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How to Be a Quaker in the Twenty-First Century

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HOW TO BE A QUAKER IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

By Dave Votaw

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
Master of Arts in Christian Studies
at George Fox University

May 2, 1997

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Origins of the Project

I've had several different jobs in my life—audiovisual coordinator, computer manager, toilet bowl cleaner, pastor, computer programmer, salesman, professor; but one thing has remained constant: for nearly twenty-five years, I've been an Adult Sunday School teacher. I like teaching adults in Sunday School best of all, because those who come are motivated; if they don't want to, they don't come.

Sunday School is a unique combination of fellowship and learning in a low-pressure environment. It's a safe place, where people can be free to express their thoughts and learn at their own rates. Home Bible study groups have similar strengths, with the added attraction of more regular attendance, more time spent together, and (in many cases) more accountability.

I have often wished that I had some material I could use to talk about Quaker things in Sunday School or in a Bible study group. It seems to me that fewer and fewer people that belong to Friends meetings really understand the distinctives (called *Testimonies*) of Friends. When I was asked to complete a project, as a part of my M.A. in Christian Studies program, this need came readily to mind.

That was in the spring of 1993. My first step was to write a paper describing the need for and the concepts behind such a project. That paper starts on the next page. My next step was to review similar materials that had been published. For the next year, I undertook an extensive review process, analyzing curricula written by authors in Northwest Yearly Meeting, Evangelical Friends International, Friends United Meeting, and Friends General Conference. In this binder, the reviews come after the introductory paper.

The third step was to decide on the shape and the scope of the project. I worked with Howard Macy, my advisor, and we set up the structure of the lessons that were finally produced. Two years passed before I started writing, and then I committed myself to teaching the curriculum to two groups: a Freshman Experience seminar at George Fox University, and an adult Sunday School class at Sherwood Community Friends Church. Those groups became my product testers, and as I taught the curriculum I was able to make changes based on what worked and what didn't.

I am very thankful to my parents, Dick and Doree Votaw, for providing a place to write (a small mobile home on the Oregon Coast); to Paul Anderson, who provided the initial impetus; to Howard Macy, for his excellent advice, encouragement and editing; to my students, for their testing; and to my wife, Karen, for her patience and support throughout the project.

Dave Votaw
May 2, 1997

Why Teach Friends Distinctives?

I'm a ninth-generation Quaker. That's just on this side of the Atlantic; the book* says that the Vauteau family were members of the society of Friends in 17th-century France as well. I was brought up in Whittier, one of the oldest (and most prestigious) Friends meetings in California. Our church was proud of its heritage; I knew what it was to be a Quaker long before I knew what it was to be a Christian.

Even after I committed my life to Christ, the distinction (Quaker vs. Christian) stayed with me. As a fundamentalist college student, I accused my parents' church (which was somewhat liberal) of being more concerned about being Quaker than being Christian. "Why can't we be both?" was my family's reply.

"You can," I stated. "But being Christian has to be top priority."

"What's the difference?" they asked. I didn't realize it at the time, but that is the critical question. Why do we bother with being Friends? As a beginning college student, I saw no reason to do so. I was attending a Conservative Baptist church at the time, much to my parents' dismay. I didn't see why they should be so concerned; after all, I was going to church, and I figured they should be happy with that.

My attitude was not uncommon for people of my generation. The old denominational loyalties have been slipping for years. Most people choose a particular church not because of its denomination, but because their friends go there, or because it's close, or because they feel comfortable there. Only after they have been involved for a while do some begin to learn about the history and doctrine of the church they've joined. Others never bother; those dusty old facts seem boring and irrelevant.

Well, what's wrong with that? After all, God is the God of the present, isn't He? That is, what matters most about being a Christian is our present relationship with God through His Son Jesus Christ, right? Isn't it our chief goal as Christians to seek to know God's will for our present and future and to obey it? Why should we be occupied by the past at all?

This paper will attempt to show why it is important for Friends to be Friends (as well as Christians) and to know something of their heritage. We will begin by looking at the public image of Quakers, and the differences in that image between the past and the present. We'll examine the current trend among evangelical Friends away from Friends distinctives, and then look directly at the question of why we should be concerned about these distinctives. We will conclude by making some suggestions for the teaching of Friends distinctives.

Within a few years of the time the Friends movement began in 17th-century England, Quakers were well-known for their distinctive behavior. They refused to bow down to those in authority, insisting instead that all people were equal in God's sight and should therefore be addressed as equals. They would not take oaths in court, but affirmed their practice of honesty on all occasions. They removed the physical sacraments from worship, replacing them with spiritually significant observations and understandings. These distinctives were essentially

* My great-great uncle, Merritt Votaw, self-published our family's definitive genealogy volume when I was about 10 years old.

positive. Friends were not trying to do what was merely different, they were trying to do what was right.

The positive difference in Friends was carried over to America. Believing that forced religious belief is wrong, Quakers established Pennsylvania, one of the few colonies that tolerated all faiths. Quaker merchants, known for their honesty, prospered. This practice of truthfulness, coupled with their convictions that all people are created equal and that killing is wrong, led to the establishment of the only unbroken peace treaty between native Americans (so-called "Indians") and the white descendants of European immigrants. Later, those same convictions led Friends to not only support the anti-slavery movement but to actively participate in it.

Equally strong convictions were behind many Friends' refusal to participate in war. Believing in the sanctity of life and the value of persons, killing was unthinkable to them. The same beliefs formed the basis for their relief efforts during and after several American wars.

Thus for the first two centuries of their existence, Friends' distinctives grew directly out of Friends' belief. Quakers may have been different from other Christians, but that difference came from hearts burning with a passion for truth and righteousness, determined to be obedient to that Spirit which drove them. Doctrinal disputes and church splits, however, accomplished what decades of opposition could not, and the Society which had made a difference began to settle for merely being different.

At some point in our history, our distinctives became normative for Friends. The differences became traditions, kept for the sake of maintaining the church's identity. Friends distinctives came to be taught and defended as if they were written in law (as indeed they are today in many Yearly Meetings) rather than written on hearts. This is not to say that Friends no longer believed in the equality of persons or the sanctity of life; it is to say that their response to that belief, their actions resulting from it, were now normalized. Questions and answers were reversed.

	Questions	Answers
"Radical" Friends	Since we believe in the direct leading of the Holy Spirit, how shall we worship?	As the Spirit leads, without planning the meeting.
	Since we believe that all human life is equally sacred, how shall we respond to injustice and war?	We will defend the rights of all to life and freedom, and refuse to kill people.
"Normalized" Friends	Why do we have silent meetings, or silence in worship?	Because we believe that the Holy Spirit will lead us.
	Why are so many Friends pacifists?	Because they believe it is wrong to kill.

It is difficult to pinpoint the times, locations, and causes for this shift (I will leave that to the historians) but even a cursory examination of our culture's present-day image of Quakers will suffice to demonstrate that it has indeed occurred.

Most people in our secular culture, if asked what image the word "Quaker" brought to mind, would respond in terms of oatmeal! Others would associate Quakers with silent meetings for worship, or with a historic stance toward pacifism. Many people confuse Quakers with Amish, thinking that we are a separatist organization that wears strange clothing. The word "Friends" carries little meaning at all to our secular culture; many Friends organizations append the parenthetical explanation "(Quakers)" to descriptions of their groups.

I have a friend who, though familiar with much of Protestant Christianity, knows little about Friends. Invited to a church that is part of Northwest Yearly Meeting, he was surprised and somewhat disappointed to find it so similar to other churches he had attended. A few weeks later, he told me, he visited a "real" Quaker church where they had a silent meeting!

Some who are familiar with the work of the American Friends Service Committee might associate the word "Quaker" with social relief efforts, or with liberal politics. Indeed, if Quakers get any publicity these days it is usually in that context. Evangelical Friends are quick to disavow any association with the AFSC, and will go to great pains to make sure that the once-perjorative term does not become the exclusive property of the left-wing group. Would that we evangelicals would work as hard at creating our own distinctive reputation as we do at dissassociating ourselves from the liberals!

But the trend in evangelical Friends circles is away from distinctives, not toward them. Friends seem to have the goal of looking just like the other evangelical churches. Indeed, some of our churches are even changing their names so as not to appear to be too different. For example, I go to Sherwood Community Friends Church. Newberg Friends' new ministry to unchurched people goes by the name of 2nd Street Church; many people do not know that it's connected to the Friends church. This is happening by design, not by accident; studies have shown that for most people, denominational loyalty plays a relatively small role in selecting a church. Churches that are too distinctive will scare away a portion of those people who might otherwise visit them. Church growth is a laudable goal, but in what context should Friends distinctives be evident?

The fear of alienating Christians who might otherwise be willing to make a commitment to one's church is a powerful force. For example, it has led several evangelical Friends churches to regularly celebrate the Lord's Supper, a practice clearly rejected by early Friends and one that has traditionally been avoided among Quakers. Few Friends, of course, would say that there is anything wrong with this ritual; most would say that it's just not necessary. Yet some Quaker churches, having failed to teach the spiritual truths underlying the Friends' concept of communion, have decided to practice it almost to fill the void. Friends, if we are going to celebrate the Lord's Supper then we should do it for a better reason than public relations. There is no shortage of good reasons to celebrate the Lord's Supper.

The traditional forum for the teaching of Friends history and doctrine in our churches is the pastor's class for potential new members. Yet even this is changing; pastor's classes today are becoming shorter in time, often concentrating more on the fundamentals of Christianity and

the activities of the local church than on the distinctives of Friends. This trend was endorsed at a recent NWYM pastors' conference.

The teaching of distinctive Friends history, doctrine and testimonies is minimal in our evangelical Friends churches today. It is simply not a priority for most Friends pastors. This is clearly indicated on the church survey forms that are returned to the Yearly Meeting's Department of Christian Testimonies (note the name!) each year. The survey asks the churches to indicate which distinctives they are trying to teach, and how the Department might be able to help them. Only a handful are trying to teach subjects that are distinctive to Friends.

I recently attended a meeting led by Joe Gerick, the superintendant of Northwest Yearly Meeting. We were talking about the potential tension (in a local Friends church) between being true to Friends distinctives (such as silent worship) and being appealing to visitors and newcomers. The assumption was that Friends distinctives would not be appealing. The question was asked "Do we have to have silent worship, just because we're Friends?" Joe related that several churches had asked him this question, and that some had decided to quit the practice of silent worship. Then he made a very interesting statement. Joe Gerick said, "We should not do these things (practice Friends distinctives) because we are Friends; we should do them because they are right."

The more I thought about that statement, the more powerful its truth became to me. I began to realize that modern Friends have changed questions; they've gone from "I believe this; how shall I then live?" to "Why do we live this way?". Friends who argue for the practice of the traditional testimonies often do so out of a conservative desire to remain distinct, not from a radical passion for truth. The error is a common one, and not unique to Friends. When other Christians make a similar mistake we call them "legalistic"; that is, they are enforcing the law because it is the law, not because it is right. Some Christians practice bibliolatry; they obey the Bible as a final authority, forgetting that there is a living, personal God behind it. This too is a similar error.

We must learn and practice the distinctives of Friends, therefore, for the same reason that we must learn and practice the teachings of the Bible: because they are true. Biblical history is a record of God's dealings with His people; Friends history, similarly, is a record of God's dealings with His people in a different time and place from the biblical setting. When we read the Bible, we come to understand God's character, and we can identify with the people in the Bible stories. Their story becomes ours, in a sense, as we are able to relate the historical settings to our own. Only in this way do the stories and the doctrines of the Bible become truth in our lives, and as a result our lives are changed.

We can relate to Friends history in a similar way. Accounts of early Friends are not inspired, of course, but that does not mean that God was not working among them. The actions of early Friends are not considered infallible, but neither are the actions of David, Elijah, and most other biblical characters. Thus, just as we read the Bible, we can read Friends history and come to better understand God's character, and we can identify with the early Friends. Our lives can be changed by the truth that an understanding of Friends history brings to us.

The historic Friends testimonies and other distinctives arose out of that truth, as it burned in the hearts and minds of early Quakers. Their church was healthy, because they knew who they

were and what they stood for. Their mission was not to be attractive; it was to obey the Spirit and be witnesses to the truth. As a result Friends have a unique place in church history and theology, and a heritage to be treasured. Yet our heritage must not only be treasured; it must be fulfilled. Our mission is not yet complete. We still have a role in this world. If we regain our distinctiveness through obedience to the truth, we won't have to worry about being attractive. People will join the Friends because of who we are, both individually and corporately.

We must, therefore, not bury our distinctiveness. We must raise Friends history, doctrine and testimonies out of the dusty tombs of church libraries and into the hearts, minds, and lives of our members. Friends distinctives will only come to life when they are part of the personal, everyday experience of today's living Quakers. Thus the first order of business is to change the way these distinctives are taught.

As I have already noted, the pastor's class is the setting for most formal teaching of Friends distinctives in our churches today. In many such classes, Friends testimonies are taught as traditions, and our story is reduced to a recitation of names and dates. More creativity is sometimes shown in teaching our children and youth, as new curricula have been developed for them in recent years.*

The critical shortage of any comprehensive teaching of Friends' testimonies was painfully obvious around the time of the recent war in the Persian Gulf. Quakers whose hearts were stirred by patriotism or whose friends and relatives were called to participate in the war suddenly found themselves unprepared to deal with their heritage and tradition of pacifism. Friends pastors were placed in the uncomfortable position of having to deal with an issue which was likely to alienate people no matter what they preached. As Joe Gerick said, "The time to teach pacifism is not in times of war; the time to teach pacifism is in times of peace."

Indeed, Friends distinctives must be taught continuously, as an integral part of Christian teaching. If we really believe in pacifism, in the equality of persons, in spiritual communion and baptism, then we must teach them along with everything else that we teach in the church. If these distinctives are to be more than traditions and facts to be memorized, they must be taught in the context of personal discipleship and church mission. Spiritual communion is an integral part of discipleship, and the concept of the equality of persons should give direction to our missionary work. We must not teach Friends distinctives as a bunch of facts to be learned and forgotten; we must teach them by doing them. Only in this way can they become a part of us.

My goal is to write a set of lessons, to be taught in adult Sunday School or in a home study group, that presents the distinctive history, doctrines, and testimonies of Friends in a real-life context. My hope is that adult Friends will not only study these issues, but experiment with them, test them, and argue with them. My prayer is that the stories and the words of other, earlier Friends will become truth that changes the lives of today's Friends, and provide a beginning place for the continuous teaching—and living—of Friends distinctives.

Dave Votaw, June 1993

* Evangelical Friends International has just completed the production of a new version of the youth curriculum "Let's Be Friends" as I write this.

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By Dave Votaw
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Testimonies

Ben Richmond Friends United Press

1993 51 pages

0. Overview

A series of 13 lessons touching on both traditional and current testimonies among Friends. The author states that there is more material in each lesson than can be covered in a single session. This allows the teacher to emphasize Bible Study or focus on contemporary issues. If it is desired to do both, the teacher will need to plan for more than 13 sessions.

Each lesson includes a Bible study, an essay, quotes from Quakers, discussion questions, and additional help and background study suggestions. In addition, there is a separate Notes For The Teacher section in the back written by Patricia Edwards which offers suggestions on how to use the material.

Too much of Richmond's material is editorial opinion. In these sections, he is not helping people learn; he is preaching at them, writing persuasively. Much of this editorial material is good food for thought, but in a Sunday School lesson he should allow people to discover truth for themselves, not ram it down their throats.

