corrie ten Boom. This book tells the story of the ten Boom family hiding Jews from the Nazis during World War II (1939–1945) and the consequences of this. Although the book is filled with horrors and injustices, it is also hopeful in showing the depth of human courage and determination.

“This book seems almost unreal,” said Monica. “I think most people would just give up when faced with those situations.”

“Except they had their faith in God,” replied Charlie. “It gave them hope that goodness and love are greater than evil and hate. That’s the point of faith. It gives us hope that good will win out, if not in this life then in the next.”

“But you don’t have to be a Christian to believe in the importance of goodness,” said Monica. “I’ve seen people from many different religions and even people with no religion making sacrifices to bring goodness into the world.”

“And does believing that goodness will win out mean having to believe in an afterlife? Can’t we believe goodness will triumph over hatred and evil in the here and now?” asked Davin.

“I mean the ten Boom sisters saw moments of kindness and goodness even in the concentration camp. I’ve been trying to look for the moments of kindness and goodness around me every day. It’s like if I look for them, I see them; if I don’t look for them, I don’t see them.”

“That’s interesting,” Monica replied. “It’s almost like you’re saying that experiencing the goodness in the world requires a certain way of seeing the world. It’s something that’s there, but you don’t experience it if you aren’t looking for it.”



A home in the Netherlands showing a place where Jews were hidden during World War II.

We have reasons to wonder whether goodness is really triumphing over evil. Just consider the ongoing news about violence, economic hardships, and injustices. Then there are the racial injustices, marked especially by the hate crimes committed because of race. Concern for global climate change continues to rise as the country experiences more and more weather-related disasters. We've lived through a pandemic during which schools were shut down and many people lost their lives. To make things worse, people in the United States and other parts of the world are sharply split on many of these issues, dividing families and communities.

Any one of these negative experiences can affect someone's life. This is true because human beings have a deep desire for goodness, an expectation that the world is good, and a general belief that people will treat one another with kindness. When something happens that challenges these understandings, it can cause people to feel a sense of hopelessness for the future. Recent years have seen rises in depression, especially among young people, because of struggles with feelings of sadness and hopelessness. A world filled with hate and injustice goes against the desire for goodness that seems built into us.

The hunger for goodness often leads to one of two responses when people face challenging and hurtful experiences. Some people fall into hopelessness and despair. They mainly see pain and grief without much hope that things will get better. Other people face the same situation and say to themselves: "We can get through this. Things can and will get better with time and effort." These people see beyond their current painful situation with the hope that goodness will overcome their pain.

## Goodness Is Connected to Hope

Hopelessness and despair are both valid responses to negative, painful experiences. Both come from



**D**raw a vertical line down the center of a sheet of paper to create two columns. In the left column, write signs of goodness you see in the world. In the right column, write signs of evil you see in the world. Which column is longer, and why?

the same place: the spiritual hunger for goodness. If we didn't have this hunger, experiencing something bad or hurtful wouldn't really bother us (outside of any physical pain). But because it does bother us, we can say that the hunger for goodness points to a reality that is spiritual because it goes beyond the physical or material world.

The hunger for goodness is connected to hope. Hope is the expectation and desire that things can and will be better than they are now. A hopeful person who has failed at something that really matters keeps trying with the belief that they can do better. A hopeful person who is struggling with money believes that their financial situation will improve

in the future. A hopeful person seeing the injustice of racism believes that people's hearts can change and that respect for people's dignity will improve. This isn't just wishful thinking.

## Hunger for Connection

Davin, Monica, and Charlie were talking after binge-watching their favorite show at Davin's house during their semester break.

"That is so corny," Charlie proclaimed. "As if those two characters could become friends after all the abuse they dumped on each other."

"I think it's great," replied Monica. "A lot of people who start out on the wrong foot end up liking each

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## Hope and Your Health

Research shows that people with hope are healthier, physically and emotionally. A *Psychology Today* article states: "Many studies have shown a wide range of physical health benefits of increased hope, including a higher-functioning immune system, better prognosis in chronic illness, and decreased sensations of pain." Not surprisingly, researchers have also shown that people with higher levels of hope have lower levels of anxiety and depression. Researchers have also identified practices that help people cultivate hope, including these:

- spending less time consuming news, which tends to focus on and repeat negative stories
- spending less time on social media, especially if your feed is filled with gossip and negative perspectives
- before going to bed, recalling one positive experience that shows the presence of goodness in the world





other. Remember the characters Clare and Chad and how they disliked each other when they first met? Turns out, they were guilty of the very things they didn't like in each other at first. Once they recognized that, they ended up becoming best friends."

"I once heard that the opposite of love isn't hate," said Davin. "The opposite of love is apathy, just not caring about the other person at all. I think our natural desire is to want connection with other people. But sometimes we avoid connecting with other people because we've been hurt in some way and don't want to be vulnerable again."

"I don't know about all that," replied Charlie. "All I know is that I love the two of you."

"We love you too!" said Monica and Davin as they all laughed together.

Every human person hungers for connection. Consider how people thrive and are happy when they are part of a caring and accepting community. Or how people suffer physically and emotionally when surrounded by mean and uncaring people. Or worse, how awful it is to feel alone and completely unconnected to other people. Many studies support the critical importance of being connected to loving and caring people. For example, one study found that being alone too much—often called social isolation—increases the risk of premature death regardless of the cause.

The hunger for connection is not limited to relationships with other people. Think of the role that pets play for many people. Have you ever heard someone with a cat or dog say, "I don't know how I would get along without them"? Human beings also hunger for a connection with nature. During the COVID-19 pandemic, people flocked to outdoor activities in record numbers. When their connection with friends and family was limited, people realized how healing and nurturing it is to be connected to nature.

Many people experience another kind of hunger for connection. It is the connection to a power greater than themselves. Throughout human existence, people have recognized that their connection to a higher power is what gives life meaning and hope. Some even go so far as to say that without this connection, their spiritual hungers are never truly satisfied.

## Connection and Love Go Hand in Hand

The hunger for connection is related to love. Loving and being loved are the ways we express our connection with others. Being able to share love with others is an essential part of being human. Think about times you have felt really loved by a family member or friend. Would it be accurate to say that these were times when you also felt the closest to them, the most connected to them? Love and connection go hand in hand.



**D**raw three interlocking circles. Label one “Meaning,” one “Goodness,” and one “Connection.” In the “Meaning” circle, write down things that give meaning to your life. In the “Goodness” circle, write down good things you experience and hope for. In the “Connection” circle, write down things and people you feel connected to. Is there something that all three circles have in common?

**spirituality** Ways of tending to the part of the self that is not physical. It is expressed through actions, beliefs, values, and attitudes that characterize a person’s life.

## Thriving, Not Just Surviving

Let’s conduct a thought experiment. Assume that the spiritual hungers for meaning, goodness, and connection are part of every person’s experience. What do these hungers point to? People will have different answers to this question. Some will say that these hungers are the result of biological evolution—that these hungers are hardwired into our brain for our survival. This answer has some truth to it. The hunger for meaning motivates us to grow and invent, the hunger for goodness motivates us to help one another, and the hunger for connection motivates us to form supportive groups and communities.

Another perspective builds on this survival answer. This perspective says that our ways of satisfying our spiritual hungers do more than help us survive. They help us thrive and grow into our full potential as human beings. People who embrace this perspective believe that human beings exist for more than just survival. We have been created to imagine new and better futures, to create beautiful works of art, to explore and understand the world, to celebrate life with dance and song, to be sources of love and goodness to friends and strangers alike. The hungers for meaning, goodness, and connection call us to use our imagination, intelligence, and creativity in ways that lead to a truly happy and fulfilled life.

The ways we feed our spiritual hungers are part of our **spirituality**. Every person has a spirituality, whether they call it that or not. This is because everyone experiences hungers that go beyond physical needs. A person’s spirituality is expressed through actions, beliefs, values, and attitudes that characterize their life.

Responding to our spiritual hungers involves choices. On the one hand, we can choose to nurture our spiritual hungers in healthy ways. A person might do this through connecting with other people, praying, serving others, or intentionally being open

to new experiences. This leads to a life that is joyful and thriving. On the other hand, we can starve our spiritual hungers, or worse, feed them in unhealthy ways. This could happen if a person withdraws from others, is resentful and unforgiving, or does not take time to reflect and center themselves. This leads to a life that is joyless, selfish, and often self-destructive. Young adulthood is a time of life when people face these spiritual choices in a more conscious way.