1. Source of the Testimonies

Overview

This lesson explores the need for Friends Testimonies and finds the source of the need in the contrast between life as God intended it to be (in the Garden of Eden, Genesis chapter 2) and life as we experience it (as pictured in Genesis 3 and 4). The choice of the Genesis passage originates with a quote from George Fox: "that such as were faithful to him in the power and light of Christ, should come up into that state in which Adam was before he fell..." Thus Friends testimonies are seen as essential ways of a return to that perfect state. Eight topics are explored: Economic Life, The World of Work, Relationships, Man and Woman, Sexuality, Discourse, God and Humanity, and Life. For each topic, one or two related scriptures from the above chapters are quoted under the headings "In Eden" and "Paradise Lost". Space is then provided for someone (the teacher? the student?) to write down the nature of the contrast. The teacher and students together are to explore the origin/need for Friends testimonies in the various topics. A few (10) testimonies are listed by name only; they are NOT the same as the eight topics.

Richmond's essay proclaims the reality of the kingdom of God here and now as outlined by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. "We expect Jesus to be Lord of all: first within ourselves and then in society and eventually in the world at large." "The Testimonies visibly refute the despairing lie that the life of the Spirit is unattainable."

Richmond seeks to drive home three points: 1) All the testimonies are equally important. You can't pick and choose. 2) The need for testimonies transcends culture, but the expression of a testimony must be appropriate for the current culture. Example: plain speech, as an expression of the testimony of equality of persons, is no longer valid for our culture. 3) The testimonies must be expressed corporately as well as individually.

Quotes in this lesson are from Edward Burroughs (1659), on the priority of Christian virtues over alliances in this world, and from Douglas Gwyn (1986), on the origin of the testimonies in the convictions of Friends.

Discussion questions center on the current expression of testimonies in the meeting and in society.

There is an interesting sidebar on the identity of the serpent, and on the fulfillment of the prophecies concerning him. No opinions are stated; only questions.

Critique

The weakest point of this lesson is in the identity of the Testimonies themselves: what are they? Who identifies them? The list of testimonies given is only described as "some of the traditional Quaker testimonies"; what are the rest? Why are there no definitions of them? It is very confusing to have eight topics of study which are different from the testimonies which are listed. At the very least a reference should have been given to a more complete list of Testimonies.

It's also very interesting to me that the only mention of "sin" in this lesson on Genesis 2-4 is a backhanded slap at some theology which relegates the reality of the Kingdom to the afterlife. The Fall, which is certainly one of the central events of history, rates only passing mention, and discussion of the resulting decay of the image of God in us and our relationship to Him is not found at all in this lesson.

Notwithstanding the above, however, the use of the contrasts between Genesis 2 and 3-4 is very effective in establishing the need for the testimonies. The notes for the teacher section gives some good ideas for presenting and discussing this material. The essay's three main points are appropriate, especially the second one which calls us to find fresh expressions of the truths within the testimonies.

The discussion questions effectively bridge the gap between the Bible study and the current experience of the class or study group, and the Quaker quotes are well-chosen.

The sidebar on the serpent is interesting, but has tremendous potential for driving the group off the topic.

Suggestions

First, I would want to clearly identify what is meant by "testimony" and give a definitive list with short definitions. Second, I would align the topics of the Bible study with the testimonies. If not all the testimonies could be found in the chosen passage, at least make sure each of the study topics is the same as a testimony. Third, I would explore further into the fundamental need for the testimonies (as found in the Fall) and their origin in the deeply-held beliefs of Friends. The implications of Fox's statement about living in an unfallen state need to be further explored.

Since I am adding so many things to this lesson, I might choose to explore only a few (three or four) topics/testimonies in the Bible passage, instead of eight. After all, attention will presumably be given to each testimony individually in subsequent lessons.

2. The Truth That Sets Us Free

Overview

This lesson covers a lot of ground, from the origin of sin in the Father of Lies to the deceptive language used by our government to describe military practices. Richmond finds deceit to be the essence of sin, and describes the battle between God and Satan in terms of Truth and Lies. Many scripture references are given to show how many ways we are susceptible to deception. The point is that only God can bring us to the Truth, and that He does this when we align ourselves with Jesus in the war of the Lamb against the Deceiver.

In his essay, Richmond shifts the emphasis from personal to corporate truth. As people of Truth, we are called to hold our organizations accountable. Starting with the local Meeting, he calls us to unity through the speaking of truth in business meetings and in relationships. The final portion of Richmond's essay is a critique of the federal government's misuse of language to lie to us about its preparation for war. Seven Quaker Quotes, from George Fox to Charles Mylander, deal with the need for truth in dealing with people and with God. The discussion questions deal with the conflicts between Truth and our culture. Several difficult issues are raised, both here and in the Bible study.

Critique

The identification of the origin of evil with deceit is hardly beyond dispute; many theologians locate evil's essence in pride. Richmond deals directly with sin and its effects in this chapter, however, and that is a great improvement over the first. Even better, he mentions the need to have Christ in one's life. But the lesson does not really deal with the pitfalls of personal deceit, except to ask difficult questions for which it supplies no answers. The emphasis on corporate Truth is good, but I would much rather see less railing about the government's tendency to lies and more about how to become more truthful in our lives. The short section on truth in the church community is much needed and very helpful.

The quotes are so many, and so varied, that it's hard to know how to use them. The Notes for the Teacher offer no help for this, either. The Discussion Questions are quite deep and would require much additional preparation to be handled properly.

Suggestions

I would decrease the complaints about the government, and increase the discussion of personal truthfulness, including some suggestions on how we can live in our culture and still be truthful. I would have this material lead directly into the discussion questions, instead of bringing up new topics there. I would reduce the number of Quaker Quotes to those which were directly relevant to my point.

3. The Gospel of Peace

Overview

The Bible study in this lesson defines peace as more than the absence of war; it is something that comes from God as a result of the work of Christ. The bulk of the study is on the armor of God, from Ephesians 6. The emphasis is on the Lamb's war against all evil. Going into battle means carrying the gospel of peace to the world. Students are asked to role play the putting on of the armor.

In his essay, Richmond declares that the Friends Peace Testimony is a testimony to redemption through Jesus Christ. It is because we are citizens of a heavenly kingdom that we do not fight in earthly battles. Indeed, fighting is against God's will and leads to evil. Peace is a positive way of life, something that has to be worked for. The Quaker Quotes include three from Fox and repeatedly avow the absolute nature of the Friends Peace Testimony. The discussion questions are linked more closely than usual with the study material. They deal with our personal response to the armor of God and the peace testimony.

Critique

This is the first of three (!) lessons on the peace testimony, so as such it is quite broad and introductory in nature. The definition and the description of the source of peace in Christ are exactly right, but the emphasis on the armor of God is puzzling. The role play could be much stronger; there is very little for the student to do and I think it would feel forced. The essay is very helpful and serves as an excellent introduction to the reasons why Friends are pacifists. The Quotes are very powerful; Quakers today would never speak so forcefully since we allow people to be non-pacifists and still be Friends if they so choose. The Discussion Questions are interesting but perhaps deal too much with feelings. Basically the lesson doesn't have a lot of hard content.

Suggestions

If I were to role play the armor of God, I would have students actually use cardboard or paper armor, and write on it some examples of what Paul is writing about in Ephesians 6. Concepts such as "righteousness" are harder to grasp and identify with than more specific examples.

I might include this lesson in with one of the others.

4. Peace and Conscription

Overview

Richmond begins this lesson by explaining that the number one reason why Christians are not pacifists is because God directed the Israelites to war in the Old Testament. With carefully-chosen scriptures he makes a powerful definition of a holy war, showing it to be utterly unlike anything our culture has ever seen or imagined. Finally, he shows that war, in God's plan, is to be superseded by peace. In his essay, Richmond briefly cites Fox as an example of a Friend who refused to participate in war, and then uses the rest of the space to give a set of instructions for Friends who are conscientiously opposed to war to help them establish their CO status. The Quaker Quotes are from official Friends organizational statements: Queries from New England Yearly Mtg. and advice to monthly meetings from the FUM 1981 Triennial.

Discussion questions are part of a simulation in which one class member will play the role of the person seeking CO status, and the others will play the role of the draft board. The questions are for the draft board to ask the candidate, and some of them are horribly biased, unfair questions. ("What would you do if someone attacked your mother?") The author's note acknowledges this fact, stating that this type of question can be expected in such a situation.

Critique

The Bible study is first-rate; I believe that Richmond has truly interpreted the OT concept of the holy war. He has done so in a powerful way that is simple and easy to understand. The essay is misplaced, I believe; Richmond would have done much better to make this material supplementary for those persons to whom it applies. The Quotes are not too interesting. The simulation and questions are fascinating, though, and would make for a powerful session not soon forgotten by those who participate.

Suggestions

I would change the essay's subject to a fuller explanation of the gospel of peace introduced in Lesson 3 and in the Bible study for this lesson. I would use Quotes from individual Quakers, not from Quaker groups.

The simulation has great potential for both good and bad. Feelings run strong on this issue, and adult Friends are not easily convinced. A careful time of preparation and debriefing is important so that people do not become angry with each other and feelings are not hurt. I would probably want to have the group more evenly split, and change the setting to a more traditional debate rather than a draft board where all but one person are on the same side. Another useful setting may be a courtroom, where you can have an equal number of people representing both sides of the issue.

5. Peace and War Tax Resistance

Overview

In the Bible study, Richmond raises several difficult and thought-provoking questions. He re-opens the statement "Render unto Caesar..." to new interpretation, not settling for the traditional "pay your taxes" understanding. The final question is "When there is a conflict between obedience to governing authorities and the great commandment, what should a Christian do?" The essay is devoted to a discussion of the reasons for and methods of paying taxes to support war and preparation for war. The bulk of it consists of specific instructions for dealing with the IRS, although there is some discussion of the principles involved and an example of a Friend who refused to supply bayonets during the Revolutionary War. The Quaker Quotes are a mix of individual and corporate statements dealing with this issue. The Discussion Questions take up where the Bible study left off, calling for Friends to consider how their convictions will motivate them to act in the current situation.

Critique

Again I have the feeling that this material is more appropriate to a sermon, editorial, or magazine article than a Sunday School lesson. The Bible study is a thought-provoking beginning, but Richmond abandons this tactic entirely in his essay; he assumes the conclusions, dismisses other points of view and proceeds right on into specific actions. The discussion questions are very helpful; an excellent lesson can be made of these questions and the Bible study, leaving out the intervening essay and some of the quotes. I wish the essay offered some answers, perhaps some alternative answers, to the questions raised by the Bible study.

Suggestions

My suggestions are implied in the critique above. Expand the Bible study, use the essay to suggest some possible answers, abandon the tax-avoidance instructions (but certainly consider that action as an option), keep the thought-provoking quotes and the discussion questions. Arguments against withholding war taxes can also be made; both sides should be represented fairly and students should be allowed to consider all points of view. Finally, we need to realize that God may call different people to do different things; what's right for me may be wrong for someone else.

6. Simplicity

Overview

The Bible study covers a variety of topics, based on Richmond's personal translation of the Lord's prayer as found in Luke 11. Unusual interpretations are given for some passages, notably "forgive us our sins, for we forgive everyone who is indebted to us." Discussion of this phrase does not deal with sin, but with communal living and the forgiveness of financial debts. The essay links simplicity to spiritual power, and calls Friends to new expressions (testimonies) of their convictions that are appropriate for our times. It concludes with some suggestions (from Richard Foster) of ways to decrease the hold of money on our lives.

Richmond suggests that a support group be formed of those who would like to "explore economic discipleship." Such a group would be based around a mutual commitment which is printed in the textbook. Written by Evangelicals For Social Action and based on the ShakerTown Pledge, the document commits the signer to Christian stewardship in all walks of life. The Questions for Discussion are designed to link the concepts presented with the personal experience and priorities of the students. A full page of Quaker Quotes contains much to think about, with authors ranging from Fox and Woolman to modern Friends.

Critique

The Bible study is quite sketchy and even questionable in its treatment of scripture. It has no underlying theme; it seems to jump from subject to subject, covering none adequately. The essay is thoughtful and helpful with a much better balance between editorial statement and practical advice than is found in previous chapters. I especially liked the call to Friends to find new ways of expressing their inner convictions through outward testimonies.

The written commitment is provocative, but I would expect Friends to write their own commitments as the Spirit leads rather than conform to this one. The suggestion for a support group is appropriate and helpful. Discussion questions are excellent and will make this lesson meaningful to participants. They would be better if the Bible study section were more related to the theme. The Quaker Quotes are, for the most part, excellent and will stimulate discussion if used with the questions.

Suggestions

I would change the Bible study to one with the theme of simplicity, with Jesus' words "Seek ye first the Kingdom..." at the center. I would not print a prefabricated commitment, but would suggest that groups draw up their own and offer some suggestions. Other than that, I find most of the material in this lesson quite helpful.

7. The Earth Is the Lord's*Overview*

The first half of the Bible study explores the various understandings of the relationship of God to the creation: did God create out of nothing, or did He conquer the (evil) chaos? Other understandings of creation explored in this passage include Hindu and scientific determinism. The questions are asked, but not answered. The second half of the Bible study discusses alternate understandings of man's role in creation: "keeper" or "have dominion". Several questions are asked, but again, no answers are given. The Bible study is intentionally open to a wide variety of interpretations.

Richmond's essay discusses the good and evil of technological advances, including nuclear war and genetic engineering. He holds the philosophy of scientific determinism (there's no ultimate purpose, so anything goes) responsible for the evils of technology, and states that we must maintain our foundation in the doctrine of the goodness of the creation and the Creator.

There are several quotes, both from Quakers and other sources, expressing a wide variety of viewpoints on these topics. Discussion questions are more philosophical than usual, asking for opinions.

Critique

This material is interesting, but Richmond raises many more questions than answers. It is not clear to me that this is an appropriate subject for a Sunday School class about Friends testimonies. Certainly, it's a current issue, but it is so broad that there doesn't seem to be much to grab hold of. The discussion questions continue to wrestle with the issues while acknowledging the difficulty: "Can we agree on any guidelines...". The more important question is what if we can, or what if we can't? What difference can any of us make?

Suggestions

The chances are that I would not include a lesson on this topic in my curriculum. If I did, however, I would like to try to make this lesson more relevant to the lives of those attending the class. Books with titles like "100 Ways You Can Save the Earth" can be very practical and helpful. Several Christian authors have written books on a Christian view of ecology and the earth. I would want to use materials like these in preparing a lesson.

8. The Council On Intoxicants

Overview

The Bible study portion consists of references chosen to represent each of two positions on this issue. The idea is that the class is to divide up into two teams, one representing our "freedom in Christ" to drink "intoxicants", the other representing a position of abstinence. A debate is to be held, and the class is to come to some form of unity and write a minute on the issue. In the short essay, Richmond makes the point that alcoholism is a disease, not a sin. On the other hand, Friends must be careful not to promote that which causes disease or abuse, so they have historically been against drinking. Richmond introduces the 12 steps of AA as an effective way for Christians to deal with alcoholism (and other temptations) in community. He also devotes space to a series of steps for dealing with alcoholics. The discussion questions move through opinions on this issue to deal with some tough choices in life. The Quaker Quotes offer opinions of Friends down through the years on this issue.

Critique

The debate would be a tremendous experience, I'm sure, and the requirement of unity and a minute goes a long way toward recapturing the traditional practices of Friends when dealing with an issue. This is the best lesson yet in terms of taking a traditional Friends testimony and bringing it up to date, making it real for the class members. The need to deal with alcoholism is real, yet I wonder if perhaps too much space is given to it in this lesson. The discussion questions are excellent and they, along with the debate, would more than fill a class period. Most of the Quaker Quotes are nothing more than interesting relics that do not add significantly to the issue. The essay is helpful.

Suggestions

I would keep the debate just as it is, or perhaps add some of the discussion questions into it just to broaden it a bit beyond the question of abstinence. I would probably leave off the 12 steps and the steps for dealing with alcoholics.