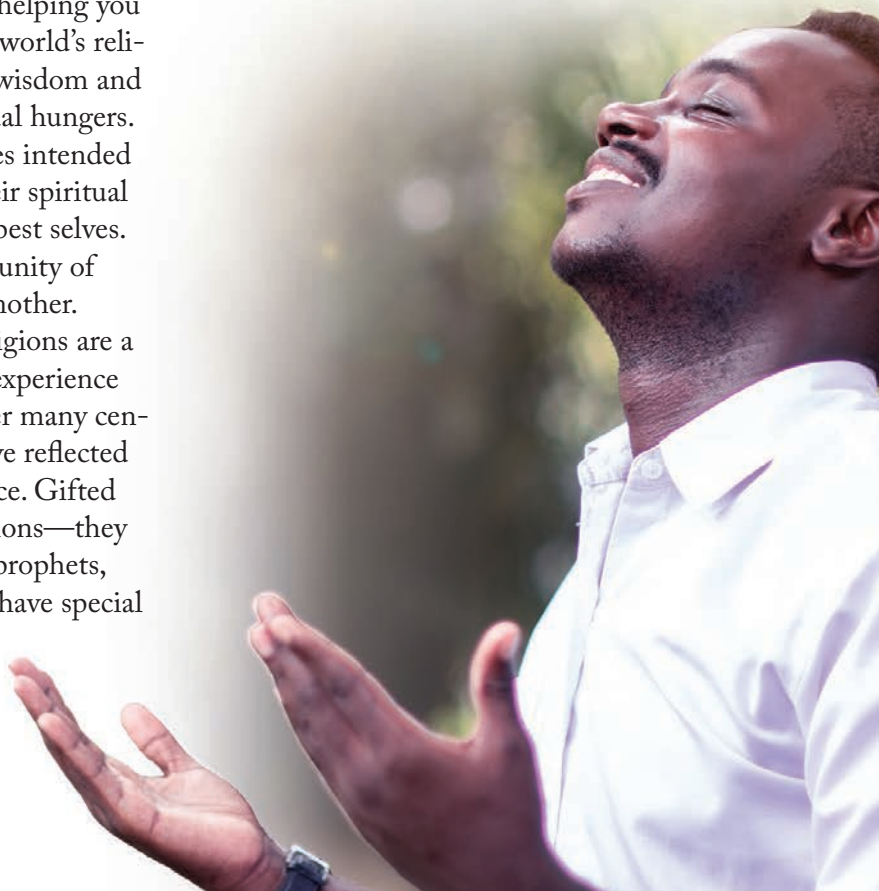
As you read this book, try to see in it an invitation to reflect on any hungers you experience related to the spiritual, or nonphysical, aspects of yourself and to consider the role religion can or might play in helping you satisfy those hungers. The world's religions have long provided wisdom and support for feeding spiritual hungers. First, they provide practices intended to help people grow in their spiritual lives and to become their best selves. They also provide a community of people that support one another.

Second, the world's religions are a source of knowledge and experience about spiritual truths. Over many centuries, religious people have reflected on their spiritual experience. Gifted people within these traditions—they might be called buddhas, prophets, saints, rabbis, and so on—have special

insights. These teachers pass on their wisdom to new generations through writings and oral traditions so that we might benefit from them.

You do not have to belong to a religion to live a spiritual life. Many people throughout human history and from around the world, however, have found that a religion's beliefs, practices, and community have helped them develop fulfilling spiritual lives.

Let's consider the changes that are occurring in the lives of teens and the spiritual opportunities that these changes bring as we continue to think about what religion provides that makes it valuable in people's lives.





## For Review

1. Why is the hunger for meaning important in the lives of human beings?
2. Describe two possible responses to challenging and hurtful experiences.
3. Describe three different kinds of connection that most people find important in their lives.
4. Define *spirituality*.

# A Time of Unique Growth

Most people don't spend a lot of time thinking about where they are in their life's journey. This is just as true of teens as it is of adults. The demands of school, family life, and extracurricular activities can keep high school students busy. If you are the typical student using this book, you are in the period of adolescence. These are crucial years of human development when a person moves from being a child to being an adult. It is a period of rapid change and physical, mental, and emotional growth. Let's look at some of the growth that occurs during adolescence and how it impacts a person's capabilities and decisions, especially regarding their spirituality.

## Growing Body, Mind, and Heart

During adolescence, human beings undergo amazing growth in their physical, mental, and emotional capabilities. The growth in young people's bodies, minds, and emotions is more rapid and extensive during adolescence than at any other time of life, except perhaps during infancy. All this growth leads to new capabilities, new possibilities, and new decisions. You are probably familiar with these changes, but let's review some highlights.

## Changing Body

Adolescence is marked by the start of puberty, which typically occurs between the ages of eight and fourteen. These are some of the physical changes that occur during puberty:

- The body grows faster than at any other time of life except between birth and age two. During puberty, young people will grow on average about two inches taller each year over several years.
- The body grows more muscle, becoming stronger, and develops greater physical stamina. Physical reaction times also improve. These changes lead to greater athletic ability, for example.
- The body becomes capable of starting new life.

Keep in mind that the timing and amount of these changes varies widely between individuals. Growth spurts will also be uneven, sometimes happening quickly and other times more slowly. There is no “normal” except what is normal for each person.

## Changing Mind

Although the human brain reaches 90 percent of its adult size during childhood, it continues to go through dramatic changes, sometimes called brain remodeling, during adolescence. These changes in the brain lead to changes in the way you and your peers may think and make decisions. Here are some of the mental changes that occur during adolescence:

- Unused connections in the brain are discarded, while other connections grow. The part of the brain where more connections are pruned away are in the back of the brain, the part that is more primitive and reactionary. Until this pruning process is complete, adolescents tend to be more impulsive, sometimes acting without thinking through the consequences.



**W**hat changes in your body, mind, and emotions have you experienced over the last two years?



**C**onsider the view that social media can be harmful to young people’s self-esteem. Experts note that when teens compare themselves to the influencers they follow on social media, they often feel inadequate or even deprived. On a scale of one (no influence) to five (high influence), rate the impact you think social media has on your feelings of self-worth.





**T**hink about a big decision you recently had to make. Were you tempted to rush to a decision, or was it easy to take your time thinking about all the possible outcomes?



- The part of the brain that is growing more connections is the front of the brain. This is the decision-making part of the brain, which is responsible for impulse control, problem-solving, and long-term planning. This process takes time and happens later in adolescence. As it continues, adolescents may think through consequences more thoroughly and spend more time thinking about and planning their future.
- The brain's chemistry is changing as new hormones and chemicals are produced, flooding the brain with new sensations. Higher levels of the neurotransmitter dopamine bring new feelings of physical pleasure and satisfaction. Higher levels of the neurotransmitter serotonin help regulate and smooth out moods and behaviors. The experience of alternating quickly between emotional highs and lows is a sign that these hormonal levels have not yet balanced out.

## Changing Heart

The rapid physical and mental changes that occur in your body and brain during the teen years are the foundation for changes in emotions, or the life of the heart. This is unavoidable, so you, your family, and your friends should accept these changes as natural and normal. These are some of the common emotional changes you may experience:

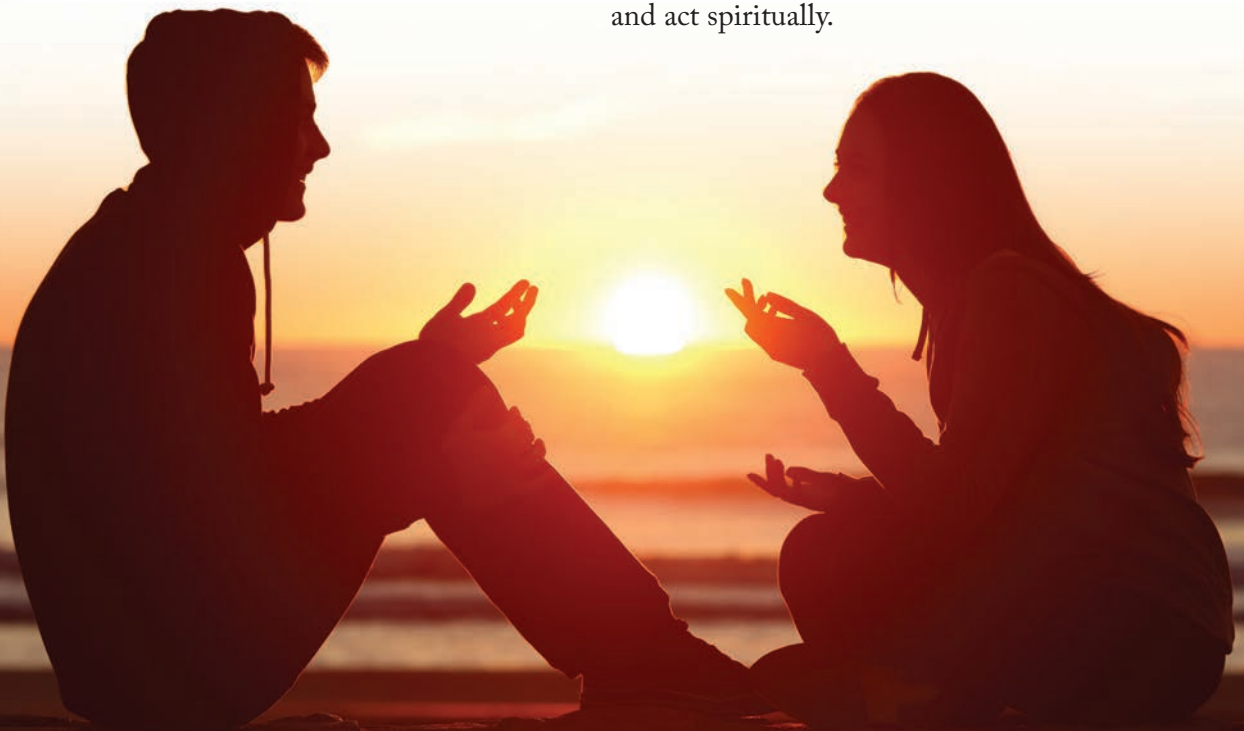
- Due to changing brain chemistry, feelings intensify. You might find that things that previously made you a little sad or a little happy can make you very sad or very happy. This can be confusing or even frightening.
- The same changing brain chemistry can lead to big and sometimes sudden mood swings. You might start out the day feeling positive and happy, and by lunchtime be feeling angry, sad, or hopeless—maybe all three!

- Biological changes can lead to sexual attraction, which can lead to dating and close friendships. The attraction can be to someone of the opposite sex or of the same sex, which does not necessarily have any bearing on eventual sexual identity.
- Because of biological changes, you may compare yourself to others. If this happens, it could affect your self-esteem.
- As the front part of the brain continues to develop, you may find yourself thinking more and more about the future. This might lead to feelings of excitement and adventure in anticipation of new experiences. Or it could lead to feelings of frustration, anxiety, or sadness if you do not see a path to a future you want to experience.

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If you or your peers are not ready for these emotional changes or do not have caring people to help you through them, there can be negative impacts. For example, changing hormones might make you raise your voice over something that isn't that bad. Or you might have tears in your eyes when hearing something a little sad. These things could cause people to be upset with you or maybe make fun of you, even though your reactions are perfectly normal given the physical and emotional changes you are experiencing.

We could add many more changes to these lists, but these points can help you appreciate the significance and the far-reaching consequences of the changes you and your peers are going through. Of particular concern in this course is the significance these changes have for your ability to think and act spiritually.



## Growing Spiritually

Davin, Monica, and Charlie were sitting together in the school lounge during their free period. “How are you guys doing on your religion essay?” Monica asked. “You know, the one where you have to describe your personal spirituality. I don’t even know where to start. I mean, I don’t pray, and I don’t go to church, so what is there to write about?”

“I’m almost done,” Charlie responded.

“Yeah, teacher’s pet!” Monica laughed. “I mean, your family goes to church and probably prays together and all that stuff. Easy for you to write about.”

“Yeah, that’s true,” Charlie said. “But the essay is supposed to be about my personal spirituality, not just what my family does. It’s got me thinking about what God means to me and how I relate to God.”

“It really helped me when Mrs. Rhodes said that spirituality is about all of our life,” Davin chimed in. “So, I’ve been writing about my decision to join the football team even when my dad had doubts about it. And about what music means to me—how it calms me and helps me relax. I’m even writing about the time I went to see a counselor about my sadness last year.”

“Hmm . . .” mused Monica. “Maybe I’m making this harder than it has to be.”



**D**ivide a sheet of paper into three columns. Label the first “Beliefs,” the second “Values,” and the third “Actions.” In the appropriate columns, write down the beliefs, values, and actions that best describe your personal spirituality.

Every person has a spirituality, that is, a way of tending to the part of the self beyond the physical—the part of the self that hungers for meaning, goodness, and connection. As a young person’s body, mind, and heart grow during adolescence, their awareness of their spiritual hungers also grows. As teens are more aware of these hungers, the possibilities for their spiritual life also grow.



Children normally mimic what they see, and they often trust the adults in their lives. So as a child, a person's spirituality may be determined primarily by their family and their religious community (if they belong to one). It is common during adolescence to begin to explore spiritual questions more deeply, as Charlie, Monica, and Davin are starting to do. And teens who identify with a particular religion may find themselves wanting to explore for themselves beliefs they have grown up with.

Even if a person doesn't actively participate in a religion, it doesn't mean they don't have a spiritual life. In the conversation between the

three friends, Monica initially seems to be assuming that because she isn't religious, she doesn't have a spiritual life. This isn't true. A person does not have to belong to a religion to grow spiritually.

To better understand how young people's spiritual lives grow, consider each of the following five scenarios, keeping these questions in mind as you read through each one:

- Can you see how a change in body, mind, or heart led to the new situation?
- Can you identify the spiritual hungers connected to the situation?

## Questions about Religion

As our spirituality develops, we might find ourselves having a lot of questions. Some of those questions will revolve around religion. It is natural to have such questions, especially as a young person. Discussions about religious questions are a good way to understand and grow your spiritual life. But sometimes authority figures discourage religious questions. From the Springtide Research Institute study mentioned earlier, here is one young adult's experience:

I questioned my religion when I was pretty young, but a lot of my questions were kind of shut down by family members too. So, I couldn't really ask them. But as an adult, probably a few years ago, I started asking questions again.

If you have religious questions, seek out a trusted, caring adult to discuss them with!





## A Driving Dilemma

**Delores's situation.** Delores is old enough to begin taking driver's education classes. Her father is pressuring her to sign up, but she isn't sure she wants to right now. For one thing, it would cut into her time volunteering at the animal shelter. But more importantly, she believes that to battle climate change, people need to drive less, not more. She's checked out the city's bus routes and bike paths, and she's made a plan for using the bus and her bike to get wherever she needs to go. But she hasn't told her father yet because she knows he will not be happy with this decision.

**Reflection on Delores's experience.** Delores's growing body and mind have made her ready to drive a car responsibly. And her spiritual hunger for goodness causes her to want to make this decision in a way that makes the world a better place. Her spiritual hunger for connection makes her want to please her father, but it also pushes her to do what's best for the whole planet, which is now causing a conflict.

## To Play or Not to Play?

**Hakeem's situation.** Hakeem has really grown in the past year. He's 6 inches taller! He has started questioning if he should join the basketball team this year. On the one hand, it could be a lot of fun and his height could give him a real advantage. But he was on the team two years ago and hated it. He felt awkward and clumsy and sat on the bench most of the time. What if the same thing happens this year?

**Reflection on Hakeem's experience.** Hakeem's dramatic physical growth has led to this situation. And it is a spiritual issue because his spiritual hungers have been engaged. His hungers for meaning and connection could be satisfied if he tries out and becomes a successful player. But what



if Hakeem doesn't do well? Then those hungers could be frustrated. Hakeem is facing one of the great truths of the spiritual life—that growing spiritually often requires taking a risk.

### Torn between Two Parents

**Ayesha's situation.** It's been over three years since Ayesha's parents divorced. She mostly lives with her mom and spends an occasional weekend with her dad. At first, it was great living with her mom, but lately they've gotten into more and more arguments. Her mom is very traditional in her faith and makes Ayesha wear conservative clothing whenever she goes out. Because of this, Ayesha is feeling more and more like an outsider at school and even with her friends. Her father is not as conservative and lets her wear what she wants. He's told her that she can live with

him whenever she is ready. She's wondering if moving in with him might be the best thing for her right now.

**Reflection on Ayesha's experience.** Ayesha's developing mind and heart are causing her to think about her life in new ways. She's realizing she could have a choice in how she dresses. The increased hormones in her brain are causing her to feel stronger emotions, leading to conflict with her mother. Her hunger for connection is strong right now, and it seems like some of her mother's religious beliefs are keeping her from making new friends.

### Friends or *Friends*?

**Bruce's situation.** Bruce has a problem. He and Cara have been neighbors and friends since grade school. They eat over at each other's houses, they do homework together,



they are in a band together, and they spend time playing games and watching movies together. Lately, Cara's been spending time with Sanjay, and Bruce is feeling some things he's never felt before. Is it jealousy? He's never thought of Cara that way before. But last night when they were watching a movie, she fell asleep with her head on his shoulder. And that felt confusing to him.

**Reflection on Bruce's experience.** Bruce's growing body and heart might be causing his love for Cara to move from just friendship to romantic love. The spiritual hunger for connection really kicks into overdrive when sexual attraction is added to the mix. Bruce's hunger for meaning and goodness makes him want to respond to this attraction in the best possible way.

## Switching Churches

**Angel's situation.** Angel has been a Pentecostal Christian all her life. She believes in God and considers Jesus her friend. Her church is small, and everyone knows one another, but they have very few youth activities. One of Angel's Catholic friends invited her to a youth activity at the local Catholic parish, and Angel had a great time. She's gone to several other Catholic events with her friend, including a national conference. Everything is so different, and Angel finds that she really likes the Catholic rituals and Eucharistic adoration times. She's thinking about joining the Catholic Church but is afraid people at her church will react negatively.

**Reflection on Angel's experience.** Angel's growing mind and heart have expanded her understanding and appreciation of different religious traditions. Her hungers for meaning and connection are causing her to explore the possibilities for spiritual growth that a different religion might bring into her life. Her hunger for goodness, though, makes her unwilling to cause pain to the people in the church she grew up in. This is a challenging spiritual situation.



**H**ave you faced an experience like any of these five examples? What new choices have your growing body, mind, and heart brought into your life?

These scenarios may help you appreciate the time of life you are in right now. Your growing body, mind, and heart are making you capable of understanding the role that tending to the spiritual aspects of yourself plays in your life and the lives of others. And because many people find that religious communities—with their organized systems of beliefs and practices—enhance their spirituality, this is the ideal time to study and think more deeply about how religion can be valuable in people’s lives.

## Being Spiritual and Being Religious

After their teacher handed back their papers about their personal spiritualities, Davin, Monica, and Charlie gathered in the hallway. “What do you think about the question Mrs. Rhodes posed to us?” asked Monica. “Are you spiritual or religious or both?”

“I’m definitely both,” responded Charlie. “I believe in God and my church. My church family means a lot to me, and they give me a lot of support. My religion’s teachings guide my life.”

“I’m still figuring it out,” said Davin. “I guess I would call myself religious, but I don’t go to services very often, and I have a lot of questions about what my religion teaches. But I can see how important it is to my parents and other people in my family.”

“I’m definitely spiritual but not religious,” Monica declared. “I think it’s important to love others, take care of the earth, and speak for justice. I just don’t think I need to be part of a religion to do that.”

“I think it’s great that even though we have different answers to the question, we can still be friends,” said Charlie. “My grandparents told me that when they were growing up, people used to look at people from other religions as enemies. I’m glad it isn’t that way anymore.”

“Well, hopefully it isn’t that way anymore,” replied Davin. “Sometimes I’m not so sure.”



**W**hat are the five most important things in your life right now? How would you have answered this question five years ago?



**T**hink of someone who has different religious beliefs than you. Do their different religious beliefs make them different from you? How?



After reading the explanations of *spiritual* and *religious*, what questions do you have? How would you explain to a friend how being spiritual and being religious are closely connected but not exactly the same?

Charlie, Monica, and Davin’s conversation is typical of the way many teens think about spirituality and religion. In this chapter so far, we have been using the words *spiritual* and *religious* almost interchangeably, as if they mean the same thing. And even though these two concepts are closely related in many people’s minds, they are not exactly the same. Let’s consider how being spiritual and being religious are connected and how they are different.

To be spiritual means that a person recognizes that human life is more than just meeting physical needs, such as the need for food, water, and air. It means recognizing that there are spiritual hungers, such as those discussed in this chapter, and appreciating how experiences such as faith, truth, beauty, justice, and love satisfy these hungers. Being spiritual means recognizing that practices such as prayer, meditation, reflection, and service are also ways to feed those hungers and making these experiences and practices part of one’s life. Ultimately, it means sensing that there is something larger than oneself, whether one believes in a supreme being or god.