9. Women's Place

Overview

Richmond begins examining (and refuting) the traditional biblical arguments against a leadership role for women in the church, and citing several passages showing their equality to men as that which was intended from the beginning of creation. In further arguments he expands the case to one of equality for all persons, citing the use of plain speech and the disuse of titles, along with the careful use of inclusive language by early Friends. Richmond goes on to defend the use of inclusive language, even when referring to God, as biblical and necessary. He says that a hierarchical family structure is wrong: the Bible's model is one of mutual submission. His diagram represents father, mother, and children as equally submissive to each other and to God. A page of "facts and figures" follows, illustrating the unfairness of the world to women and the ways that Friends have been equally guilty. The latter includes a citation from Howard Macy. This lesson also features a full page of Quaker Quotes, whose single purpose is the proclamation of the equality of men and women in ministry. The discussion questions are in the form of traditional Quaker Queries, except for the last one, which asks students to speculate on the value of separate men's and women's meetings for business. (The joining of the two groups at the beginning of the 20th century is suggested as one source for the decline of women in Friends ministry.)

Critique

While the Bible study is interesting and well-written, it is too one-sided. I continue to believe that the purpose of this type of curriculum is not to preach, but to teach. It would have been better to look at scriptures that are usually interpreted against the public ministry of Friends, and examine them carefully. While I agree with Richmond's point of view on this issue, I believe that it should be presented more fairly.

The quotes show little more than the fact that this is an important issue; they merely declare an opinion, however eloquently. As queries, the answers to the discussion questions are assumed. Thus they do little more than embellish the preaching of the quotes.

Suggestions

Expand the Bible study to look at the issue from both sides; perhaps a class debate would be in order, with each of two groups preparing one side of the argument. The case could be made from several points of view: historical, biblical, etc. It would be important to follow such a debate with a thorough debriefing session and an attempt to bring closure (unity would be even better) to the issue.

10. Good Sex/Bad Sex*Overview*

In his Bible study, Richmond establishes a biblical case for the goodness of sex, and establishes sexual union as an expression of intimacy. It creates a "mystical bond which can never be broken". Bringing in the Friends point of view, he states that "Friends have always tried to uphold the goodness of sex in a way that affirms mutuality in relationship." The unity in sexual relationships carries over to equality in marriage and equality in ministry.

Richmond defines sexual immorality without reference to God: "...whenever human sexuality is perverted in such a way that human personhood is undermined." He shows how immoral sex leads to broken relationships, loneliness and lack of freedom, and that Quakers are not exempt from such problems. He goes on to suggest tools for strengthening family life. The half-page of Quaker Quotes reinforces the points already made in this lesson. There are six discussion questions, each of which breaks entirely new ground! Topics covered by these questions include remarriage after divorce, attitudes toward homosexuality, abortion, and other current topics.

Critique

The Bible study is traditional in its interpretation, and probably would be helpful in many church situations. It doesn't seem to have much to do with Friends, however. Friends attitudes toward sex have (in my opinion) not been particularly distinct from those of other Christian denominations. The discussion questions are excellent, and would make for a far more lively study than the Bible study, essay, or Quaker Quotes. Richmond, however, offers no sources or guidance to go with the questions, so leaders and groups would essentially be on their own.

Suggestions

I probably wouldn't include this topic in my curriculum. If I did, however, I would lean more heavily on the topics introduced by the discussion questions and offer more supporting material. These topics do offer opportunity for Friends to develop distinctive testimonies.

11. Fellowship, the Mystery of Christ*Overview*

In this lesson Richmond explores the origin and purposes of the church from a Friends point of view. Each of us has been reconciled to Christ and joined in fellowship together with Him and with each other, forming the church. The purpose of the church is to break down the barriers to fellowship between people, and to develop and use our gifts for ministry. Other characteristics of the church include mutual submission and discipline. The church is engaged in a spiritual battle against the enemy.

Next, Richmond includes an essay on Community. He stresses the importance of community and the inadequacy of a solitary Christianity. In community we must make the effort to truly know and support one another. Only then can we truly benefit from the community's guidance for individuals and itself. The essay closes with some guidelines for determining God's will in the Friends meeting. The Quotes echo the Bible study and the essay. The six discussion questions are of two types: four are queries, asking the reader to evaluate the meeting. The other two are theoretical questions about the nature of community in the church.

Critique

This lesson covers too many topics: redemption, the purpose of the church, spiritual gifts, church discipline, spiritual warfare, individual and corporate guidance, and Friends business meetings. All these are good topics, but cannot be covered adequately in a single lesson. Leaders and students will experience either boredom or frustration with this lesson. Queries are good, but not for discussion questions in this setting. I wish Richmond had narrowed his scope and concentrated on one or two of these topics.

Suggestions

I believe that the most important topic in this lesson is the role of the believer in the local church (meeting) and that the most important of these issues should be covered from that point of view. The most important issues are the purpose of the church, spiritual gifts, and Friends business meetings. These are not necessarily part of the same lesson. Students should be encouraged to evaluate their own roles in the meeting in the light of the points raised in the study.

12. Spiritual Baptism*Overview*

In the Bible study, Richmond examines many passages having to do with baptism. His selection is broad and shows that the word "baptism" has many shades of meaning. The conclusion of this study is that God is not concerned with ritual but He is concerned with the baptism of the Holy Spirit. His essay is hard to understand, but I believe that the point is that baptism marks the turning of the self from sin, and that Friends have historically emphasized that repentance and holiness and not the ritual. The Quaker Quotes in this lesson do more to amplify the meaning of the Friends understanding of baptism. The four discussion questions seek to relate our understanding of baptism to our experiences as Friends.

Critique

The Bible study is good and leads to a traditional Friends understanding of the meaning of baptism. The essay, which quotes extensively from a tract of George Fox, is quite difficult due to an extensive use of metaphorical language. "What would happen if our Peace and Social Concern Committees saw their task as one of training the members of our meetings in the use of spiritual winnowing forks? What would happen if we were to go about our communities and daily business separating wheat from chaff..." It's not clear what he means by all this. The Quaker Quotes are helpful (for a change) in that they supply what should have been in the essay: an explanation of the traditional Friends understanding of baptism. The discussion questions, unfortunately, relate to the essay.

Suggestions

A discussion of baptism is necessary to a curriculum on Friends distinctives and I too would follow the Bible study approach. The essay and discussion questions might better have been devoted to a discussion of the appropriateness of the ritual and the question of whether there might be other ways of expressing the truth of our repentance from sin.

13. The Place of Meeting*Overview*

Richmond gets to the deeper sense of the meaning of the word "communion" in his Bible study as he examines several key Bible passages. He shows that "communion" and "fellowship" have much in common. The Bible study is full of questions that are not answered, yet they guide the students to a deeper understanding of these concepts. The latter part of the Bible study shows how silence can be an apocalyptic event. In the essay, Richmond defines communion as "where we meet God" and shows how that happens in the gathered meeting for worship, in service, and in mission. The essay and the Quotes section both close with a quote from Alan Kolp: "The call to discipleship is not to participate in the sacraments, but to live sacramentally." Other quotes relate to the purpose and experience of silence in worship. Discussion questions relate to personal understanding of communion and sacrament.

Critique

The Bible study is well-designed as a teaching tool, with many helpful questions and suggestions. The essay about where we meet God is a helpful complement. The quotes give helpful insight into the experience of silent worship. The part about silence as an apocalyptic event seems strange and inappropriate for this lesson. It might be good as a part of a worship experience. The effect of the whole is to define all of life as a sacrament, which is a powerful Quaker distinctive. The discussion questions break no new ground, but follow naturally the points made in the lesson.

Suggestions

I like this lesson and would keep it as it is, leaving off the part about silence as an apocalyptic event.

A Family of Friends: Friends Church Membership Course

Jack Willcuts Portland, Oregon: The Barclay Press

1960 89 pages

1. "Thee and Thou"

Very brief treatment of various unique Quaker terms with some attempt to explain the spiritual meaning behind the various terms. "Thee and Thou" is not explained well at all, but good (if brief) explanations of "meeting" and "recording".

2. A Glance at the Past

"Friends are not followers of George Fox, William Penn, or any other illustrious 'founder.'...Fox and his co-laborers did not advance new teachings or new doctrines...'Quakerism' is...a movement which for three centuries has sought to restore the emphasis and teaching of early Christianity." Thus, according to Willcuts, our primary reference for Quaker purity is not Fox, et al., but the early Christians. The rest of the lesson is a very brief history of Quakerism, with emphasis on the positive effects of persecution on the health of the church.

3. Doctrines Are Important

"Friends," says Willcuts, "have been criticized for concentrating on their beliefs instead of their activities." (p. 26) He must be referring to the criticism of evangelical Friends coming from their more liberal fellow Quakers, who have traditionally felt that evangelical Friends were more interested in winning souls than in offering more material assistance. "These [doctrines] come not from some higher authority of the church organization nor from a historical setting, but are based upon an up-to-date application of history, practice, and Scripture as made real to us by the presence of the Holy Spirit." Thus Willcuts acknowledges the dynamic character of Friends beliefs. We are non-creedal, and non-hierarchical; we believe what we believe because God tells us what is true, and He is telling us here and now.

The chapter has short sections dealing with beliefs about God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit; the section on Christ has creedal sections like Fox's letter to the governor of Barbadoes, and (by reference) the 1887 Richmond declaration of faith. It does not mention the Light of Christ Within, or the Inner Light. The section on the Holy Spirit equates Him to the conscience, and does not mention the unique Quaker emphasis on His leading.

4. Beliefs in Action (Friends doctrine)

"Doctrines are something to hold. But they are also a foundation upon which to build a Christian life and a church program of action." p. 35

A. Friends worship - not dependent on special persons, objects, or ceremonies. These are unnecessary. Worship in spirit and in truth. Liberty within programmed meeting. Simplicity, freedom of expression. Determination to be directed by the Holy spirit in worship.

B. Ordinances - baptism and communion are widely disputed as to methods and efficacy. Friends believe they are inward spiritual experiences, not outward acts. Friends believe in baptism of the Holy Spirit for cleansing and filling. "[It] is a positive and definite experience to be sought and expected." p. 39 Communion with elements is no more commanded than is footwashing.

C. Pacifism - primary defense is tradition of pacifism in the early church (!) with but brief mention of the teachings of Jesus. Mention of positive acts of relief activities in war time, active promotion of peace and Christian service, not just avoidance of war. Recommendation that Christians study this issue, take it seriously and grapple with the issues.

5. Practical Christian Living

"...These interests spring from a basic doctrinal position involving one's beliefs... Christian belief expresses itself in moral action." p. 44

Preliminary discussion of Friends relief efforts, from which the above quote is taken. These are mentioned again in the thoughts for discussion section as responsibilities of all true Christians.

A. Use of Oaths - primary objection is due to Jesus' prohibition, which is quoted. The higher standard of truth in all circumstances is mentioned, as is the American option to affirm instead of swear. No other suggestions are made for modern Friends, with the exception of a thought for discussion that Friends ought to tell the truth whether under oath or not.

B. Pastoral meetings - distinction is made between pastoral and non-pastoral meetings, but there is no further discussion of the latter. Mention of pastoral gift, recognized among Friends, and should be encouraged. Distinction between the real pastoral gift and lay gifts of speaking, exhortation, prayer. Willcuts really goes out of this way to emphasize the special calling of the pastor and the importance of recognizing and developing that gift. Women are also encouraged to consider whether they have the gift. Lay ministry is ignored here.

C. Pastoral support - it is very important, says Willcuts, to fully support a pastor whose gifts have been recognized, so that he can give himself fully to the ministry to which he has been called. Provide enough for him and his family to live on, so they can be free from anxiety and other obligations.

6. The Heart of the Matter (Salvation)

This chapter does not particularly relate to Friends; here Willcuts makes a clear statement of priorities and says that being a true Christian is most important of all. Since I intend to deal with discipleship and the relationship of being Quaker to being Christian in my curriculum, the lesson is somewhat relevant.

In this lesson Willcuts draws a sharp distinction between church membership and becoming a Christian. The bulk of the lesson is a strong evangelistic call to salvation, emphasizing the reality of sin, our need for confession and repentance, and the changed life of the Christian. On the latter point, Willcuts advises the new Christian to examine his life carefully and allow contact with God and fellow Christians to make the appropriate changes. Complacency is strongly condemned, with emphasis on the power of a victorious life available through the Holy Spirit. Christians are also encouraged to form regular Bible reading and prayer habits, and to commit to an area of Christian service.

7. A Heritage and a Future

The first part of the lesson is devoted to a description of the Friends organization for business: monthly meeting, quarterly meeting, yearly meeting. Willcuts emphasizes the worshipful character of Friends business meetings. Unity in decision making is practiced because 1) Voting only reveals the extent of the division in the group and 2) God's will is being sought, and God is not divided. Much emphasis is given to obeying the leading of the Lord, and not simply trying to win one's own way.

Authority is in the Lord, and not in the structure. Thus the pastor is not a chief executive, and the yearly meeting does not have authority over the monthly meetings. Each has their role, however, and acts according to its nature. Since there is no natural line of authority, and no political power games should be played, individuals may take on as big a role as they feel called to, and decisions must sometimes be delayed. The process of decision-making sometimes takes years, as evidenced by the progress of Friends toward an anti-slavery position in the 17 and 18th centuries. The strength of this process is found in the continuing unity of the church in the midst of disagreement.

(Possible activity: Simulate an 18th-century Friends business meeting that deals with this issue.)

Willcuts describes how an issue can originate with an individual and be brought to the monthly meeting, then progress to the quarterly and yearly meetings. This illustrates the lack of an authoritative hierarchy and the importance of recognizing God's leading in an individual.

The process of arriving at unity is described in great detail, with emphasis on the heart's attitude. This is obviously very important to Willcuts. He distinguishes between uniformity, which is mechanical, and unity, which is spiritual.

8. All Things to All People (Church activities)

This lesson is a survey of the various types of church activities available to members of Friends churches. As such it's not particularly relevant to my topic, but some parts are applicable.

A. Missions - a very short treatment whose main point is to say that Friends have historically worked to spread the gospel to all parts of the world, and they continue to do so today. Nothing is said about the nature of a distinctly Friends approach to missions.

B. Stewardship - Much of this section is given to a treatment on why the believer should tithe. The discussion does not mention Friends. Another set of paragraphs encourages the new member to be informed of and participate in the financial affairs of the church. It is particularly important for Friends to do this, since all members are equally able to be involved in setting the meeting's priorities.

C. Evangelism and Church Extension - states the need for evangelism and outreach, and describes typical activities in these areas at the local meeting and yearly meeting levels. The new member is encouraged to participate in these efforts.

D. Christian Education - refers to the establishment of Friends academies and colleges. These are described briefly, and members are encouraged to support them and make use of them for their own education. In addition, Friends are encouraged to participate in the governance of their own local public schools to influence them for God.

Sunday School, retreats and camps, youth groups, and Christian literature are also discussed in this section. Friends are encouraged to participate in all these activities. "The church should become the hub of interest for all members of the Christian home so there are parties, clubs, athletics, choirs, Bible classes and other activities offered, giving a full-orbed life for the loyal Christian." p 75.

Thus Willcuts states the goal of the church: to attract families into a fully church-oriented schedule, out of the world. The alternative, of course, is to allow the Christian to remain in the world to be salt and light.

9. Steps to Membership

A. Importance of Joining - Willcuts' point is that church membership is a statement of current (not past) commitment, and that a person who is actively involved in a local church should join. To think of resigning membership from a church formerly attended is difficult for some, but the fact is that after one has left the retention of the membership is merely symbolic and has no particular value. Membership has value when it implies commitment.

B. Types of membership - Three types are described in considerable detail: associate, active, and affiliate membership. Only active membership is relevant for those who would study this curriculum or mine either. Procedures and sample forms are given for those who would apply for membership or transfer of membership. This section is not really relevant to my purpose.

10. Earthen Vessels

A very short pep talk, encouraging new members to become fully involved and follow the Lord's leading in their involvement, despite the fact that church members are not perfect. New members are encouraged to find other members that can serve as examples for them, and to find their place in the church and serve as best they can.

Quakerism 101

Shirley Dodson Philadelphia Yearly Mtg.
1992 93 pages

0. Introduction

In her introduction, Dodson states that the Quakerism 101 course "is meant both as an opportunity for spiritual growth and as an intellectually stimulating course..." In this we have a common goal, but it will be interesting to see how our methods and content differ. The curriculum is divided into 6 sessions of two hours each. Thus its best application is to evening classes, not to Sunday School. There is a formal (short) reading requirement that students are expected to complete before each session, and students are expected to purchase books as well.

Dodson gives a great deal of helpful instruction to the teacher preparing to teach the course, including good advice on teaching and group facilitation.

A. Seekers and Finders

Overview

The assignment sheet gives the required reading list and some background information on each selection within it. On the back side, a series of reflection questions are printed. Time is given during the class session for discussion of these questions, which ask the students to try and relate the experiences of early Friends to their own lives. Many of the questions also deal with the meaning of special Friends vocabulary words used in the readings, such as "openings" and "convincement." The lesson plan is given step by step, including such things as how to have the students introduce themselves and how to divide them into groups! The first content to be shared in the lesson is a "gallop through Quaker history" which occupies the next six pages of the curriculum and includes mini-biographies of Fox, Penn, and Barclay. Time is then given for a discussion of special Quaker vocabulary, including the words mentioned above, plus several others. The instructor is then told to divide students into groups for discussing the reflection questions. Practical advice is given to students on how best to participate. After the group discussions, the teacher is asked to hand out materials for the following sessions and lead the group in a brief worship period.

Critique

The "gallop through history" is well-written but far too much time is spent on the political and theological roots of Quakerism. The potential benefit of this material to students is not worth the time/effort put into it. Also, when it is presented in paragraph style like this the temptation will be for the teacher to simply read it to the class. This is a poor way to convey information and a sure way to put several people to sleep. The section on Quaker terminology will be useful. The discussion questions are good, and will, if people are willing to share at a fairly deep level, probe to the heart of their spiritual experiences. I am concerned about the deep level of these questions in leaderless groups, however; it would be easy for groups to go too far in one direction without assigned leaders. It is especially poor, I think, to not have a time set aside for large-group "debriefing" after the small-group discussions. Important issues could very well have been raised in the small groups that the teacher needs to respond to. It is good to close with a period of worship.

Suggestions

I would leave out much of the history; in fact, I probably wouldn't teach much history at all except in the context of a particular testimony, when history would help us to understand it. History presented in lecture format is dull. It's much better to do a simulation of a particular event, so students can get the "you are there" feeling and understand the issues firsthand. In the teaching of history I would place more emphasis on what Friends did (and why) rather than where they came from. For the discussion questions, it's good to divide up into smaller groups if you have a larger class, but each group needs a leader if the questions are going to be this deep. The teacher should be asked to choose leaders in advance and work with them a bit on preparation. I would also hold a whole-group sharing/reflection time after the small groups, so that perspective is gained on difficult issues and so that the teacher is made aware of any difficulties that came up.

B. The Light Within

Overview

This lesson serves to introduce the concept of the Light, as traditionally defined and employed by Friends. The author takes a historical approach, showing what the term has meant to Friends through the years. In an easily-read list of characteristics of Light she defines it as divine, single, unifying, universal, eternal, pure, unchanging, personal, inward, saving, guiding, resistible, persistent, empowering, and ineffable. Each of these terms is explained in a helpful paragraph. She also quotes and explains the most famous Bible passages on the light.

The prerequisite for this lesson is that students are to have read the relevant chapters (2-3) in Howard Brinton's *Friends for 300 Years*. Much of the content is assumed from that work, and not repeated in this curriculum. Most of the discussion questions center around the students' personal experience with the Light; in keeping with the concepts presented, no normative truth is presupposed. There is also some discussion of the limits and possible negative connotations of the "light" metaphor. A worship session is suggested.

Critique

Studying the Friends concept of the Light without also talking about the person and work of the Holy Spirit seems pointless. The only mention of the Holy Spirit in this lesson is that some people may find it more comfortable to use the word "Spirit" instead of "Light." I would also take issue with the author's presentation of the meaning of salvation as it relates to light (no surprise there). It isn't right to study John 1:9 without talking about salvation in a biblical sense. I appreciate, however, her emphasis on the corporate, unifying aspects of the Light.

Suggestions

While I think that the term "light" has great historical significance for Friends I question the inclusion of any topic that is so open to such a wide variety of interpretation, and so difficult to define or approach for comprehension. The reality is that the Light, as a concept or a person, is not really biblical. The Bible talks about light as a metaphor for Jesus Christ, and Friends have used the Light as a metaphor for the work of the Holy Spirit. How much better to study the reality of Christ or the Spirit than to speak of the metaphor as if it had a separate, independent existence! With "light" alone we have no point of reference except our own experience and the explanations of others. If I were doing a historical study it would be very helpful to look at the concept of the "Light" and how it has been helpful (and harmful) to Friends. But the study of the Light, as a separate topic, has no place in the curriculum I'm planning.

C. Quaker Universalism

Overview

A historical approach to the classic Friends problem of authority. The presentation is neutral, as it basically tells the story of the rise of Quietism, the Hicksite split, and the Wilburite/Gurneyite split. Special emphasis is given to the differences in beliefs among the various branches of Friends, which are traced to their present-day descendants as Friends organizations. Questions relate to the ability of students to articulate their beliefs and to state the minimum requirements for membership with Friends.

Critique

Universalism was hardly a characteristic or testimony of the original Friends, no matter what the author says. Such a belief is easily derived, however, once you accept the guiding principle that one's personal experience carries more authority than any other source of spiritual guidance, and it is now common among liberal Friends. As evangelical Friends, however, our faith is distinctly Christ-centered, and we look to the Bible as an authority for our beliefs and our lives. Universalism, therefore, is not an appropriate topic for the project I am undertaking.

Suggestions

The problem of authority is not as pressing for evangelical Friends as it is for the liberal ones. We recognize the authority of the Bible, and we share as a result a common faith in Christ. We submit ourselves to Him. But we still have potential problems in the lack of an authoritative structure in the church, and in the lack of a creed. The possibility exists for a Friend to dominate a meeting for business, or preach a new doctrine. While that can happen in any church, the lack of authoritative structures or creeds makes it harder to deal with.

I would consider including a lesson on this topic in my curriculum, dealing with the issue of community guidance and the nature of authority for Friends. How can we honor our belief that God speaks directly to each person and still maintain unity? What is the "minimum" set of beliefs for Friends?

D. Worship and Ministry

Overview

The presentation section covers three major questions: How do you "center down"? How do you know when to speak? And, what can you do to promote a "gathered Meeting"? The first two questions are given a full treatment; the third is more quickly dealt with. Suggestions for both active and contemplative Friends are given, to help them in centering down. There are also helpful alternatives given for dealing with distractions and "blockage." Some excellent guidelines, including a personal example, are given to help a person know when she should speak out in meeting. The concept of a "gathered Meeting" (new to me) was explained as a worship meeting in which the presence of God was especially real to all. A few ideas are given to promote such an event, but they consist of things that would be excellent advice in any case; e.g., "Live into a life of worship, every day, in all situations."

Critique

This is a very helpful lesson, useful to any Friend who wants to enhance the experience of worshipping God. Rather than treating a "gathered Meeting" as if it were some sort of special event I would have rather seen the experience of the presence of God treated as a primary goal of all worship. That is, it is something to be expected rather than something unusual and special.

Suggestions

For Friends in programmed, pastoral meetings this lesson would need to be expanded to deal with worship in other forms. The discussion of the relative values of preaching, music, and traditional "silent" worship could be very helpful.

E. Living in the Light: Quaker Witness

Overview

The lesson starts with a helpful explanation of the Friends terms "concern" and "leading", and moves from there into "witness" and "testimonies". In this curriculum the latter terms have different meanings than I would give them; witness refers to an action taken that arises out of a concern and a leading, and testimony refers to a traditional Friends value such as simplicity, honesty, etc. A chart is given of 10 different "witnesses" of early Friends, grouped under the headings of three testimonies (honesty, simplicity, equality). Special attention is given to the peace testimony. A document giving the basis of Friends' beliefs about peace is part of the appendix. The lesson closes with an activity that invites the students to place themselves (physically) on a large Cartesian coordinate chart, mapping the traits of "violence" and "OK" in response to each of a list of actions. One example is "spanking a child as an act of discipline." Where does it rank on the scale of non-violent to violent, of "not OK" to "OK"? Each person is to place herself in the appropriate quadrant.

Critique

I wish less space had been devoted to terminology and more to the discussion of the various testimonies and "witnesses." (I don't like the use of "witness" in this sense; I am too accustomed to using it to refer to someone talking about how God has worked in his life.) As it is, too much ground is covered too quickly, and students are not given an opportunity to work out the testimonies of honesty, simplicity, and equality in their own meetings and personal lives. The peace testimony deserves a lesson of its own, especially in an evangelical Friends meeting where there would be much less agreement on the basis for it. Perhaps it needs less coverage in a meeting where this curriculum would be taught. In any case, I would give much greater emphasis than this author does to the biblical basis for the peace testimony. The activity is creative and thought-provoking. I wonder whether it would result in semantic discussions of the meaning of "violence" or in real considerations of my personal values and the reasons I hold them?

Suggestions

I think I would divide this lesson up into three or four, dealing with each testimony more fully, since there are several different ways that Friends have lived out the truth of each. I like the activity of requiring students to place themselves physically on a Cartesian chart, but I would want to change the axis labels from "violence" and "OKness" to something else, maybe "pacifism" and "goodness".

F. Getting Down to Business*Overview*

This is a basic overview of traditional Friends business practices, including the concept of a business meeting as worship, the difference between the sense of the meeting and consensus, and the role of the clerk and committees. The remainder of the presentation is devoted to an explanation of Friends structure. An extensive simulation is also set up, featuring a Friends business meeting with a tough decision to make.

Critique

The overview of Friends business meeting concepts is helpful, as far as it goes, but I wish more emphasis had been given to the leading of the Holy Spirit, and the relationship of Friends worship business. The explanation of Friends organizational structure is not particularly helpful unless you're in Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. The simulation is powerful and creative, but unrealistic. The situation this meeting finds itself in is hardly typical (at least I hope not!) for Friends. Thus lessons learned here may not easily transfer to the real thing.

Suggestions

I would give more emphasis to the process of decision-making, highlighting the work of the Holy Spirit and the submission of all to the leadership of God. I like the simulation idea, but would probably substitute a more typical situation. Some discussion time ought to be given to a discussion of present (local) meeting business meeting practice.

Friends Way (Revised Edition)

Richard Jones Friends United Press

1982 53 pages

0. Introduction

The lessons are intended to be used with either adults or youth, and the book provides material for both students and teacher. Included are discussion questions, activities, readings, and a bibliography. Some lessons require advance preparation.

1. Personal Relationship to God

Overview

Purpose: to introduce GF, his vision, and the beginnings of Friends. (Interesting contrast of title with stated purpose.)

Fox's encounter with Christ is the major focus of this lesson. There is much good background material on the social/historical context of Fox's concern and action. Comparison is made between the church of Fox's day and the religion of the Jews in the days of the minor prophets, with (good) emphasis on what God is really seeking. Fox's seeking and finding of Christ is covered twice, once in a "skit" and once in the text. The contrast between profession and "possession" is highlighted; what is the evidence of faith? The story of Fox's preaching, his encounters with the establishment and their persecution of him is told. A short list of similarities between the early church (as described in Acts 2) and the early Friends is given.

Critique

The article (the major content portion of the lesson) is well-written and helpful.

The "skit" is quite poor, being taken from a pageant and having all the dramatic value that pageants usually contain. It's merely a condensed re-enactment, filled with jargon and references to concepts that the students would not have the background to understand. It glosses over all his struggles with single statements, and re-enacts the Voice from Heaven without dealing with why this answer satisfied George when the others didn't.

A set of four discussion questions contains three that are list-oriented and one that requires thought ("What does the 17th century have in common with our century?").

Suggestions

To improve this lesson, I would write a skit that allows participants and viewers to feel more of the very real struggles that Fox experienced. I would want to link up to the students' personal spiritual walk—can they identify with Fox?—to the point where they would be evaluating their personal relationships to God. I would want to write more thought-provoking discussion questions (e.g., "Can ritualistic worship be authentic? What makes it so?").

2. Commitment to God's Service

Overview

The purpose of the chapter is to show how early Friends took their call to minister seriously.

Those who have an intimate relationship with God will receive a call from Him to ministry. There is a wide variety of gifts. Early Friends were united, like the early church in their shared ministry and commitment (Acts 2 is cited). Early Friends were persecuted, like the early church members (Acts 4, 5, 8), for preaching their faith. Reasons for the persecution are explored, and thoughtful discussion questions are provided. The positive effects of persecution and imprisonment of Friends are explored. The missionary work of Friends in America is explored, complete with hardships and persecutions.

Critique

Once again the writing is good; easy to understand and thoughtful in content. The article contains instructions and discussion questions which (according to the design) should have been in a separate section. There is not a clear distinction here between student and teacher material. The discussion questions are very good in this chapter, since they require some analysis of the situation, evaluation of the student's own situation and some decisions. The final section relating the history of early Friends missionary efforts in America ends abruptly, without being connected up to anything in terms of commitment or current experience. There aren't even any questions about it; the section really seems superfluous.

Suggestions

I would move the teacher's instructions and all of the discussion questions out of the article. I would cite and discuss other New Testament passages on the relationship between faith and works. I would eliminate the final section, or connect it up for the students in some way.

3. Belief in Basic Christian Doctrines*Overview*

The purpose of this chapter is to understand the distinctiveness of Friends among Christians. The lesson introduces Barclay's *Apology* as a Friends doctrinal statement. The first five propositions of Barclay are quoted and interpreted, and several Bible verses are associated with each. No activities are suggested, other than two discussion questions which are quite good. The other propositions of Barclay are not mentioned. The lesson concludes with a short description of Robert Barclay's abilities and the effect of the *Apology* on Friends through the years.

Critique

The scripture references for the first two propositions contain some errors; some of the verses chosen seem inappropriate. No context is given for most of the verses; they seem more like proof texts than anything else. That is, the passages cited are one or two verses in the midst of a longer passage, and the verses could easily be misinterpreted when removed from their contexts. The discussion questions are good, but they relate only to the idea of doctrinal statements, not to the content of doctrinal statements.

The reasons for choosing only the first five propositions are unclear to me. Certainly the doctrinal presentation is not complete. Perhaps it will be completed in subsequent lessons.

Suggestions

I would give fewer Bible references for each proposition, and make sure that I cited enough verses to supply context, and that my listings were error-free. I would supply discussion questions for each proposition that cause the student to think about its meaning, and to determine whether Barclay has correctly interpreted the scriptures. Finally, I would either plan to cover Barclay systematically, or choose propositions that more completely cover the range of the book.

4. The Sacraments*Overview*

The purpose of the chapter is to gain insight into Friends interpretations and practice of sacraments. The strategy advocated by the author is for the class to examine communion and baptism from the point of view of Christians in other denominations who might ask questions of Quakers. The tone of the lesson is largely defensive, although some emphasis is given to the positive understanding of both communion and baptism. No other sacraments are mentioned.

The author begins the chapter by giving examples of the misunderstanding and misuse of sacraments, for the purpose of showing that they are not necessary. Beginning with baptism, he cites the disagreements between various denominations on the method and proper recipients of this rite. The sacrament itself is described as a Jewish custom, common in the Old Testament.

Three questions, similar to those that might be asked by non-Quaker Christians, are posed. In the answers, John's and Jesus' baptism are dismissed as normative for Christians (since these baptisms originated in Judaism) but their overall significance is omitted. The third one, "How do you explain the reference to baptism in the Great Commission?", is not really answered here, although it is dealt with later in the lesson. This section is highly defensive in tone.