For most people, to be religious means to identify with an established religion. This means being connected to a community with an organized system of beliefs, rituals, and practices, and a leadership structure that supports these things. A primary characteristic of a religion is the belief that a higher power is at work in the universe. The names for this higher power vary from religion to religion.

Belonging to a religion and following its beliefs and practices are ways many people respond to their spiritual hungers. The world’s religions provide opportunities to experience truth, beauty, justice, and love. They provide ways for their members to practice reflection, prayer, meditation, and service. For most people who belong to a particular religion, their spiritual life and their religious life are pretty much the same thing.

As you are on your way to becoming an adult, you have an opportunity to decide which spiritual experiences and practices have value for you, and what role religion will play in your spiritual life. Your developing body, mind, and heart will open you up to a deeper and more fulfilling spiritual life. Along the way, you will probably have more questions about religious beliefs and practices. Your thoughts on what religion provides that makes it valuable in people's lives will grow and change. Before turning to look at the Catholic faith in chapter 2, let's consider the religious truths held in common by most of the world's religions.

## Talking about Religion and Spirituality

Conversations about religion and spirituality can help us grow into our best selves if done respectfully. Here are some guidelines for having respectful conversations:

- Honor and respect the other person's religious choices, whether the person belongs to your religion, another religion, or no religion at all. Do not try to convert the person to your beliefs.
- Be genuinely curious about the other person's religious beliefs and practices. Do not attack or belittle their beliefs and practices.
- Be willing to share what you believe and why you believe it, but not in a way that comes across as the only way to believe.
- Be honest about your own religious questions and struggles. Everyone has them!



### For Review

1. Give an example of how an adolescent's body is changing.
2. Give an example of how an adolescent's mind is changing.
3. Give an example of how an adolescent's heart or emotions are changing.
4. Give an example of how an adolescent's changing body, mind, and heart can lead to new situations and decisions connected to spiritual hungers.
5. What does it mean to be spiritual?
6. What does it mean to be religious?

# The Shared Wisdom of the World's Religions

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What are the religious questions young people ask? By *religious questions*, we mean big questions about why we are here, what keeps us alive, and where are we headed. Consider this list of questions.

- How did the universe come to exist?
- Is there a god or supreme power responsible for creation?
- Is the universe basically a machine set in motion by God? Or is it something more?
- Does my life have a purpose?
- Does God care for me?
- When I die, is that the end for me?

How many of these questions have you wondered about? Have you ever talked about them with friends or family members? If you are a member of a religious faith, how does your religion answer these questions?

Since the first humans appeared on our planet, they have thought about questions like these. Over time, different religious traditions developed and provided answers to these questions. The traditions often started out small, associated with a particular tribe or nation. Many died out, but

some grew and expanded across the globe. The largest worldwide religions that exist today are Christianity (which includes Catholics, Orthodox Christians, and Protestants), Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, and Judaism. Many other smaller, but still important, religious traditions exist as well. The beliefs and practices of these global religions feed the spiritual hungers of human beings.

People of different religious backgrounds sometimes disagree bitterly, and some of these disagreements have led to violence and war. This may suggest that huge and irreconcilable differences exist among the world's different religions, but this isn't entirely true. When people from different religions talk to one another with open minds and hearts, they find they have as more in common than not. In the last several centuries, religion scholars and religious leaders have recognized that the world's major religions hold many of the same core beliefs. Let's consider some of these core beliefs as one more way to explore what religion provides that makes it valuable in people's lives.



## There Is a Divine Creator

Being in nature is a spiritual experience for many people. Walking amid trees, floating on a lake, or looking up at the night sky can bring a profound sense of peace. Even more, it brings a sense of wonder at the beauty, majesty, and diversity of the natural world. And it raises the question, How did all this come to be?

A core belief of the world's religions is that the universe we know came to be as the result of **divine** creation. That is, the universe came into existence through the creative power of a supreme or divine being or beings. The name most used for the supreme being(s) in predominantly Christian countries such as the United States is **God**. Some of the world's religions believe in only one god. This is called **monotheism**. These religions include Judaism, Christianity, Islam, the Bahá'í faith, some forms of Hinduism, and several others. Many religions believe in multiple gods. This is called **polytheism**. These religions include Taoism, some forms of Hinduism, and the ancient Greek and Roman religions. Buddhism does not teach a belief in a divine creator, and for this reason many consider Buddhism a spiritual tradition or philosophy rather than a religion.

This brings us to another point. In addition to believing that the universe was brought into being by God, the world's major religions hold that creation is an expression of divine love, a love that brings all that exists to life. Another way of saying this is that God is in some way part of everything that exists, connecting all creation in divine love. As part of creation, human beings are also connected to one another, and to all of creation, by divine love.



**P**ope Francis has said on several occasions, "Faith and violence are incompatible." Many other religious leaders agree with him. If this is true, why are so many acts of violence committed in temples, synagogues, and churches or carried out in the name of religion around the world today?



**I**magine that someone said to you, "There's absolutely no reason to believe there is a God." How might you respond to this person? Can you give some reasons showing that belief in a divine creator is reasonable?

**divine** Related to or coming from God.

**God** A name for the supreme being, creator of all that is.

**monotheism** The belief that there is only one God.

**polytheism** The belief that there are many gods.

## Can Science Prove That God Exists?

Science cannot prove or disprove the existence of God. The supreme being that created all space and time must exist outside of space and time. So science, the discipline that seeks to understand and measure space and time, cannot measure God. However, this does not prevent human beings from making arguments for the existence of God. It does require using logical arguments, rather than scientific reasoning, when discussing the existence of God.

A person crawling under the edge of the sky represents the human quest to know what exists beyond space and time.



**W**here and how do you experience love in your life? What are the things that block you from experiencing even greater love? Are these blocks from inside of you or from things outside of you?

## Human Beings Are Made for Love

Another belief shared by the world's major religions is that human beings are meant for love. We are created to be in relationship with the divine creator, with God. If you think of God as a power source with outlets to plug into, human beings were created to plug into those outlets. This is a crude image, but you get the idea. And not only do human beings have the ability to "plug into" God, more importantly, God desires to be in relationship with us. Human beings are unique (not more special than the rest of creation, just unique) in that we can freely choose to receive the love of God and share it with the rest of creation.

The world's major religions hold that when we are connected to God, ultimately our lives will be **blessed**; that is, at a deep level we will be happy and be at peace. The flow of divine love will run through us as it is meant to. On the other hand, when our connection with God is blocked, our lives will be unsettled and even unhappy. What blocks this connection? Things like greed, anger, anxiety, injustice, and ignorance can all hamper our ability to be connected to God.

This does not mean that a deep connection with God means never having problems, difficult relationships, grief, or other hardships in life. It can mean just the opposite. It can mean that God knows our pain and the world's pain and does not ignore it. Thus, a person deeply connected to God also experiences pain, grief, and hardship without trying to hide from it. However, having a strong relationship with God can keep a person from falling into complete sadness and despair, knowing that in the end God's love will triumph.

The world's great religions also teach a variety of spiritual practices that are meant to help human beings stay connected to God. Prayer, meditation, religious rituals, forgiveness, serving others, and studying sacred texts, like Islam's Qur'an and Christianity's Bible, are some of the practices shared

## Arguments for the Existence of God

Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), one of the greatest thinkers of the Middle Ages, developed these five well-known logical arguments for the existence of God:

1. Life is in motion. For life to be in motion, there must have been a "first mover" to get everything going. That mover is God.
2. An egg can't just cause itself to be an egg. There must be a cause outside the egg (in other words, a rooster and a hen!) that causes it to be an egg. Likewise, there must be a first cause outside all creation that caused creation to come into existence, and that first cause is God.
3. For the possibility of everything else to exist, there had to be something in existence first. This something is God.
4. There is something we call truest and best against which we measure everything else that is true and good. This something isn't just an abstract concept but is God.
5. The order in nature isn't just a happy accident. An intelligent being exists to direct all things to their natural end, and this being is God.

**blessed** To receive a favor or gift bestowed by God, bringing happiness.

by many religions. By making these practices part of one's life, people can stay connected with God, the source of love and blessing.

## Human Life Has Purpose

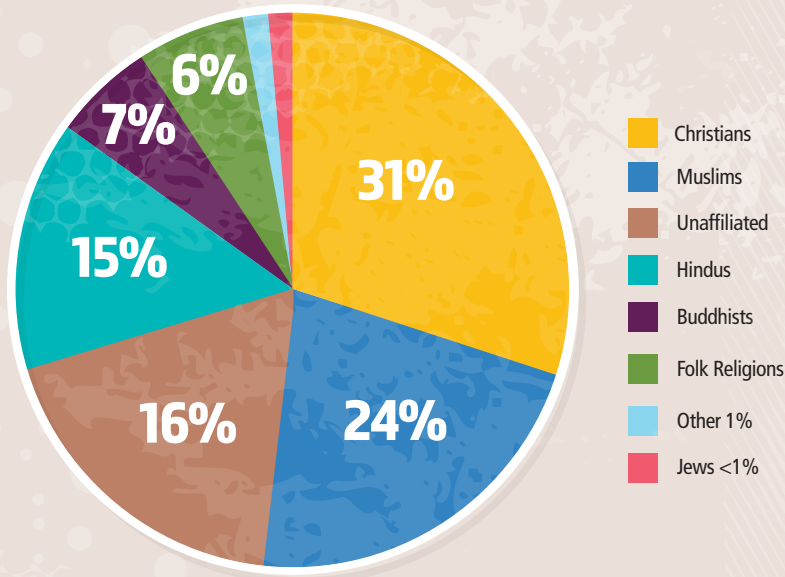
Have you ever been asked what you want to be when you grow up or what you want to study in college? You will no doubt be asked these questions more often in your next few years of high school. These questions can feel annoying to young people who are still trying to figure out what they want to do with their lives.

Here's some good news. The world's great religions make a distinction between the work that you *do* and the kind of person you *are*. Your career and the work you do can take many different paths with few wrong choices. You can be a politician, a health care worker, a plumber or an electrician. You might be a minister, an artist, or a sports enthusiast. These are all possible jobs you might do. But they are not who you are. Who you are is more significant than what you do.

It might be better if people would ask what kind of person you want to be. When asked that, most teens give



## Religious Affiliation Worldwide



Percentages do not add up to 100 due to rounding. "Christians" includes Catholics. "Folk Religions" includes Indigenous religions. "Other" includes Taoism and Confucianism.

these answers: "I want to be a good friend. I want to help other people. I want to be someone others can count on. I want to be a person who is happy and content." These are all great life goals, and working on them determines the kind of person you will become.

The world's great religions teach that who we are and who we are becoming matters. Human life has a purpose and a goal. Our purpose is to cooperate with God's desire to be a source of beauty, joy, peace, and love. Because God has given human beings free will, we can bring harm to creation—including other humans. But because of our free will, we can also be—we *should* be—sources of healing. We can help creation become what God wishes it to be.



How would you answer the question, "What kind of person do you want to be?"



**M**any of the world's great religions believe in some kind of heaven or paradise after death. Some people think of heaven as a reward for doing all the right things, and others think of it as a continuation of a life already lived in union with God's love. What are your thoughts on life after death?

The religions also share a belief that the goal of human life is to be in union with God, to experience the fullness of God's love for us. Some religions teach that we can reach this goal in this life, at least partially. Some religions teach that we reach this goal through reincarnation, living repeated lives in which we keep growing toward spiritual perfection. Some religions believe that we ultimately reach this goal after death, when we see God face-to-face. No matter the specific belief, the world's great religions agree that the goal of human life is to give and receive the love of God, to the greatest degree that we can.



## For Review

1. What is the difference between monotheism and polytheism?
2. How are creation and divine love connected?
3. Give an example of a logical argument for the existence of God.
4. What happens when human beings are connected to God?
5. According to the world's major religions, what is the purpose and goal of human life?



## Religion, A Love Affair

Suppose someone wants to become a world-class soccer player. Do they only go out on soccer fields by themselves and practice endless hours, teaching themselves how to play? That's not the way the best soccer players achieve their goal. The best soccer players join a good team and find a coach who knows how to bring the best out of them. They study the moves of the world's best players. They value the wisdom and experience of the great soccer players who have gone before them. And they keep practicing, practicing, practicing.

The same is true for our spiritual lives. If we want to become the best version of ourselves, if we want to live

lives filled with the most meaning, goodness, and love, it's best not to try to do it all on our own. As you move from childhood to adulthood, you have the opportunity to decide what the best version of yourself will be and how you will become that person. The great religions of the world are filled with wisdom to guide and support you in becoming that person.

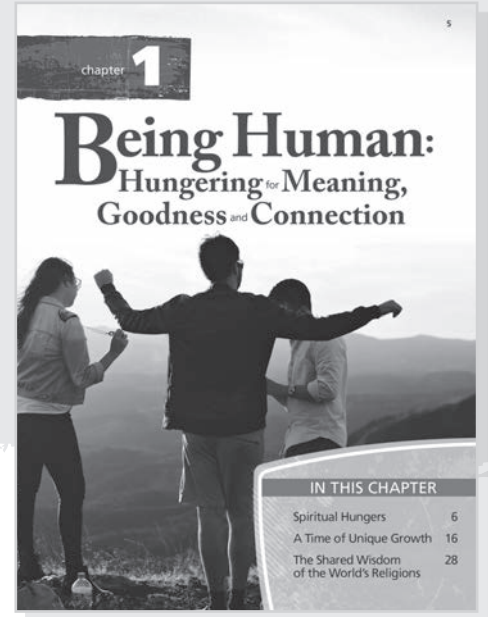
The rest of this course takes a deep dive into how one specific faith—the Catholic faith—helps people live lives of meaning, goodness, and connection. The exploration begins in chapter 2, with discussion of the Catholic understanding of how people come to know God.



# Chapter 1

## Being Human: Hungering for Meaning, Goodness, and Connection

This chapter explores the hungers of human life: the need for meaning, goodness, and connection. These needs are described with particular focus on the adolescent person, in both the physical and spiritual realms. The role of spirituality and religion is presented in the context of human life in all its fullness.



### At a Glance

Section	Student Book Pages	Learning Objective
<b>Spiritual Hungers</b>	6–16	To examine the role of spirituality and religion in human life.
<b>A Time of Unique Growth</b>	16–27	To reflect on the rapid physical, mental, and emotional growth that occur during adolescence, and how this growth impacts adolescent spirituality.
<b>The Shared Wisdom of the World's Religions</b>	28–35	To explore the big questions of human existence, and how the world's major religions have approached these questions.

To access additional resources for this chapter, including a digital chapter overview presentation, a reading guide, and links to videos and articles, go to [www.smp.org/uccresources](http://www.smp.org/uccresources).



# Spiritual Hungers

Whether or not they belong to a particular faith tradition, almost 75 percent of young people say they are religious. The spiritual hungers we share as human beings are also experienced by adolescents. These spiritual hungers provide the context for exploring Catholic Christianity.



## Activities

### Religious Identity (15 minutes)

**Objective:** To engage the students in reflection on their personal religious identities.

#### Materials Needed

slips of paper, one for each student

1. **Direct** the students to open to page 6 in the student book, and draw their attention to the checklist.
2. **Ask** them to imagine that they are participating in a study about religion and to identify which box they would check if presented with such a religious affiliation checklist.
3. **Distribute** a slip of paper to each student, and ask them to record the affiliation option they would check. Instruct them to not add any identifying information on the paper.
4. **Invite** the students to reflect on the following questions:
  - Did you make your selection quickly, or did you have to think about it?
  - Is your answer the same or different from how you imagine others in your family would answer?
5. **Instruct** the students to record the box they checked and to take notes about their answers to the questions in a place where they will be able to find them at the end of the course, or plan to have them submit their answers to you to keep track of until then. Collect the slips, and tally the number of people who selected each item on the checklist while they work.



6. **Share** your tallies with the students, and ask them to share any thoughts they may have in response. (Note: Consider making a note for yourself to repeat this exercise at the end of the course, asking the students to reflect on any changes in their selections or answers to the questions.)

### Teacher Note

The students may need your help to understand “Christian (Orthodox)” on the checklist, as some may think of “orthodox Catholic doctrine” or may even think someone who identifies as Orthodox is necessarily Jewish. Note for them that Orthodox Christianity refers to the Eastern Orthodox Churches separated from the Western (Roman) Catholic Church in the Schism of 1054. These Orthodox Churches are familiarly known by their countries of origin (i.e., Greek Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, and so on). Additionally, the Catholic Church has within it what is known as “Eastern *Catholic* Churches,” which retain the Eastern liturgical worship style but are in union with the Catholic Church around the world under the leadership of the pope.

## Hungry for What? (20 minutes)

**Objective:** To help the students identify their own everyday hungers through a personal fact-finding activity, and to explore how these hungers can symbolize and lead to hunger for God.

### Materials Needed

- copies of the handout “Hungry for What?” on page 28, one for each student



1. **Introduce** this personal fact-finding exercise by distributing the handout “Hungry for What?” Review the instructions on the handout, and ask the students to complete the tasks, which are described there and included here:
  - Put a check mark by the hungers you experience.
  - Add any hungers for nonphysical things that you experience that are not on this list.
  - Circle the five hungers you feel most often or most intensely.
  - Record your thoughts about when you experience the five circled hungers, what you do to satisfy them, and what gets in the way of satisfying them.

2. **Arrange** the students into small groups. Ask them to each share one of their circled hungers. Then ask them to compile a list of the ways they satisfy their hungers and a list of what gets in the way of satisfying those hungers. Explain that the students are perfectly free to share whatever they wish, or to keep to themselves whatever they wish. Circulate among the students to help keep the discussions moving.
3. **Reconvene** the class. Ask each group to choose one group member to share one hunger, ways they satisfy that hunger, and what interferes with satisfying that hunger.
4. **Add** these points to clarify the reasons for doing this activity:
  - Let's remember that we are talking about nonphysical, spiritual hungers. How we deal with those hungers—whether we ignore them or feed them—says something about our spirituality. Spirituality is the way we tend to the part of ourselves that is not physical. Our actions, beliefs, values, and attitudes express our spirituality, our “inner spirit.”
  - This entire course is an invitation to recognize and reflect on your own nonphysical, spiritual hungers, and to consider how religion can help you satisfy those hungers.
5. **Note** that one of the hungers on the list is a hunger for God. Ask the students to consider how a person might realize they are hungry for God? Share the religious perspective that sometimes people don't know they are hungry for God until they have tried to fill themselves up with everything else! Restlessness or general unhappiness is often a sign for many people of their inner hunger for something more.



## Hunger Gone Sideways (30 minutes)

**Objective:** To acquaint the students with the twelve steps of Alcoholics Anonymous as a way to explore how a hunger for God may “go sideways” when people try to satisfy the hunger in unhealthy ways, such as through alcohol.

### Materials Needed

- copies of the handout “The Twelve Steps,” on page 29, one for each student



1. **Distribute** the handout “The Twelve Steps.” Ask the students to take turns reading aloud each of the steps, from one to twelve.