The defense against water baptism is followed by teaching on the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Several scriptures are cited to prove the point that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is the one baptism intended in the New Testament. The temporary and incomplete nature of water baptism is now proved in a long section.

Finally, the supposed necessity of baptism as shown by Matthew 28:19 and John 3:5 is refuted by interpreting these passages in such a way as to make the author's point.

At this point the lesson goes on to consider communion. Once again, the wide variety of observances is used to demonstrate the need for a Friends understanding of communion. The Friends emphasis on continuous spiritual communion, without the need of elements, is explained.

Bible passages (such as Luke 22:19-20) used by Christians to support the observation of the sacrament of communion are re-interpreted to show that they do not, in fact, support this. Other New Testament passages such as Acts 2:42-46 and Acts 15:23-29 are cited to show that no such ritual was practiced by the early church; instead, a common meal was eaten. The author offers a new interpretation of the passage in I Cor. 11 to show that the ritual was not prescribed for all Christians.

The Friends position, that spiritual baptism and communion are important, but the elements are not, is here briefly explained. Here follows a series of questions on communion, similar to the ones on baptism above. Several of the arguments are repeated as answers. The passage in John 6 on eating Christ's flesh and drinking His blood is now interpreted, with a listing of the various ways it has been interpreted by the church in the past in contrast with the Friends view.

Critique

The lesson is way too long; in order to cover this material at any significant depth the teacher would need to use several weeks. Although the Friends concept of spiritual baptism and communion is explained, the explanation is a brief one and occupies a small fraction of the chapter. The majority of the chapter consists of defenses against the more traditional views of the sacraments. I think that the proportions of these two subjects should be reversed. The Friends concept of spiritual communion and baptism is deep and deserves more consideration, while the elaborate defenses against the commonly-held views of Protestants on these matters are defensive in tone, and not particularly helpful. Several of the interpretations of biblical passages are highly questionable, and some highly controversial positions (e.g., water baptism was common in Old Testament times) are given as facts.

This chapter also places questions in the body of the text as well as in the margin for activities. The discussion questions (the ones in the margins) are helpful but more are needed.

Suggestions

I would make this lesson into two (one on communion and one on baptism), and spend a much greater proportion of the time on gaining an understanding of Friends' views. After all, most Friends do not find fault with the observation of the ordinances, so there is little to be gained by spending so much effort to refute them. I would build a much better case biblically, and consider more strongly the traditional interpretations of critical passages rather than trying to improve my argument by re-interpreting them. Finally, I would add more discussion questions to help the students explore the reality of communion and baptism in their own spiritual experience.

5. The Desire for Peace

Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to make basic personal decisions about the Friends peace testimony and Quaker respect for the individual conscience. The author introduces peace as one of the products of a deep relationship with Christ. He shows how peace has been one of the testimonies of Friends from the earliest days, quoting Fox and Barclay. He cites biblical passages on the character of God, the purpose of Christ, and the desired character of Christians.

Friends have historically been committed to peace, even when this commitment caused them to be persecuted. As an example, the author cites William Penn, who committed to the way of peace despite what it cost him. Penn's "Holy Experiment" in the colony of Pennsylvania is given as an example of the potential and value of a policy of peace.

The various types of peace testimonies traditionally held by Friends are briefly listed, along with a statement that differences on this issue are tolerated as a matter of conscience. The lesson concludes with four questions, which are not discussion questions but merely provide a different way of presenting material. Within the framework of these questions the author deals with additional Bible passages on peace, the question of wars in the Old Testament, the attitude of early Christians about war, and other Friends statements about war.

The two discussion questions deal with the ramifications of a peace testimony.

Critique

The placement of peace in the context of a life committed to Christ is highly appropriate; I only wish the author had continued with this approach beyond the introduction to the chapter. Instead, he appeals primarily to tradition and example, which are not nearly so strong a foundation for the peace testimony. His coverage of the historical emphasis on peace among Friends is adequate, and the description of Penn's Holy Experiment is excellent. His statement that the peace testimony is rooted in scripture is made hollow by his sketchy use of the Bible within the lesson. His typical proof-text approach to the Bible leaves no room for thoughtful discussion and interpretation of the cited passages.

The discussion on Old Testament wars is misleading; the plans and purposes of God are misrepresented. The paragraphs on different approaches to the peace testimony by Friends are so short that they're not really helpful. The discussion of early Christian attitudes toward war is a good beginning, but I would want a little more substance. The quotes from other Friends are thoughtfully chosen and helpful.

Suggestions

I would want to give much more emphasis to role of peace in the life of a Christian, through a more thorough study of the relevant Bible passages. I would sponsor a healthy debate among class members on the practicality and possibility of peace in our world, comparing the historical situation with ours. Would Penn's "Holy Experiment" work today? Why or why not? What is the relationship of God's call to peace to our culture's call to self-preservation?

I would also wish to make a distinction between peace defined as an anti-war stance and peace defined as a personal commitment to non-violence. To which of these positions does the Bible call us? Have Friends distinguished between them, and to what effect? Finally, I would add discussion questions on the role of peace in the individual believer's life.

6. Equality and Community

Overview

Jones starts this lesson by advising the teacher to divide the class into groups that will discuss various injustices around the world in the light of some scripture passages that he specifies. The theme of the lesson is the equality of all people. In the first part of the main article Jones moves from the Quaker practice of refusing to give hat honor to later Friends' stand against slavery. The bulk of the lesson is taken up with the story of John Woolman, his anti-slavery campaign, and its gradual effect among Friends. The subject then shifts to that of women ministers and the resultant persecution of Friends. Discussion questions bridge the gap between the history discussed in the lesson and today's situations.

Critique

The introductory group work on injustice is not really followed up in the lesson itself. I think if you're going to do a Sunday school study on injustice in the world you should come to some sort of conclusion about it. The story of Woolman is well-told and the lesson on how to be a change agent among Friends is a valuable one. There is no transition, not even a section heading, on the subject of women in ministry, and the presentation is somewhat perfunctory; more a statement of facts than a learning session. The discussion questions are very helpful.

Suggestions

I would leave off the women's rights section and instead work on tying the group discussions on world injustices into the story on John Woolman with the goal of learning how we might respond to injustice. The discussion questions will work well with that combination.

7. Relating To The Times*Overview*

The teacher is encouraged to begin the class by holding a formal debate on some topic (several are suggested) relating to the relevance of Quakerism. The introduction to the chapter states the thesis on which I began this project: "those who follow in the train of dynamic leaders substitute traditions for personal experience." With this thought Jones introduces the period of Quietism in Quaker history (1690-1825) and the shortcomings in Friends commonly associated with those times. Joseph John Gurney is introduced as one who did much to end the period of Quietism, and the rest of the lesson is devoted to the story of his ministry. The story highlights Gurney's travels and preaching, his cooperation with other evangelical denominations, and his strong opposition to the beliefs and teachings of John Wilbur, who (according to Jones) sought to maintain Quietism. Indeed, the lesson offers no credibility of any sort to Wilbur's position. Three discussion questions complete the lesson.

Critique

I was excited by the introduction, but the author failed to follow through by showing (or even suggesting) how we might express our convictions as testimonies to today's world. The story of Gurney's ministry, while interesting, hardly helps us to do that. Gurney is an excellent model for preachers, and for Friends groups, but few have his gifts. The discussion questions are weak and overly general. Several different books could be written in answer to each one.

The debate format has potential, and the suggested topics were intriguing. I wish that Jones had provided some guidance or further material on those topics, since they related more closely to the stated purpose of the chapter than did the story on Gurney.

Suggestions

I would provide additional material for the debaters, or at least some references. The questions relating to the relevance of Friends are very important, and the class must not be allowed to flounder about with them. The story about Gurney could be made much shorter. Discussion questions should be more specific and require the students to think about their own lives.

8. Loving Help for Those in Need*Overview*

This chapter is an overview of the ways Friends have ministered to the physical needs of people. Examples given are Elizabeth Fry's work in prison reform; the work of Philadelphia Friends in caring for the mentally ill; work among the Indians; and relief work in Europe. The teacher is encouraged to lead the class through study of relevant biblical passages (Mt. 25:34-36, I John 3:14-18, James 2:15-17). The class is encouraged to work on a project of their own, and several ideas are given. Discussion questions focus on how Friends can best care for the needy today.

Critique

Overall this was a good lesson; it might be better if some more modern examples were given. The need to balance physical outreach with spiritual is touched on but not really emphasized.

Suggestions

If I were teaching this lesson I would want to get some examples of contemporary outreach ready for the class. I might bring in some pamphlets or have a visitor tell about his or her work. I would probably want to dig a little deeper into the reasons behind the unfortunate emphasis of social outreach over the preaching of the gospel, and vice versa. I believe we must minister to the whole person, but everyone says that. Why do we tend to one side or the other, and how can we counteract this tendency?

9. Spiritual Worship

Overview

The lesson begins with a brief recital of the origins of the Friends style of worship, and explains some of the distinctive vocabulary and architectural designs used by Friends. The implications of the physical arrangement of the place of worship are briefly discussed. The unprogrammed style of worship is described, along with the more common practice of setting aside a time within a programmed meeting for unprogrammed worship. Jones also discusses the strengths and weaknesses of having a "resident" pastor, one who is paid for ministry. The lesson concludes with a discussion of the purposes and value of worship and suggestions for enriching one's personal worship experience. Discussion questions center on the value of the worship service and on suggestions for improving it. The teacher is also encouraged to have a class discussion of experiences with other forms of worship (besides Friends).

Critique

The discussion of the pastor's position (paid or not) doesn't really belong here. What is appropriate is the role of the pastor in worship. The suggestions for enhancement of personal worship are very helpful, especially since they convey the impression that quality of worship is the worshipper's responsibility, not the pastor's. The discussion questions could well open up a can of worms and lead to criticism of the pastor. Any time you open up the subject of worship to public criticism you invite controversy.

Suggestions

I would emphasize the purpose of worship (celebration? teaching? conviction?) and the means (elements) used to accomplish it, inviting the class members to make personal decisions on the meaning and method of worship. Discussion of past meaningful worship times will show that the pastor is seldom responsible for a great personal worship experience. The use of unprogrammed worship is a healthy topic for discussion. If preaching or music must be discussed it should be confined to the context of its role within worship and its relationship to the purpose of worship. Sunday school is not the place for a critique of the content of music or preaching.

The class might wish to experiment with alternate styles of worship and report on them. Perhaps the class could design its own worship service after coming to consensus on purpose, elements, etc. The designed worship service could be held as part of the lesson series, or, if possible, during the regular worship service of the church.

10. Conduct of Christian Business

Overview

Jones begins with a brief discussion of the structure of Friends meetings, but the bulk of this lesson pertains to the intent and conduct of a Friends business meeting. The value of group decision-making is stressed, and an excellent explanation is given of the value of consensus over voting. Jones describes a Quaker business meeting as a process of finding God's will on the issues at hand. He gives as an example the situation in Acts 15 when the New Testament church had to make a difficult decision. The chapter closes with a brief list of scriptures on church leaders.

Critique

The closing section on church leaders seems to have been cut off; it has no connection with the rest of the lesson or a conclusion. The discussion of the value of the consensus process is good, but some practical tips on the process itself might have been helpful. The lesson seems to be mostly theory with little application.

Suggestions

A simulated business meeting might be a helpful exercise for this session. I would also like to include some discussion of how God can work during a meeting, along with some guidelines for participation. I would not include any discussion on the structure of Friends organizations or the role of the pastor in this lesson.

11. The Spirit-Filled Life

Overview

This lesson concerns the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. Jones begins with several quotes from the Bible and from early Friends on the work of the Spirit. He goes to some length to distinguish the Friends emphasis on the H.S. from that of the charismatic movement, stating that Friends are to "experience the guidance of the Holy Spirit without some of the excesses which have characterized recent so-called 'movements of the Spirit.'" (p. 47) Yet Jones also states that the Spirit gives boldness, enabling early Christians and Friends to speak with authority against the ungodly trends of society and to stand up for what they think is right. The latter part of the lesson gives instruction from the Bible to the individual on how to receive the Spirit-filled life, and what it is like.

Critique

This lesson goes to the root of Friends testimonies, yet the connection is not really made due to the contradiction illuminated above. Jones seems perfectly willing for early Christians and Friends to be radical and "excessive" but not current ones. The power of the Spirit for today seems to move one toward a deeper relationship to God, but in the examples he cites it also moved Friends to action on God's behalf. The instruction on how to experience the Spirit-filled life is solidly biblical, but it does not go far enough.

Suggestions

I would want to make a strong connection between conviction and action in each example, to show cause and effect, and challenge the students to do the same. A discussion of how convictions should and should not lead to action could be extremely fruitful. I would certainly not want to restrict the expression of convictions to any predetermined set of traditions, yet I would want to point out the value of group consideration and actions. The Spirit-filled life is a pre-requisite for all of this, and it seems to be too big and broad a topic to occupy only part of one lesson.

It seems to me that all the lessons might have the structure of conviction -> action, with the power and leading of the Holy Spirit as a context for all of it.

12. Mission to the World

Overview

The text for this lesson consists primarily of short examples of biblical characters and historic Friends who have heeded God's call to public ministry and have traveled, proclaiming the Word of God. The examples describe the people and their circumstances more than the content or effect of their ministry. The teacher is asked to put the class into one or more role-playing situations. Each of the suggested scenarios (there are 3) is similar: an individual determines that God has called her to a vocation of ministry that requires her to leave her current station in life and take up a new one. She is asked to defend the decision to follow her calling to her family and/or friends.

Critique

While I generally approve of role-playing as a method of teaching I do not think it wise to make it the entire content of the class session. It needs to have some sort of closure, perhaps a learning objective. If role-playing is not wrapped up in this way, the participants may often feel that their time has been wasted. In this lesson any such conclusion is left up to the leader. There doesn't seem to be much connection in this lesson between the text and the role-playing. The text offers no challenge to the reader.

Suggestions

I would use fewer examples of people responding to God's call. That would give me more space to develop each example and show how the person dealt with the issues raised by the role-playing. It would also give opportunity to describe the nature and results of the person's ministry. I would offer more variety in the role-playing options: instead of varying by the type of person, vary more by the type of ministry. I would also offer more suggestions for the leader on setting up a role-playing session and on bring the session to a valuable time of closure.

13. Your Future as a Friend

Overview

The purpose of this lesson is to emphasize the central contribution of Friends to an understanding of Christianity: the priority of a personal encounter with God. Without that, all distinctives, indeed all religious practices, are a waste of time and effort. It is easy for Christians to lose track of this fact and concentrate on the practice of religion instead of the relationship with God. Jones goes on to show how historic Friends testimonies such as peace, and spiritual communion and baptism, must flow from inner spiritual convictions and not from tradition or conformity to current practice. The lesson is concluded with a call to commitment to the practice of our beliefs. "If there is no commitment to the basic message of Friends which is also the basic message of the Bible, the Word of God, then Friends have no real need to survive." (p. 52)

Study questions in this lesson deal with spiritual characteristics of early Friends and the relationship of these to desirable and effective spiritual characteristics in the students. Jones also suggests a discussion of Christian vocations. Other questions focus on the potential for impact held by Friends of conviction and commitment.

Critique

This is the most valuable lesson in the curriculum; too bad it was saved for last. It would serve as an excellent backdrop for all the other lessons. The importance of personal commitment to God cannot be overstressed. The concept of Friends distinctives arising out of such a relationship is central to my project. It is equally important to show the shallowness of Friends (and other) religious practice that does not arise out of such commitment. The discussion questions, particularly the first set dealing with spiritual characteristics, are valuable, and students will learn much from discussion of these issues.