2. **Ask** whether anyone has heard of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) or Narcotics Anonymous. Explain that *anonymous* means “no name.” The founders of Alcoholics Anonymous wanted people to feel free to share their struggles in privacy. Participants usually share only their first names until they are sure they can trust the group to keep what they share confidential.
3. **Offer** the students time to speak about their knowledge of twelve-step programs, but caution them to speak in general terms and not to name names or reveal personal relationships. Instead of saying “my uncle” or “my cousin,” advise them to identify the person as just “someone I know.”
4. **Explain** that Alcoholics Anonymous was founded by an alcoholic, a man named Bill W. (later known as Bill Wilson), and a Catholic priest who had helped Bill become sober. Together they wrote the Twelve Steps as a guide for support groups to help others become sober.
5. **Ask** a student to read step 2. Emphasize that many participants name God as the “Power greater,” but others simply name the collective power of the group as the “Power greater.” Explain that whatever this Power is or is called, the AA program considers belief in it essential for the participants to stay sober and healthy.
6. **Invite** a student to read step 3. Explain that participants in this program learn that none of the steps are optional. They are done in order, and are done over and over. The program becomes a way of life, requiring continual work, for many participants. For someone who has suffered from addiction and perhaps lost family and friends because of it, these steps can guide the way to a full human life.
7. **Explain** that many people struggling with addiction have found a Power greater, or God, by following these steps. They realized that their addiction was “hunger for God gone sideways” and found ways to satisfy this hunger without alcohol. Explain that addiction can be a complicated dynamic and that not all addiction results from satisfying a hunger for God in an unhealthy way. Also be sure to note that Alcoholics Anonymous is not the solution for everyone struggling with addiction to alcohol.
8. **Ask** a student to read step 12. Note that many participants discover what the authors of this program call a “spiritual awakening.”

## The Art of Positive Conversation (15 minutes)

**Objective:** To help the students engage in focused conversation in order to experience overcoming loneliness by taking a sincere interest in what others have to say.

### Materials Needed

- slips of paper with each student's name written on one
- a basket or bowl
- a bell

1. **Introduce** this activity by asking about student conversations, whether in person or through texting or social media. Are these conversations sometimes too critical, mocking, or dismissive? If so, ask the students how this makes them feel. Note that criticism can lead to feelings of loneliness. Explain that true listening does not mean looking for ways to poke holes in someone else's opinions.
2. **Tell** the students that they will engage in a period of positive listening and conversation. You will draw two names at a time from the bowl or basket. The first name will be the Talker. The second name will be the Listener. After 5 minutes, you will ring a bell, and the roles will switch.
3. **Explain** that the role of the Talker is to talk, and the role of the Listener is to listen, without criticizing or interjecting their own opinions. The Listener can speak, but only to draw out the Talker and help them by asking questions. After 5 minutes, the Listener will get a chance to be the Talker.
4. **Draw** the names, two at a time, and allow a few moments for the pairs to sit near each other. Assign a topic of conversation, such as "Describe a good movie or TV show you have seen," "Describe one of your favorite books," or "If you could go anywhere in the world, where would you go and why?" (Choose the topic before you begin drawing names, to give the students a chance to think about their responses.) Keep time, and note the 5-minute mark by asking the Talkers and Listeners to switch roles.
5. **Invite** the students to share their experiences, asking these or similar questions:
  - Was it hard for the Listeners to keep their opinions to themselves?
  - Did the Listeners keep an open mind and just appreciate what the Talkers were saying?
  - How did the Talkers feel when they could simply give their opinions without fear of criticism or negative feedback?



- Did the Talkers feel appreciated because they were being heard and understood?
- Might such conversations help people in general feel less lonely in everyday life?

6. **Summarize** the various comments. (You may want to repeat this exercise every so often to help the students get to know and appreciate one another as both Talkers and Listeners.)



## Student Book Activities

The activities provided in the student book, reprinted here along with page numbers where they appear, can be used in class or as homework. See the introduction of this guide (pages 9–10 ) for suggestions of ways to use them, such as paired exchanges, small-group discussions, role-plays, fish-bowl discussions, journal or essay writing, or test questions.

**Page 7** What does it mean to say that someone is religious or belongs to a particular religion?

**Page 9** Do you believe in something bigger than yourself? If so, what role does this belief play in your life? Does it give meaning to your life?

**Page 11** Draw a vertical line down the center of a sheet of paper to create two columns. In the left column, write signs of goodness you see in the world. In the right column, write signs of evil you see in the world. Which column is longer, and why?

**Page 14** Draw three interlocking circles. Label one “Meaning,” one “Goodness,” and one “Connection.” In the “Meaning” circle, write down things that give meaning to your life. In the “Goodness” circle, write down good things you experience and hope for. In the “Connection” circle, write down things and people you feel connected to. Is there something that all three circles have in common?



## For Review

1. *Why is the hunger for meaning important in the lives of human beings?*

The hunger for meaning is important because human beings want to know that what they do matters. Those who feel that their lives are without meaning can fall into sadness and despair. People who believe their lives have meaning tend to live with joy and hope. The hunger for meaning leads to the idea of having faith in something bigger than ourselves.

2. Describe two possible responses to challenging and hurtful experiences.

One possible response to challenging and hurtful situations is to fall into hopelessness and despair. A second possible response is to see beyond the current painful situation with the hope that goodness will overcome the current pain.

3. Describe three different kinds of connection that most people find important in their lives.

One kind of connection is the connection people have to other people, especially loving and caring people. A second connection is to nature, which can be a healing and nurturing connection. The third connection is to a power greater than themselves, which gives life meaning and hope.

4. Define spirituality.

*Spirituality* is the term that describes the ways of tending to the part of the self that is not physical. It is expressed through the actions, beliefs, values, and attitudes that characterize a person's life.

# A Time of Unique Growth

Adolescence is a crucial time of human development. Learning about what can be expected during the rapid physical, mental, and emotional growth can help the adolescent understand these changes and become comfortable with them. Changes in the body, mind, and heart can be upsetting, but they can also be significant in the adolescent's growing ability to think and act spiritually.



## Activities

### My Values (30 minutes)

**Objective:** To help the students discover their own spiritual values through a self-survey, and to help them consider living other spiritual values they may have been neglecting.

### Materials Needed

- copies of the handout “My Values,” on page 30, one for each student



1. **Explain** to the students that they will be taking a survey about values that may help them clarify their values and how they are living them.
2. **Distribute** the handout “My Values.” Review the directions.
3. **Arrange** the students into small groups. Ask them to answer the discussion questions found below the values assessment on the handout.
4. **Ask** the small groups to share what they discussed.
5. **Invite** the students, individually, to reflect further on their own values by completing the “Personal Reflection” section of the handout, which asks them to create these three lists:
  - their five highest values
  - the values they hold that don’t appear in the list on the handout
  - ways they might live the values they hold more fully
6. **Conclude** by inviting the students to name values they added to the list.

### † A Letter to God (30 minutes)

**Objective:** To help the students use a letter-writing activity to realize that their physical, mental, and emotional changes are natural and normal, and to know that each person is God’s creation at work.

### Materials Needed

- the song “Please Be Patient with Me,” by James Bignon and the Deliverance Mass Choir, available on YouTube (*optional*)
- copies of the handout “A Letter to God,” on pages 31–32, one for each student

1. **Introduce** this activity by briefly recalling the creation of the world—the sun, the moon, the stars, the planets. Remind the students that the same Supreme Being who created the world also created each one of them. Explain that God’s creation of them is still going on—Explain that God is truly at work in them and in the happenings of their lives.
2. **Play** the song “Please Be Patient with Me,” or move to step 3.
3. **Distribute** the handout “A Letter to God.” Invite the students to write a letter to God. Explain that most who believe in God are confident that God already knows what their unique situation in life is. However,





putting one's thoughts in a letter helps a person feel connected to God so that they remember that God knows. Read the sample letter on the handout. Assure the students that their letters will not be collected. These letters are confidential, between the student and God. Encourage them to begin by thanking God for something good in their lives, and then go on to describe their situation to God.

4. **Ask** the students to look at the last line of the handout, which says "My Thoughts about God's Reply." Give the students time to write what they think God is saying to them at this time. Assure them that even if they don't think God is saying anything now, they might recognize an answer at some other time.

### Teacher Note

In the next chapter, an activity called "Reply from God" will be presented, adapted from "A Meditation," by Cardinal Newman, which offers a perspective from a Catholic wisdom figure. You might want to ask the students to save their "A Letter to God" handout until this activity is presented.



## Student Book Activities

The activities provided in the student book, reprinted here along with page numbers where they appear, can be used in class or as homework. See the introduction of this guide (pages 9–10) for suggestions of ways to use them, such as paired exchanges, small-group discussions, role-plays, fishbowl discussions, journal or essay writing, or test questions.

**Page 17** What changes in your body, mind, and emotions have you experienced over the last two years?

**Page 17** Consider the view that social media can be harmful to young people's self-esteem. Experts note that when teens compare themselves to the influencers they follow on social media, they often feel inadequate or even deprived. On a scale of one (no influence) to five (high influence), rate the impact you think social media has on your feelings of self-worth.

**Page 18** Think about a big decision you recently had to make. Were you tempted to rush to a decision, or was it easy to take your time thinking about all the possible outcomes?

**Page 20** Divide a sheet of paper into three columns. Label the first "Beliefs," the second "Values," and the third "Actions." In the appropriate columns, write down the beliefs, values, and actions that best describe your personal spirituality.



**Page 24** Have you faced an experience like any of these five examples? What new choices have your growing body, mind, and heart brought into your life?

**Page 25** What are the five most important things in your life right now? How would you have answered this question five years ago?

**Page 25** Think of someone who has different religious beliefs than you. Do their different religious beliefs make them different from you? How?

**Page 26** After reading the explanations of *spiritual* and *religious*, what questions do you have? How would you explain to a friend how being spiritual and being religious are closely connected but not exactly the same?



## For Review

1. *Give an example of how an adolescent's body is changing.*

Possible answers could include:

- The body grows faster than at any other time of life (except between birth and age two).
- The body grows more muscle, becoming stronger, and develops greater physical stamina.
- The body becomes capable of starting new life.