Suggestions

This is a first-rate lesson and I would do nothing to change it except to move it to the beginning of the curriculum.

Declaring Our Faith

Daniels, Brian, ed. Friends United Press

1992 56 pages

0. Introduction

This curriculum is based on The Richmond Declaration of Faith, which was written in 1887 by Friends at the Richmond Conference (the forerunner of the Five Years Meeting, which became Friends United Meeting). Each section of the Declaration has its own lesson in this course, and each lesson is written by a different author from within FUM.

Each lesson is divided into six sections, as follows: "For Openers", an introduction; "This We Declare", a short essay presenting an explanation of this section of the Declaration; "Friendly Discussion", a set of discussion questions; "Biblical Focus", a Bible study relating to the topic; "This We Resolve", an opportunity for commitment; and "A Deep Sense of Awe", with suggestions for worship.

1. God

Overview

In the opening paragraph the author remarks on how common belief in God is, and invites the reader to imagine life without Him. The essay talks about how various individuals and groups throughout history have perceived God. It also makes a crucial distinction between the Richmond Declaration and a creed. A new convert is required to adhere to a creed, but a declaration is simply that: a statement of the beliefs of a group of Christians at a particular time. It is not binding on all future members of the group. The discussion questions invite students to write their own statements about God, and to creatively think about Him in images. The Bible study discusses God's roles as Father and Creator. The commitment section asks the students to indicate how their lives might be different if God were not in it, and to think about areas of their lives that need to recognize the reality of His presence.

Critique

There is little to interact with in this lesson. It's little more than an essay. There is a lot of explanation and not much exploration. The discussion questions raise no issues; they are purely open-ended. The Bible study offers surprisingly few scriptural references, and it's hard for me to understand the point of the commitment section. Thus the whole lesson is weak; there's nothing really "wrong", but there's nothing really interesting here, either.

Suggestions

The Bible is full of statements about God, and I would send the students searching through it to discover aspects of His being. A study of the names of God would also be interesting. There are lots of ways to do it, but the key to a good lesson is to involve the students in discovery, not just write an essay.

2. Jesus Christ

Overview

In the opening section, the author paraphrases Josh McDowell in saying that anyone encountering the biblical stories of Jesus must logically come to one of three conclusions: either Jesus is a lunatic, or He is a liar, or He is Who He says He is, the Lord. The essay section is filled entirely with quotes from Fox, Barclay and other well-known Friends. Each quote affirms the divinity of Christ and the necessity of knowing Him personally. The discussion questions invite the students to write their own statements about Christ, and to deal with any concerns that they may have about the quotes. The Bible study gives students a chance to explore Jesus' claims for Himself, so that they may make a personal decision about who He is. There are many verses to look up, and the student is invited to compare what he learns with the Richmond Declaration. The commitment section invites students to make a personal decision about Jesus Christ: Lunatic, Liar, or Lord. The student is asked to find scriptural support (!) for this decision.

Critique

I think that the chances are very slim that any student taking a course like this one would think that Jesus is a lunatic or a liar. Furthermore, anyone who does think that of Jesus is unlikely to go to the Bible for support! This whole framework for thinking lends an air of unreality to the lesson. Let's get off the soapbox and on with the study! In reality, the secular reader is only forced to such a choice IF he believes the biblical accounts to be reliable. Most scholars today, however, do not think this is true. They believe that the words about His lordship were put into Jesus' mouth by His disciples when they wrote the gospels. This "scholarship" has been well-publicized, and as a result most people don't know if they can trust the Bible.

Thus McDowell's (and this author's) attempt to logically force people to belief goes the way of all such attempts: it fails. I guess we'll have to rely on faith and the work of the Holy Spirit, after all, to convince people of the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Having said all that, I want to also say that I appreciate the Bible study - it is great to have the students involved in looking up the information for themselves. The Quaker quotes are good, too, but there are too many of them.

Suggestions

I would focus more on the variety of interpretations of Christ, particularly as found in Friends history. If the christological controversies were brought out into the open, Friends would immediately see the importance of sound doctrine. Keep the Bible study, throw out half the quotes, drop the challenge entirely, and let the students dig into the Quaker splits.

3. Holy Spirit

Overview

The opening statement asks the student to choose one from among five statements about the Holy Spirit. (The statements are not in conflict with each other - they just have differing emphases.) The essay section expounds at length on the difficulty of writing theological statements, then quotes the relevant portion of the Richmond declaration. The discussion section is really another essay, which gives examples of the way George Fox spoke of the work of the Holy Spirit. The section ends with some questions relating to Bible passages on the Spirit. The "Biblical Focus" section has another essay, this one dealing with the various roles of the Holy Spirit and the fact that Friends traditionally put Him first in authority. The commitment section invites Friends to let the Holy Spirit examine their lives, to reveal any part of them that needs the Spirit's touch.

Critique

Again, this lesson almost completely fails to involve the student. It's little more than a collection of essays. There is little exploration of the roles of the Holy Spirit as defined in the Bible. The question of authority is important, and the explanation of the traditional Friends' doctrine is very well written. Yes, the Holy Spirit is the supreme authority, even greater than scripture, but this is not a dangerous doctrine.

Suggestions

Rather than so much focus on the difficulty of expressing our experience of the Holy Spirit, I would rather have seen a much more extensive exploration of the Spirit's work. Perhaps students could be invited to note His work in various times of their lives as they identify with what they read in the Bible.

4. The Trinity

Overview

In the opening section the author makes the point that the word *person* in "God in three Persons" refers to a role. God is really one person, with three different roles. The discussion section shows how difficult it is to come up with natural analogies for the Trinity. The Biblical Focus traces the activity of the three persons of the Trinity through the Bible. The next section shows how all three of the Persons were active in working for our salvation. The lesson closes with a scripted worship session featuring Bible passages about the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Critique

The Trinity is a very difficult subject to teach, and this lesson copes well with the topic. I appreciate the strong biblical focus on a topic that the Bible doesn't really cover. As with the other lessons in this curriculum, there is not much for the student to do.

Suggestions

I have no suggestions except that I probably wouldn't want to write a lesson on this topic.

5. The Holy Scriptures*Overview*

The emphasis in this lesson is on the question of authority. Which is more authoritative for Friends, the Bible or the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit? In the opening remarks, the author invites us to contemplate the ramifications of an extreme position in either direction. The best position, according to the author, is a balanced one. The truth of the scripture never changes, but we need the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit to help us understand its meaning for our times. This statement is followed by a long set of Quaker quotes, giving a variety of Friends positions on the scriptures. The Bible study section is the longest yet, with several passages to study and several questions asked about each one. The commitment section merely asks students to respond to what they have learned in this lesson.

Critique

I appreciate the balanced approach of this author, but I wish he had been willing to explore the more extreme positions more deeply. Students are less likely to appreciate the strength of a balanced doctrine when they don't experience the effects of a one-sided position. The Bible study is quite good, and will help the students develop a view of how scripture explains its own role.

Suggestions

I would drop out half of the Quaker quotes, and add some tougher questions to the commitment questions. I would also want to tell the story of some Friends in history who had a different doctrine of scripture.

6. Justification*Overview*

This lesson covers the fall of humanity, the need for justification through Jesus Christ, and sanctification. Basically it's just one long essay that expounds these doctrines. It's well-written, and easy to understand. There are many Bible references throughout, but nothing for the student to do. There are no references to Friends until the section on sanctification, when the author quotes from Everett Cattell and George Fox (extensively), along with the Bible exposition. The commitment and worship sections invite the student to examine his or her relationship with God.

Critique

As an essay explaining these doctrines, this lesson is good. As something to teach from, it's not. I fear that any class taught from this lesson would put half the students to sleep, unless the teacher introduced a lot of material that is not included here.

Suggestions

The same as with the other lessons: include things for the students to do, to discover truth on their own!

Let's Be Friends

Barratt, Dorothy (ed.) George Fox Press

1993 124 pages

Unit 1 - The People Called Quakers

Overview

This unit consists of four lessons relating to Friends history. Because they do not directly address the topic of my curriculum, I have not written separately on each lesson. Briefly, the first lesson covers the history of Christianity and the beginnings of Quakerism; the second deals with the distinctive witness of early Friends; the third explores the relationship between evangelism and social action through the efforts of Friends in the 18th and 19th centuries; and the fourth deals with Friends history and Friends diversity.

The four lessons are full of activities to engage the minds of young people. There is a "To Tell the Truth" game which brings out the facts relating to George Fox's life; an interview with George Fox himself; resource handouts with stories and biographical sketches; and charts showing the spread of Friends both organizationally and geographically.

Critique

My criticisms are few, and relate to the appropriateness of some of the suggested activities. The lightning trip through church history in lesson 1 is too brief and too superficial to have much value, and some of the suggested activities seem more suitable to younger children (such as coloring in the countries on the map where Friends missionaries have served). Overall I think that this is an excellent presentation of the most important facts from Friends history. While the presentation is biased toward evangelical Friends I think that is to be expected, and anything else would limit the use of this curriculum by its intended audience.

Unit 2: The People Called

Overview

The emphasis in this unit is on discipleship, on what it means to be called by God as one of Christ's followers. The first lesson has to do with the student's personal walk with Christ, and the necessity of salvation. The example of William Penn shows the effect of the power of God in a new believer's life. The activities (pipe cleaner, kids in a tree, "Now that I'm a Christian") do well in getting the students to think personally and deeply about the meaning of Christ in their lives. The second lesson has to do with living in the Light - what it means to be a Christian. Examples and stories are drawn from Friends history; in this case, Sarah Haines ("The Old Lady of Purchase") and Wm. Dewsbury. The Quaker Queries drive these truths home. The third lesson deals with Friends worship. "The Presence in the Midst" is studied, and the concept of centering down is discussed. The local worship practice is analyzed, and as an activity students are asked to plan a worship service. The fourth lesson deals with ministry. Jigsaw and word search puzzle activities help to show what types of ministries we should be engaged in, and how each of us has a role to play. The practical aspects of Friends business meetings and the structure of Friends organizations are also discussed here. The fifth lesson presents the Friends (and biblical!) concept of ministry. Emphasis is given to the fact that all of us are called and all of us have opportunities for ministry. We choose to distinguish certain leadership gifts and "record" them, often setting aside funds to support those engaged in serving Christ through the use of these gifts. The story of Elizabeth Comstock is given as an example. A final section is aimed at helping the students discern God's call in their own lives.

Critique

This material is excellent, and I'm sure it's been useful with young people in lots of Friends meetings. My only criticism is the way Friends business meeting practices and Friends organizational structure is shoehorned in under the topic of ministry. (This happens with other curriculums too!) It just doesn't fit there, and digresses from the important topics otherwise dealt with.

The examples and stories chosen are excellent, and do much to bring the ideas to life.

Suggestions

I really like the handouts and activities presented here; they do much to engage the mind beyond what can happen through simple discussion, because they force each person to become involved and to make decisions. I want to include lots of activities in my curriculum.

I think the discussion of Friends business meeting practices belongs with the topic of worship, and I find no place for a discussion of Friends organizations in my curriculum.

Unit 3, Lesson 1: Baptism & Communion

Overview

The goals for this lesson are to present the Friends' understanding of the Bible's teaching on the ordinances of baptism and communion, to present the spiritual realities behind these two sacraments, and to prepare youth for a personal experience of these realities. The lesson begins with an assessment of what the students think about Friends beliefs, through an agree/disagree statement. A short history of sacraments is followed by a brief Bible study from John 6 (Jesus says to eat his flesh and drink his blood - an obviously non-literal statement). A discussion of the spiritual reality of communion (special time spent with God) is followed by a skit about the spiritual reality of baptism. The skit is simply a scripted conversation. Some Quaker Quotes are presented, followed by a short presentation on sacramental living.

Critique

I think that there were just too many goals for one lesson. Covering history, Bible study, spiritual reality, and the deeper meaning of two sacraments is just too much. Consequently, the lesson seems choppy as each bit of it is cut short in order to fit into the time and space constraints. In reality, the class will not cover this in one session, or if they do, it'll be with minimal participation on the part of the students. The skit is not a very interesting one; it seems to have been written purely as an alternative to a lecture.

The content is excellent, but it just doesn't go far enough. A lot more could be done in each area, especially in the final topic, sacramental living.

Suggestions

I like the agree/disagree statement idea; perhaps that could be expanded, forcing students to think about their own beliefs in this area. I would definitely separate the lesson into two: one on communion, one on baptism, and expand on each section. I'd especially want to expand the Bible study into one that explores the deeper realities behind each concept.

Unit 3, Lesson 2: Peacemaking

Overview

The lesson begins with an extensive Bible study covering several passages referring to peace and the peaceful actions of those who obeyed God. The emphasis is on love, with our attitude to mirror God's. No attempt is made to deal with Old Testament wars. The Quaker print "None Shall Make Them Afraid" is shown and discussed, and its story told. This is followed by an extended discussion of what it takes to be a peacemaker in our culture. Two handouts (an illustration of a peacemaker and a set of agree/disagree statements on a peacemaker's actions) are used to involve the students in thinking.

Critique

An excellent presentation of the basis for our peace testimony. It would be better if some information was given to the teacher for handling the inevitable questions (What about the Old Testament wars? What if someone were to come into your house and attack your family?). But I applaud the positive approach, and the application of peace principles to daily living (far more important than theoretical arguments). The Bible and Quaker stories are very helpful as illustrations of the main point.

Suggestions

Perhaps a simulation, or drama, with sets of options to take at each point, in order to show the consequences of peace as opposed to violence. Also, I might want to distinguish between violence (which may sometimes be necessary) and the taking of human life (which, in my opinion, is always wrong).

Unit 3, Lesson 3: Equality

Overview

The opening activity forces students to experience discrimination, as positive or negative personal characteristics are pinned on their backs and others are told to treat them as if they were true. This is followed by an extensive Bible study with questions for each person to answer. The Bible study passages relate to God's equal treatment of all sorts of people, and to the sin of discrimination. The lesson then tells the story of hat honor and Friends' rejection of that practice, followed by a discussion of discrimination tendencies in our culture. The lesson closes with a time of personal reflection through some probing questions.

Critique

I don't think much of the opening activity; there seems to be little point to the game of figuring out which characteristic you were stuck with based on the way people treat you. I think that most people have been discriminated against many times in their lives, and are quite familiar with the way it feels. The Bible study is good, and brings out the scriptural basis for this testimony. I wish more Friends examples and stories had been put in. There is much evidence of the Friends historic testimony of equality besides hat honor. And I disagree with the author's contention that our culture has no modern equivalent. In a non-profit organization we tend to treat the rich much better than we do the poor! The discussion of discrimination practices in our culture is good, as are the questions at the end.

Suggestions

I'd like to see more Friends emphasis, with a deeper exploration of what this testimony has meant to Friends through history, and what happened to them as a result. What parallels exist in our culture, and what would happen if we treated everyone equally? Time for this could be created by leaving out the opening activity. The testimony on equality may lend itself to a historical re-enactment of a Friends story.

Unit 3, Lesson 4: Honesty and Integrity

Overview

The lesson begins with a discussion of finding a driving purpose for one's life, such as an Olympic runner might have. Such a purpose leads to integrity. An apple is used as an object lesson. The Friends tradition of honesty in marketing and sales is cited as an example. Students are asked to examine the impact that a life of integrity might have on areas of their lives, such as friendships, shopping habits, work habits, speech, etc. An essay is distributed, which discusses traditional Friends values in these areas. The final portion of the lesson emphasizes the importance of allowing God to guide your life, walking in the light of Christ.

Critique

This lesson is long on discussion and short on activity. The content is excellent, although I miss not having any Bible study. There are hints of the Friends testimony on simplicity within the lesson, but it is never directly addressed; I'm not sure that simplicity is directly implied by honesty and integrity.

Suggestions

I wish there could have been some activity designed to help the students discover the areas of their lives where they need more integrity. Perhaps a skit illustrating the shock of finding a person of real integrity in our culture would be helpful.

Format of the Lessons

Each lesson consists of at least three parts, although some have more.

Handout (for all participants)

Set in a two-column format, this section is intended to be reproduced and given to each of the participants to read **before** discussion begins on that lesson. Each handout is organized in a similar way. After the topic is introduced, relevant portions of Scripture are examined and the issues and terms are defined. The next section deals with the traditional Friends approach to the topic, including a discussion of the development of the Testimony as expressed by various groups of Friends. The third section of each handout brings up topics for discussion about the Testimony and how it can be understood and lived by contemporary Friends.

The last page of each handout is a sheet of questions, intended for group discussion. Space is given on the page for people to write answers or notes for themselves. I have found that some people in my groups like to take notes on what they learn, but I always make sure that they know that note-taking is optional!

Outline (for the leader only)

The outlines were my original source of notes for writing the handouts, and I've found that they are somewhat helpful in teaching, especially if you don't assume that people have read the handouts before class. If the class does read the handouts then they won't need you to work through the outline, and this will save time.

Questions and Answers (for the leader only)

I have written some suggested answers and guides for discussion for each question that appears in the handouts. The answers usually refer back to the handout text, although some give further suggestions and topics for consideration. The written answers are not intended to be definitive, but you may find them helpful.

Exercises (for all participants)

For some of the lessons I have included additional material which leaders can reproduce and distribute to the group. Use of this material is entirely optional, and should be done only if the leader believes it will help members to better understand the concepts and issues presented in the handout.

Lesson 1: A Testimony as a Communication of Truth

The word *testimony* means different things to different people. In a court of law, a testimony is a statement of facts from the point of view of a particular witness. The witness is typically cautioned to stick to verifiable facts, and not present any opinions or beliefs that cannot be demonstrated to be true. Among evangelical Christians, *testimony* refers to a story about what God has done, told by someone who has been witness to God's work. The focus of the testimony is on God's actions, not the witness's good morals or devotion, or anything particularly good about the witness.

What do these definitions have in common? The *testimony* concerns a subject that is external to the one giving the testimony. A good testimony, then, is objective; it does not contain any subjective elements added by the witness. The witness must stick to the truth as he or she knows it.

Friends have created a third definition of testimony. A *Friends Testimony* is a distinctive practice (outward, visible action) that Friends traditionally follow. For Friends, testimonies arose out of the inner conviction that God was directing their lives. They were compelled to live according to his Truth, no matter what consequences followed from the world. Consider this definition of *testimony* as

the Friends use it: a **Testimony is a communication from God to the world, through the agency of a human life.** This is the definition we will use in this course. Chapters 3-4 of II Corinthians help us to understand this definition. The whole passage develops the concept of testimony as Friends understand it (although the word "testimony" is not used). The verses that relate directly to the definition are printed in the box.

Communication

"...the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory" (John 1:14)

"You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all" (II Cor. 3:2-3)

God

"Not that we are competent of ourselves...; our competence is from God" (II Cor. 3:4-6)

"For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord" (II Cor. 4:5-6)

World

"Yes, everything is for your sake, so that grace, as it extends to more and more people, may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God." (II Cor. 4:15)

Agency

"We have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us." (II Cor. 4:7)

Human Life

"And all of us...are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit." (II Cor. 3:18)

Communication:

The first chapter of John's gospel says that Jesus is the Word of God. The idea of "Word" is not easy for us to understand, but it was well-known to John's contemporaries. An adequate explanation of this concept is beyond the scope of this lesson, but in summary we can say that "Word" refers to a message or com-

munication - not a simple message, but a full expression, a complete idea. In this sense Jesus was the embodiment of God's essence, the complete expression of God for our world.

Since we in the church age are entrusted with the preaching of the gospel, we represent Christ to our world. We speak God's message. In this sense, in a lesser way than Jesus, we Christians are the Word of God. This is what Paul means in II Cor. 3:3 by declaring us to be a letter

from Christ.

God: The message we communicate must be carefully handled. Since it is God's message, it must not be corrupted or diluted. It must be delivered in God's power, according to God's direction. Paul urged Timothy (II Tim. 2:15) to "rightly handle the word of truth."

We must also be careful to remove personal concerns from our communication of God's Truth. As Paul says in II Cor. 4:5, we are not preaching ourselves, we are preaching Christ. We should not be concerned for our own reputations, but Christ's. We should trust in God for our safety and support, taking the attitude Paul describes in Philippians 4:10-19.

World: We must never lose sight of the purpose of our Testimony - it is being given for the sake of those who do not know God. God has charged us with the crucial task of bringing the gospel to a world that does not know Christ. We must always evaluate our work with this goal in mind.

Agency: As humans we are the stewards of God's message. We are imperfect, but still we have been chosen by God to represent Christ and the gospel. Paul says something quite unexpected in II Cor. 4:7 - he says that our imperfections, our weaknesses can have the effect of showing to the world just how perfect and powerful God is!

This does not mean that we should try to increase our imperfections and weaknesses! (See Romans 6:1) What it means is that we must not let our human foibles discourage us from doing God's work, delivering Truth to the world. God has chosen us to do this.

Human life: The benefits of bearing

God's message to the world are not limited to those outside the church. We Christians are transformed by the process! As we go about the world, representing Christ and Truth, God is at work in us, conforming us to the image of Christ.

The Immediate Presence of Christ

One of the strongest Friends emphases is the doctrine that Christ is present to each of us, personally, right now. No person, no hierarchy, no book, must come between you and Christ. Friends have used several different phrases to describe this truth - among them are *The Light of Christ Within* and *The Present Teacher*.

This is a powerful doctrine, and it has many implications. But it can also be dangerous doctrine. What happens when Christians hear the voice of Christ in conflicting ways? Friends recognized this danger, and made a point of acknowledging the presence of Christ in *community* as well as in individuals. In community with other Friends, we learn to distinguish the voice of Christ as he speaks to us, and the community experience helps us to guard against misunderstanding.

Timeless and Timely

Through this experience of corporate listening and obedience to Christ, Friends Testimonies have been developed over many years. Many of them have changed over the years, as Friends grew in their understanding of God's Truth. In one sense the Testimonies are timeless: they are an expression of the Truth of God's Word, and that never changes. But as an *expression* the Testimonies must change to match the people and the times in which they are expressed. Otherwise, the world will not hear God's Word, and the

communication won't be complete. The danger of failing to ensure the timeliness of testimonies is that they may lose their ability to effectively communicate God's Truth. That sort of Testimony isn't worth keeping.

It's not always easy to separate the *timeless* aspects of a Testimony from the *timely*. To do so, we must carefully look at reason, Scripture, tradition, and experience. The challenge is to interpret the Testimony for today's society; to find contemporary expressions of timeless Truth.

If we successfully meet this challenge, we will become effective communicators of God's Truth. God's Truth is powerful! The Truth will change us as well. Friends who faithfully live the Testimonies find themselves encouraged in their walk with Christ, and more effective as his disciples.

This, then, is the task of these lessons: to help you gain an understanding of the timeless aspect of Friends Testimonies, and to explore ways of incorporating these truths into your life and times. To do so, we will study the Bible, stories from Friends history, and practices of contemporary Friends.

Questions for Lesson 1

1. What does the word "testimony" mean?
2. What do the various definitions of "testimony" have in common?
3. The word *testimony* is not used in the Bible in the same way that Friends use it. How does the Bible support the Friends concept of *testimony*?
4. How are testimonies developed?
6. What can happen to a testimony over time?
7. How can Friends make sure that a testimony continues to communicate accurately and effectively?
8. Which testimonies are no longer effectively communicating God's Truth?
9. How should Friends observance of the testimonies be evaluated?

Lesson 1 Outline

◆ Definition of Testimony - a Testimony is a communication from God to the world, through the agency of a human life.

◆ Quotes

- ◇ "A testimony is an outward expression of an inward leading of the Spirit, or an outward sign of what Friends believe to be an inward revelation of truth." - Cooper, p. 101
- ◇ "The testimonies begin as matters of personal decision when people decide to take personal responsibility for something. However, more is involved in the adoption of the testimonies than a change in personal attitudes. We have seen that the underlying conception of testimony is that it is a form of communication. If it does not say something to somebody else, it can scarcely be a testimony." - Punshon, p. 27.

◆ Bible Study

◆ communication

- ◇ And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)
- ◇ "You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all; and you show that you are a letter of Christ, prepared by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts." (II Cor. 3:2-3)

◆ God

- ◇ "Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are competent of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our competence is from God, who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of letter but of spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." (II Cor. 3:4-6)
- ◇ "For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake. For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (II Cor. 4:5-6)

◆ world

- ◇ "Yes, everything is for your sake, so that grace, as it extends to more and more people, may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God." (II Cor. 4:15)

◆ agency

- ◇ "But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us." (II Cor. 4:7)

◆ human life

- ◇ "And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit." (II Cor. 3:18)

◆ Development of Testimony

◆ The immediate presence of Christ

- ◊ Nothing comes between us and Christ
- ◊ Danger of misunderstanding - confusing the Holy Spirit with the human spirit

◆ The paradox of Testimony: individual freedom vs. the sense of the meeting

- ◊ "Fox laid down no rules for his followers. He formulated no prohibitions. He was easy and lenient toward those who were in the army or navy and who nevertheless wanted to become 'Children of the Light.' He always left them free to 'follow their Light.'" - Jones, p. 106
- ◊ While Friends believe that each person is personally responsible for understanding truth ultimately only from God, yet they also believe that God's revelation of truth is consistent from person to person. This paradox leads to the group effort known as arriving at the sense of the meeting.
- ◊ Testimonies are usually developed by groups of Friends, going through a process of understanding the Truth and determining its implications for life.
- ◊ Friends should always speak the Truth as they understand it. They should not quench the expression of Truth for the sake of unity on the surface. But in that expression they must be careful to distinguish preference from conscience.
- ◊ When Friends disagree, they must seek unity by following the leading of Christ, Who is present. This is not an easy process. It requires much prayer and inner searching. Friends should proceed cautiously, trusting God to reveal more of His plan at a later time.

◆ Testimony as a process

- ◊ Testimonies may change over time - each person must learn the Truth and communicate it in a way appropriate for the life he or she leads.
- ◊ Sometimes a sense of the meeting that seems obvious today (e.g. that slavery is wrong and therefore we should work to end it) is arrived at only through much time and discussion and disagreement. It is a process through which Friends arrive at a corporate understanding of the Truth.
- ◊ The implications of a testimony can grow with time. The testimony of Equality developed into a testimony against slavery only through several generations of understanding.

◆ Testimony distinguished from tradition

- ◊ We do things according to tradition simply because we've done them that way before. We do something as a testimony because we believe we are communicating God's Truth.
- ◊ Testimonies are the expression of unchanging Truth. The Truth does not change, but the way it is communicated must change if it is not to become meaningless. Testimony must never descend into mere tradition.
- ◊ Traditions are important: they represent the handing down of Testimonies from one generation to the next. They must never be

discarded simply because they are traditions - they must be examined and evaluated.

◆ The problem of Testimony: separating the timeless from the timely

- ◇ "Into the use of *thee* and *thou* was packed the symbolism of belief in the equal dignity of all men—a symbolism now just reversed, a badge of separation and group consciousness, setting us *apart from* other men. As such, the use of *thee* and *thou* ought to be dropped, but we suffer from the weakness with which we charge ritualists—the symbol has received rich historic incrustations of sentiment, and is retained after the vital life is gone." - Kelly, p. 69
- ◇ We must continue to examine the Truth and evaluate our Testimony in its light.

◆ Effect of Testimony

- ◇ Testimonies seek to transform the world for the kingdom of God. They must have as their effect the production of God's good work, or they must not continue. They are to be evaluated by the effectiveness of their communication of God's Truth and God's purposes.
- ◇ Testimonies seek to change the world into one more closely aligned to God's kingdom. The values of this world and its kingdoms are nothing compared to the value of God's Truth - therefore Friends do not consider the worldly consequences of obedience to the Spirit.
- ◇ Testimonies serve to encourage and strengthen Friends in the principles of life that they have voluntarily chosen. Thus they have the effect of spiritual formation and are a guide to personal righteousness.
- ◇ The truth of a testimony comes from God, not from us. This truth calls us to repentance; it is our lives that are open to question, not the truth. The truth judges us - we do not judge it.

Questions for Lesson 1

1. What does the word "testimony" mean?

Possible answers: spoken evidence given in courtroom, verbal witness of God's actions, one's personal life as a testimony.

2. What do the various definitions of "testimony" have in common?

A testimony is a communication of truth (facts). The source of the truth is external to the one giving the testimony - i.e., the witness is simply conveying what was known to be true already, not making up new information.

3. The word *testimony* is not used in the Bible in the same way that Friends use it. How does the Bible support the Friends concept of *testimony*?

See the Bible study in this lesson. The idea of a "testimony" is conveyed by the concepts developed by Paul in II Corinthians 3 & 4. It might also be a good idea to review John 1 and do some research on John's use of "Word" (logos).

4. How are testimonies developed?

They begin with the immediate, real presence of Christ. Sometimes an individual receives a "leading" or "concern" which only later comes to be shared by others. Recognizing the danger in purely individual leadings, Friends gather in community to make decisions. Unity is sought through the discernment of God's will and the distinguishing of preference from conscience. Through this group process more errors are avoided, testimonies become more powerful communications to the world, and more Friends are encouraged and strengthened by them.

6. What can happen to a testimony over time?

It's possible that a testimony might lose the effectiveness of its communication simply because of changes in culture and cultural values. Friends should be evaluating their communication, making sure that the right message is getting across.

7. How can Friends make sure that a testimony continues to communicate accurately and effectively?

Ask themselves why they are doing what they are doing. Make sure that God's truth is being communicated. Follow the leadership of Christ in decision-making.

8. Which testimonies are no longer effectively communicating God's Truth?

This one can be controversial! The goal here is not to make any final decisions, but to explore ways of distinguishing Testimony from tradition by citing various examples. Examine behaviors in your church that are distinctive to Friends. Ask members of the class why they think things are done this way. Their answers may be illuminating!

9. How should Friends observance of the testimonies be evaluated?

Perhaps the best way is to ask people what they understand when they observe these things. If they have learned God's Truth, then the Testimony is effective.

Lesson 2: The Presence of Christ

You're a Christian, right? You want to please God with your life. That's good - but how do you know what's right and what's wrong? Where do you get your answers to the moral questions of life? The obvious answer for any Christian is "From God, of course" - but we want to dig a little deeper. How does God speak to you? Different people hear from God in different ways. Most of us learn God's word for us in the Bible, in the traditions of the church, and from our personal experiences of his presence in prayer and other times spent with him.

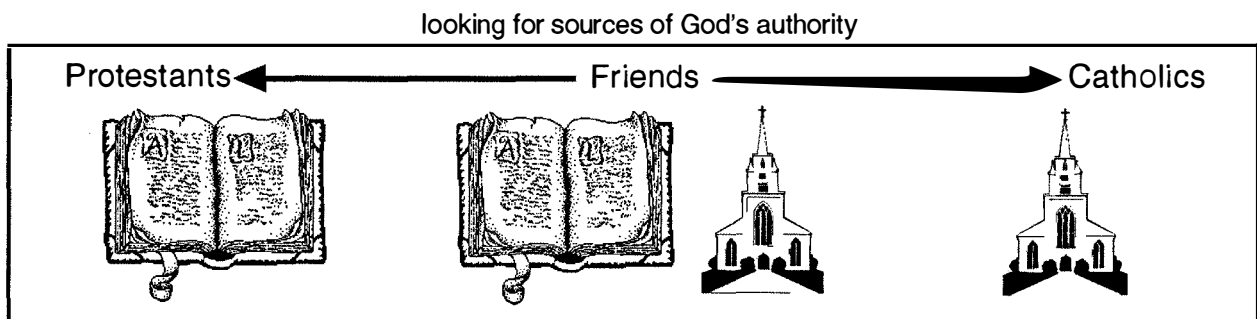
Through the years since the Church was founded, various groups of Christians have chosen to give priority to one of these three sources of God's authority over the other two.

orthodoxy.