2. *Give an example of how an adolescent's mind is changing.*

Possible answers could include:

- Unused connections in the brain are discarded while other connections are growing, causing adolescents to be more impulsive, sometimes acting without thinking through the consequences.
- The front of the brain is growing, helping adolescents think through consequences more thoroughly and spend more time thinking about and planning their future.
- The brain's chemistry is changing, as new hormones and chemicals are produced, flooding the adolescent brain with new sensations.

3. *Give an example of how an adolescent's heart or emotions are changing.*

Possible answers could include:

- Due to their changing brain chemistry, adolescents experience feelings intensely.
- The same changing brain chemistry can lead to big and sometimes sudden mood swings.
- Biological changes can lead to sexual attraction, which can lead to dating and close friendships.

- Because of their changing bodies, adolescents may start comparing their bodies with other people's bodies, leading to them feeling self-conscious about their appearance.
  - As the front part of their brain continues to develop, teens may start thinking more and more about the future in positive or negative ways.
4. *Give an example of how an adolescent's changing body, mind, and heart can lead to new situations and decisions connected to spiritual hungers.*  
Answers will vary.

5. *What does it mean to be spiritual?*

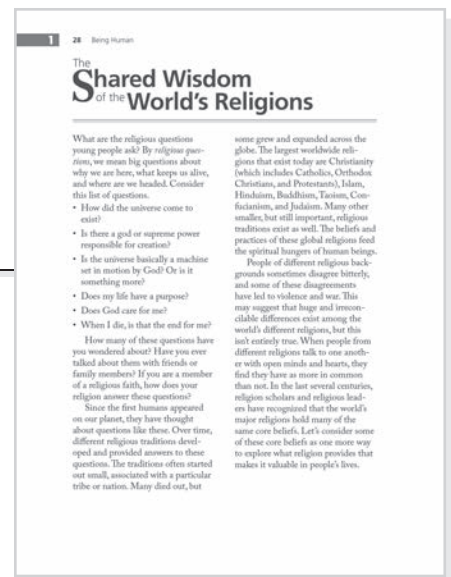
Being spiritual means that a person recognizes that life is more than just meeting physical needs. It means recognizing spiritual hungers and how experiences such as faith, truth, beauty, justice, and love satisfy those hungers.

6. *What does it mean to be religious?*

To be religious can mean different things. For some, it means identifying with an established religion. For others, it can simply mean having belief in a higher power. For others, it might mean identifying with a particular religious tradition even if they no longer actively practice it or have doubts about some of its core aspects.

# The Shared Wisdom of the World's Religions

What big religious questions do young people ask? Their big questions typically outline the primary concerns of human beings, concerns that have occupied the minds and hearts of the human race for literally ages. Over time, different religious traditions developed and provided answers to these questions. The core beliefs of the major religions are very much alike: the existence of God, the need for God's love and love in the world, and the purpose of human life as a relationship with God and people.





## Activities

### Sharing Wisdom (45 minutes)

**Objective:** To participate in a creative craft activity focusing on wisdom quotes from various world religions, thus opening the students' minds and hearts to the core values of these religions.

#### Materials Needed

- seven sheets of newsprint or poster board
- various colors of construction paper
- markers, scissors, and glue for each of seven small groups
- one copy of the handout "Wisdom Quotes," on page 33, precut as directed
- a bowl or basket to hold the seven quotes from the handout

1. **Introduce** the activity by reminding the students that the religions of the world share many core values and beliefs. Explain that some of these are expressed in the seven quotes in the bowl (or basket).
2. **Arrange** the students into seven small groups. Ask a representative from each group to take a quote from the bowl. When each group has a quote, explain that they will be making a poster to illustrate that quote. The poster should include the quote itself.
3. **Distribute** the newsprint or poster board and art supplies, or place them in a central location so that the groups can choose what they need as they work on their posters.
4. **Create** an air of excitement and curiosity by directing the students not to peek at the work of the other groups.
5. **Give** a warning before asking the groups to stop.
6. **Ask** each group to stand with their poster, and give them a minute to read their quote and explain their poster.
7. **Display** the posters in the classroom, the school, or in another appropriate place.



## Wisdom Close to Home (45 minutes)

**Objective:** To remind the students that the wisdom of many religious traditions is available close to home, in local churches, synagogues, and mosques.

### Materials Needed

- several sheets of newsprint
  - markers
  - plain white paper, business-size envelopes, and stamps
  - copies of the handout “Sample Letter to a Leader of a House of Worship,” on page 34, one for each student
  - internet access
1. **Prepare** by hanging the newsprint where possible in the room, each piece labeled with the name of a religion with a community in your area—for example, Judaism, Islam, Protestant Christianity, Catholic Christianity, Orthodox Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism.
  2. **Remind** the students that spiritual wisdom can be found in all the major religions of the world.
  3. **Explain** that the students will be taking a survey of the wisdom available to them, close to home.
  4. **Brainstorm** with the class, asking them to think of the churches, synagogues, mosques, and other houses of worship they know of in their neighborhood or city. Write each of these places on the appropriate newsprint. (If you live in a large city, you may have to limit the geographical area you will cover and survey only your immediate area as a “neighborhood.”)
  5. **Ask** the students to write letters to these houses of worship. If you have more houses of worship than students, each student would need to write more than one letter, or you would need to make selections about which houses to write to.
  6. **Direct** the students to research their assigned religious community online. Explain that they should find the name of the leader and the mailing address. In addition, they should take notes on anything they can learn about ways their assigned community serves the wider community.





7. **Distribute** the handout “Sample Letter to a Leader of a House of Worship” and the plain white paper and envelopes.” Ask the students to use the sample as a model for their letters. They should explain that your class has been learning about the wisdom of world religions. They should also thank the leader for their community’s presence in your city or town, for the wisdom they share with their members, and for the service they offer to the community (with examples from the research done in step 6). Remind the students that they will need to write the address on the envelope, as well as the return address (your school name and address).
8. **Sign** the letters with your name and a group signature that names the class (e.g., third-period ninth-grade religion class.) Individual signatures of the students can be added too.
9. **Arrange** for the letters to be mailed.



## Student Book Activities

The activities provided in the student book, reprinted here along with page numbers where they appear, can be used in class or as homework. See the introduction of this guide (pages 9–10) for suggestions of ways to use them, such as paired exchanges, small-group discussions, role-plays, fishbowl discussions, journal or essay writing, or test questions.

**Page 29** Pope Francis has said on several occasions, “Faith and violence are incompatible.” Many other religious leaders agree with him. If this is true, why are so many acts of violence committed in temples, synagogues, and churches or carried out in the name of religion around the world today?

**Page 29** Imagine that someone said to you, “There’s absolutely no reason to believe there is a God.” How might you respond to this person? Can you give some reasons showing that belief in a divine creator is reasonable?

**Page 30** Where and how do you experience love in your life? What are the things that block you from experiencing even greater love? Are these blocks from inside of you or from things outside of you?

**Page 33** How would you answer the question, What kind of person do you want to be?

**Page 34** Many of the world’s great religions believe in some kind of heaven or paradise after death. Some people think of heaven as a reward for doing all the right things, and others think of it as a continuation of a life already lived in union with God’s love. What are your thoughts on life after death?



## For Review

1. *What is the difference between monotheism and polytheism?*

Monotheism is the belief in only one god, and polytheism is the belief in multiple gods.

2. *How are creation and divine love connected?*

God brought the universe into existence as an expression of divine love, a love that brings all that exists into life. God connects all creation together in divine love.

3. *Give an example of a logical argument for the existence of God.*

Possible responses could include:

- Life is in motion. For life to be in motion, there must have been a “first mover” to get everything going. That mover is God.
- An egg can’t just cause itself to be an egg. There must be a cause outside the egg that causes it to be an egg. Likewise, there must be a first cause outside all creation that caused creation to come into existence, and that first cause is God.
- For the possibility of everything else to exist, there had to be something in existence first. This something is God.
- There is something we call truest and best against which we measure everything else that is true and good. This something isn’t just an abstract concept but is God.
- The order in nature isn’t just a happy accident. An intelligent being exists to direct all things to their natural end, and this being is God.

4. *What happens when human beings are connected to God?*

When human beings are connected to God, the world’s major religions hold that at a deep level they will be happy and at peace. This does not mean that human beings will not experience problems, or sadness, or grief, but they will be supported by divine love through these difficult times.

5. *According to the world’s major religions, what is the purpose and goal of human life?*

The world’s major religions teach that the purpose of human life is to cooperate with God’s desire for each person to be a source of beauty, joy, peace, and love, with the ultimate goal of human life to be in union with God, to experience the fullness of God’s love for us.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Hungry for What?

Review the list of hungers below and follow these steps:

1. Put a check mark by the hungers you experience. ✓
2. Add any hungers for nonphysical things that you experience that are not on this list.
3. Circle the five hungers that you feel most often or most intensely.
4. Record your thoughts about when you experience the five circled hungers, what you do to satisfy them, and what gets in the way of satisfying them.

**meaning** \_\_\_\_\_

**friendship** \_\_\_\_\_

**God** \_\_\_\_\_

**love** \_\_\_\_\_

faith \_\_\_\_\_

goodness \_\_\_\_\_

**connection** \_\_\_\_\_

hope \_\_\_\_\_

**strength** \_\_\_\_\_

purpose \_\_\_\_\_

justice \_\_\_\_\_

knowledge \_\_\_\_\_

**wisdom** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_





# Twelve Steps

**1**

We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.

**2**

Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

**3**

Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.

**4**

Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

**5**

Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

**6**

Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

**7**

Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.

**8**

Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

**9**

Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

**10**

Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

**11**

Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

**12**

Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

(The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous are taken from [www.aa.org/the-twelve-steps](http://www.aa.org/the-twelve-steps).)



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## My Values

Rate the extent to which you put the following values into practice on a scale of 1 to 4 by circling the number after each value that best reflects your experience.

1	2	3	4
I rarely, if ever, put this value into practice in my life.	Even though I appreciate this value, I don't put it into practice very often.	I admire this value, and I put it into practice fairly often.	I admire this value, and I put it into practice almost every day.

<b>Truth</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Learning</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Beauty</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Respect</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Justice</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Gratitude</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Love</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Cooperation</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Friendship</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Authenticity</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Being helpful</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Inclusion</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Serving others</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Caring for the Earth</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>

### Discussion Questions

What values rated highest in your small group? \_\_\_\_\_

What values rated lowest? \_\_\_\_\_

### Personal Reflection

List five of your highest values: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

List values you hold that don't appear on the list: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

List ways you might live the values you hold more fully: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



# A Letter to God

## Sample Letter

Dear God,

My teacher said we should start with thanking you for something. I thank you for my friend Zach. He is teaching me to play the guitar. We hang out at each other's houses a lot and ride bikes. So thank you for a good friend.

And then we should write our situation. My situation is mainly I am kind of miserable. Everything is changing. It is embarrassing. Yesterday I was talking and my voice cracked and I ended up squeaking! It was horrible. I used to get along with my family, but now my brothers and sisters just bother me and my mom and dad are giving me more chores to do. All I want to do is go to my room and listen to music, and they want me to do things with them that are so boring. We have a Teen Service Club at church, and I like helping with them, but the rest of my life is kind of hard now. I hope you can help. Thank you.

James





# Wisdom Quotes



**My religion teaches me to love all equally.**

—Mahatma Gandhi (Hinduism)

And do good; Indeed, Allah loves the doers of good.

—Mohammed (The Qur'an 2:195)

My religion is very simple. My religion is kindness.

—The Dalai Lama (Tibetan Buddhism)

**What the Lord requires:**  
Only to do justice and to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God.

—The Prophet Micah (Micah 6:8)  
(Judaism and Christianity)

The Christian does not think God will love us because we are good, but that God will make us good because he loves us.

—C. S. Lewis (Protestant Christian)

**This is my commandment: love one another as I love you.**

—Jesus (John 15:12) (Christianity)

**Radiate boundless love toward the entire world.**

—Buddha (Buddhism)

(The Scripture quotations on this handout are taken from the *New American Bible, Revised Edition* © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Inc., Washington, D.C. All Rights Reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the copyright owner.)



# Sample Letter to a Leader of a House of Worship

St. Ann High School  
2500 Parish Drive  
Hillsdale, Illinois  
September 8, 2025

Rev. Richard Smith  
Hillsdale Baptist Church  
1680 Main Street  
Hillsdale, Illinois

Dear Reverend Smith,

Our ninth-grade class at St. Ann High School has been learning about the wisdom tradition found in various religious traditions. We are writing to houses of worship in our area, and we wish to thank you and your community for your presence in our city. We realize that your members share God's light and love with the entire community, and we would like to thank you and your members for sharing your wisdom in this way.

Thank you especially for [mention a special good work you may know of that this community does for the wider community, such as sponsoring a soup kitchen, having a particular festival, or caring for those who are homeless].

We are grateful for your presence in our community.

Sincerely,

[insert teacher's signature]

[insert teacher's name and name of class]

[class members' signatures may follow, but this is optional]



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Chapter 1 Test

## Multiple Choice

Write the letter for the best or most appropriate answer in the space provided before each question.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. The word *spiritual* means \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. relating to the physical aspects of human life  
b. relating to the economic aspects of human life  
c. related to the nonmaterial aspects of human life  
d. relating to the social aspects of human life
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Biological changes in adolescence sometimes lead to negative impacts, like \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. raising your voice unnecessarily  
b. sudden tears  
c. mood swings  
d. all of the above
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. The world's major religions hold that when we are connected to God, our lives will be \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. blessed  
b. free of trouble  
c. painful  
d. sad
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. When the front of the brain grows, later in adolescence, the result is \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. better impulse control  
b. problem-solving ability  
c. long-term planning ability  
d. all of the above
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. A core belief of the world's religions is that the universe we know came to be as the result of \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. random happenstance  
b. divine creation  
c. extraterrestrial activity  
d. human intervention
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Our spirituality is expressed through our \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. actions and beliefs  
b. values and attitudes  
c. *a* but not *b*  
d. both *a* and *b*



- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Some of the physical changes that occur during puberty include \_\_\_\_\_.
- faster growth
  - more muscle development
  - sexual development
  - all of the above
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. The way we feed our spiritual hungers is called our \_\_\_\_\_.
- outer life
  - spirituality
  - belief system
  - search for value
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. A belief shared by the world's major religions is that human beings are made for \_\_\_\_\_.
- love
  - work
  - recreation
  - exploitation
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. The hunger for connection can be satisfied through relationships with \_\_\_\_\_.
- other people
  - nature
  - a higher power
  - all of the above
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. The back of the brain is more primitive and reactionary. During adolescence, this part of the brain is gradually \_\_\_\_\_.
- developed
  - pruned
  - enhanced
  - lost
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. How can religion help satisfy spiritual hungers?
- through spiritual practices
  - through a supportive community
  - through knowledge of spiritual truths
  - all of the above
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. How can we choose to respond to our spiritual hungers?
- in healthy ways
  - in unhealthy ways
  - a* but not *b*
  - both *a* and *b*





- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. \_\_\_\_\_ means putting your trust in someone or something.
- Goodness
  - Purpose
  - Faith
  - Meaning
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. The world's major religions hold that creation is an expression of divine \_\_\_\_\_.
- curiosity
  - love
  - egoism
  - manipulation

## Matching

Match each word or phrase in the word bank with its description.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. The name of that period of human development when a person moves from being a child to being an adult; a time of rapid physical, mental, and emotional growth.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. Typically occurs between the ages of eight and fourteen.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. An organized system of beliefs, rituals, and ways of living that gives expression to a particular people's faith in a god or gods.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. Related to or coming from God.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. A word best avoided to describe adolescent development, because changes during puberty vary from person to person, with no one standard pattern.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 21. Dramatic changes in the brain during adolescence.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 22. To receive a favor or gift bestowed by God, bringing happiness.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 23. The belief that there is only one God.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 24. The changes in the brain, producing new hormones and chemicals, that result in highs and lows, not yet balanced out.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 25. The belief that there are many gods.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 26. The beliefs, rituals, and practices as lived out by those who identify with the Catholic religion.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 27. Results from biological changes, leading to dating and close friendships.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 28. A name for the supreme being, creator of all that is.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 29. Ways of tending to the part of the self that is not physical. It is expressed through actions, beliefs, values, and attitudes that characterize a person's life.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 30. Bodily changes during adolescence, like rapid growth and increased muscle strength.

- physical changes
- spirituality
- God
- divine
- monotheism
- Catholicism
- blessed
- puberty
- brain remodeling
- brain's chemistry
- normal
- sexual attraction
- polytheism
- religion
- adolescence



## True or False

Mark each statement as true (T) or false (F).

- \_\_\_\_\_ 31. Over time, different religious traditions have developed and provided answers to the big questions of human existence.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 32. Most people find meaning in life by believing in something bigger than themselves.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 33. Huge and irreconcilable differences in belief exist among the world's different religions.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 34. The hunger for goodness leads to one of two responses: hopelessness and despair, or hope that goodness will overcome pain.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 35. In adolescence, awareness of spiritual hungers grows and possibilities for spiritual life grow.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 36. As part of creation, human beings are totally independent of one another, and of all creation, by divine decree.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 37. In adolescence, teens may want to explore for themselves beliefs they have grown up with.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 38. A person does not have to belong to a religion to grow spiritually.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 39. Things like greed, anger, anxiety, injustice, and ignorance are no hindrance to our ability to be connected to God.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 40. The world's great religions also teach a variety of spiritual practices that are meant to help human beings stay connected to God.

## Essay

Respond to one of the following questions in complete sentences.

- A. Human beings hunger for meaning, goodness, and connection. Select one of these three hungers, and then do the following:
1. Explain why it is considered a spiritual hunger.
  2. Discuss ways people can satisfy it.
- B. Explain why science cannot prove or disprove the existence of God.
- C. Describe what it means to be religious and to be spiritual. Are religion and spirituality related? If not, why? If so, explain the relationship.



# Chapter 1 Test Answer Key

## Multiple Choice

1. c
2. d
3. a
4. d
5. b
6. d
7. d
8. b
9. a
10. d
11. b
12. d
13. d
14. c
15. b

## Matching

16. o
17. h
18. n
19. d
20. k
21. i
22. g
23. e
24. j
25. m
26. f
27. l
28. c
29. b
30. a

## True or False

31. T
32. T
33. F
34. T
35. T
36. F
37. T
38. T
39. F
40. T

## Essay

- A. For part 1, the answer should explain that the selected hunger is considered spiritual because it relates to the parts of ourselves that are not material or physical. For part 2, answers will vary but should demonstrate knowledge of the relevant material in the student book (see pages 7–9 for meaning, pages 10–12 for goodness, and pages 12–13 for connection).
- B. The core answer is that science cannot prove or disprove the existence of God. If a supreme being exists, that supreme being that created all space and time must exist outside of space and time. So science, the discipline that seeks to understand and measure space and time, cannot measure God. Students may also add that this does not prevent human beings from making arguments for the existence of God. It does require using logical arguments, rather than scientific reasoning, when discussing the existence of God.
- C. The student should discuss the meaning of both spiritual realities and religion. Being spiritual means relating to the nonphysical aspects of human experience. Being religious means committing to an organized system of beliefs, rituals, and ways of living to express faith. Some students will see the two as interlocking realities; some students will see spirituality as a reality separate from religion.