Friends stand between these two ways of thinking. They gladly receive God's speaking through the traditions and leadership of the church and through the Bible. But they will allow neither the church nor the scripture to stand between them and God. Friends believe that God also speaks to us directly. God speaks to us directly through his Holy Spirit. Friends, following the New Testament, speak of this in varied ways; sometimes Christ as Present Teacher, sometimes as the Spirit of God or the Holy Spirit guiding or teaching.

Whatever the language, the fact that God teaches us directly has been a special emphasis of Friends from the beginning.

Friends have used many different terms for



Catholics historically have looked to the church for their primary source of authority. They place a high value on traditions, on the hierarchy of saints and church authorities, on the corporate decision. God's authority is expressed to individuals through the church as a mediator.

Protestants protest against that way of thinking, and find supreme authority in the Bible. They place a high value on correctly understanding, interpreting, and preaching the scripture. It is important to Protestants to have the **correct** interpretation of a passage of scripture, and they frequently create *creeds* as a representation and test of

the Holy Spirit and the inner presence of Christ. Not all of these terms are equivalent, and different groups of Friends give them different shades of meaning. John 1:9 ("The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.") is an important scripture for Friends. The "light" referred to by John is Jesus Christ. This verse indicates that the Light is present and available to every person. Friends have used terms like the "Light of Christ Within", or the "Real Presence."

The New Testament also speaks of the inner presence of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit's role was described by Jesus and recorded in John 14, and amplified by Paul

in Romans 8. Jesus promised his disciples that the Spirit would be their Counselor, and also work to bring people to faith (John 16:7-11).

The Light of Christ and the Holy Spirit are not the same thing, but their roles are similar. Robert Barclay, the first Friends theologian, found the idea of a "seed" (used by Jesus in the parable of the sower, Luke 8:5-11) to be helpful in understanding this role:

First, God, who out of his infinite love sent his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, into the world, and who tasted death for everyone, has given a certain day or time of visitation to everyone, whether Jew or Gentile...

Secondly, for this purpose God has communicated and given a measure of the light of his own Son, a measure of grace, or a measure of the Spirit to every man. The scripture describes this gift by several names. Sometimes it is the seed of the kingdom, Mat. 13:18-19; the light that makes all things manifest, Eph. 5:13; the word of God, Rom. 10:17; a manifestation of the Spirit for some useful purpose, I Cor. 12:7; a talent, Mat. 25:15; a little leaven, Mat. 13:33; or the gospel preached to every creature, Col. 1:23.

Thirdly, God, in and by this light and seed, invites, calls, exhorts and strives with every man, in order to save him. If the light is received and not resisted, it works the salvation of all, even of those who are ignorant of the death and suffering of Christ, and of Adam's fall.¹

As Barclay states, there are many names used in the Bible for this gift of God.

Many have confused the Inner Light with the conscience. There is a fundamental difference, however. The conscience is an attribute of humanity - everyone is born with a conscience, just like everyone is born with a nose. The Inner Light, on the other hand, is clearly **not** a natural attribute of a human. It is Wholly Other - something that

is within us, but comes from God, who is outside of us.

Similarly, many have equated the Inner Light with the Image of God. But the Image of God is something that the first humans were created with. Genesis 1:27 is very clear about that. The Image of God (whatever it consists of - this is a topic beyond the scope of this lesson) is definitely an attribute of humanity.

Human attributes are subject to the taint of sin. The conscience, for example, can be damaged (by repeated sin) to the point where it is no longer a reliable guide. The Inner Light of Christ is not so frail. It can be ignored or denied, and God can even withdraw his presence from us, but he cannot be damaged.

The Work of the Holy Spirit

Briefly, the Inner Presence has three functions. They are closely related, yet distinct in terms of their effects. The Holy Spirit brings people into a saving relationship with God, guides God's people in daily living, and brings God's people to spiritual maturity. Note that all these functions have more to do with life than with knowledge. The inner presence of Christ is a practical, day-to-day experience, not something to make theories about.

A Saving Relationship with God. When John wrote about "The true light, which enlightens everyone" (John 1:9) he was referring to the light seed of Christ. Of course the Inner Light does not force anyone to be a Christian. Barclay says that if it is received and not resisted, it will bring salvation.

A Guide for Daily Living. Since Friends believe that God speaks directly to us through the Holy Spirit, we look to him as a guide for life. But we know by experience that we can be fooled - it is all too easy to confuse our human spirit for the Holy

¹ Barclay, Robert. *Barclay's Apology in Modern English*, Dean Freiday, ed. Elberon, N.J., 1967, p. 83 [originally published in 1678]

Spirit. That is why we come together as Friends, to seek God's will in community. Together we can discern his will, and learn how we should live.

A Maker of Disciples (Mature Christians).

As we continue to live in the knowledge of his presence, the Holy Spirit helps us to grow to maturity in Christ. Our point of view comes more and more in line with God's. We begin to see ourselves, other people, and our world as God sees them. The Holy Spirit helps us to grow through prayer, through the church, and through the reading of the Bible.

The Bible, of course, is a special revelation of God to us. His Holy Spirit inspired the people who wrote the Bible, and that same Spirit acts as a personal interpreter to us as we read it. Because of this, we know that the Holy Spirit can never lead us contrary to scripture. Therefore the Bible is a principal source of authority for Friends. It serves as a standard against which our leadings can be tested.

But the Bible is not our only source of authority. It must never be seen as "God in a package." God is alive - a living Person - and cannot be condensed into a set of words. When we read the Bible, the Holy Spirit speaks to us. Thomas Kelly wrote in *The Eternal Promise* "...there is no substitute for *immediacy of revelation*. Each individual soul must and can have direct illumination inside himself, from the living, revealing Spirit of God, now, today, for he is active in this world."²

A Faith Commitment

If we understand that the Holy Spirit makes the Truth known to each individual soul through the Bible, we can begin to understand why Friends have traditionally been a non-creedal church. A creed is a set of beliefs that are written down - a

particular interpretation of the Bible as given to a particular set of people at a particular time. Since God cannot be confined to a particular set of words, but is always an alive and active Person, it is a mistake to confuse intellectual assent to a creed with knowing God.

It comes down to the difference between intellectual assent and an active trust. It is relatively easy to believe *that* a set of facts is true, but it is another thing entirely to believe *in* (commit your life to) a person, even to God. To have faith is to risk everything. What we find when we step out in faith, however, is that God **is** real, and that Christ is **truly** present in us.

The effect of Christ's presence in us is to cause us to become like him, to remove the tarnish from God's image in us. This is called "discipleship." It comes from the same root word as "discipline," and it can indeed be a painful process. The Inner Light of Christ illumines every part of our lives, bringing out in the open what was hidden in darkness. Sin thus exposed must be cut away and removed in order for growth to continue.

Learning to Listen to Christ

John Woolman's *Journal* has been particularly helpful to many Friends through the years as an example of the working of the Holy Spirit in the life of one whose life was dedicated to God. It is fascinating to read the account of the way Woolman's mind was changed and his opinions informed as he continued to experience the presence of Christ in his life.

"Thus for some months, I had great trouble, there remaining in me an unsubjected will which rendered my labors fruitless, till at length through the merciful continuance of heavenly visitations I was made to bow down in spirit before the Lord... Thus being brought low, he helped me; and as I learned to bear the cross I felt refreshment come from his presence... As I lived under the cross and simply followed the openings of Truth my mind from day to day was more

² Kelly, Thomas. *The Eternal Promise*. New York: Harper & Row, 1966, p. 53

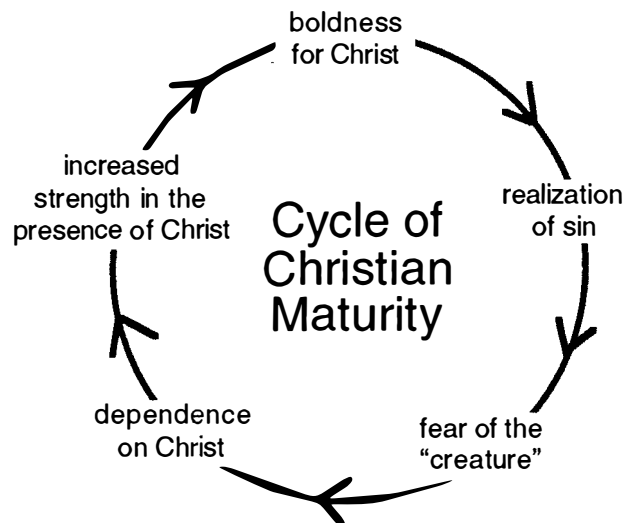
enlightened... Though I had been thus strengthened to bear the cross, I still found myself in great danger, having many weaknesses attending me and strong temptations to wrestle with... And as I was thus humbled and disciplined under the cross, my understanding became more strengthened to distinguish the language of the pure Spirit which inwardly moves upon the heart, and taught me to wait in silence, sometimes many weeks together, until I felt that rise which prepares the creature.”³

- from John Woolman's Journal

Woolman's language is archaic, but a couple of rereadings will show you that he is dealing with the same difficulty we all face - knowing the difference between God's Spirit and our human spirit (which Woolman calls "the creature").

All of us have to learn to listen to that voice. Sometimes the learning can be a struggle. The process is different for each one of us. The diagram to the right is not intended to be normative, but descriptive of the process that each of us most go through in order to hear and understand Christ's speaking to us. Your diagram might be different. It may be helpful to know these patterns, so that we can recognize (and thereby embrace) God's work in our lives.

The wonderful thing is that as we learn to listen we learn to know and to do God's will, through the process of becoming like Christ. It may be more encouraging to think of the process not as a cycle but as an upward spiral, as the Holy Spirit makes you more like Christ each time around.

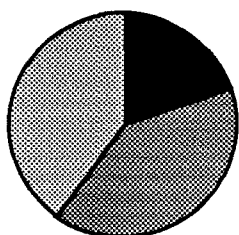


³ Woolman, John. *Journal*. Philadelphia: Friends Book Store, 1914, pp. 56-61.

Questions for Lesson 2

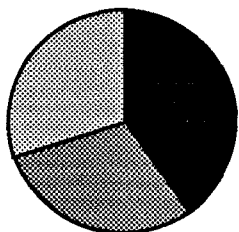
1. How do you know what is right and what is wrong for you to do as a Christian? Through what sources does God guide you? Different Christians emphasize different sources of guidance. The diagrams below illustrate, in general, the emphases of different churches. (You may disagree with the percentages shown - that's okay.) What about your church? Yourself? Draw pie charts to illustrate the relative priority of the sources of guidance in your church and in your own life.

Sources of Guidance - Catholic



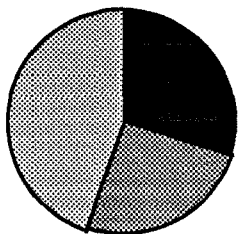
■ Bible
▨ Church (Tradition)
▩ Personal Experience

Sources of Guidance - Protestant



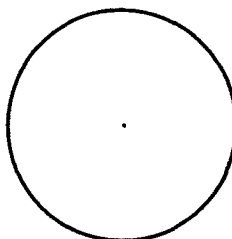
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▩ Personal Experience

Sources of Guidance - Friends



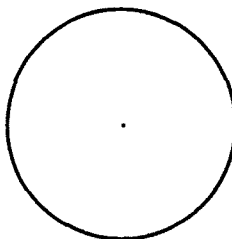
■ Bible
▨ Church (Tradition)
▩ Personal Experience

Sources of Guidance - Your Church



■ Bible
▨ Church (Tradition)
▩ Personal Experience

Sources of Guidance - You



■ Bible
▨ Church (Tradition)
▩ Personal Experience

2. Read the scriptures cited by Barclay in the quote on page 2. What do all of these terms have in common? How are they distinct?
3. Why is it important to understand that the conscience is not the same as the Holy Spirit?
4. How does the Holy Spirit work through the church? through the reading of the Bible?
5. What's the difference between intellectual assent and a faith commitment?
6. How does the Holy Spirit help us to become mature in Christ?
7. How have you learned to recognize the inner voice of Christ?

Lesson 2 Outline: The Inner Presence of Christ

I. Sources of Authority

A. In our lives

1. Church or traditions
2. Bible or creeds
3. Personal Experiences - Prayer

B. Different church emphases

1. For Catholics - the church, the traditions, the hierarchy, the corporate decision. God's authority is mediated by special people chosen by God for that role. Dangers: God cannot be present without these special people. These people may take on the role of God for those who listen to them. Potential of corruption from power.
2. For Protestants - the Bible is the source of authority, and its words are condensed into creeds which serve as tests of orthodoxy. Thus that which was spirit becomes law, that which was alive becomes stagnant. Protestants fall prey to the same problems that the Jews faced - the teachers of the Law, those who can interpret the Scripture, hold the power.
3. For Friends - the presence of Christ within (Holy Spirit, Inner Light) is the source of authority. The church and the Bible both assist in the understanding of His will. Danger: confusion of the human spirit with the Holy Spirit.

II. Bible Studies

A. Convicting the world of sin

1. John 15:26
2. John 16:7-8

B. Guiding God's people in life

1. John 14:16-20
2. John 14:26

C. Bringing us to maturity in Christ

1. Romans 8:5-17

III. Terminology

A. Confusing terms

1. The Light of Christ Within
2. The Holy Spirit
3. Conscience
4. The Image of God

B. The Light Within = The Holy Spirit

1. Liberal Friends might disagree with this equation. They tend to talk more about the Light and less about the Holy Spirit.
2. Quotes
 - a) "Early Friends believed that if they waited in the Light and walked in the Light they would be endued with power to overcome sin and moral darkness and come into the Light of the glory of God. This victory over sin and evil constituted a doctrine of perfection: if they responded to the Light of Christ, they would be empowered to live up to the measure of the light that was given them." - Cooper, p. 13
 - b) "The Quaker discovery and message has always been that God still lives and moves, works and guides, in vivid immediacy, within the hearts of men." - Kelly, p. 20

C. Conscience ≠ Light Within

1. The Image of God > Conscience; Image of God ≠ Holy Spirit
 - a) The Image of God consists of those attributes of humanity that are held in common (similar in kind but not in power) with God. Conscience, the capacity for moral reasoning, is one of those attributes, but there is more to the Image of God than conscience.

Lesson 2 Outline: The Inner Presence of Christ

- b) The Image of God is not the Holy Spirit. The Image of God relates to the attributes of humanity. The Holy Spirit is not an attribute of humanity - it is God Himself, present in our lives in a very personal way.
- c) The Light Within (Holy Spirit) is alive. It is God, active within us. Our sense of His presence grows, as does His cumulative effect on our lives. When He speaks to us, we know His voice - it is not our own voice.
- 2. Conscience is the capacity for moral choice. It brings a moral dimension to daily decision-making.
- 3. Conscience is shaped by environment: culture, upbringing, etc. The Holy Spirit is the unchanging God.
- 4. "The Light Within is not to be identified with or confused with conscience and reason, but both can and need to be illuminated by the Light of Christ." - Cooper, p. 14
- 5. The Light Within must come from outside of us, if it is to transform us into the likeness of Christ.

IV. roles of the Holy Spirit or Light Within (closely related, not distinct)

A. to bring people into fellowship with God

- 1. The Light of Christ acts as a "seed" - it will grow in fertile soil (parable of sower).
- 2. Without that seed, it would not be possible to know God.
- 3. The Holy Spirit works in the heart of the unbeliever to bring the knowledge of God and his need for Him.
- 4. God does not force anyone into fellowship with Him - we have to make the choice.

B. to guide God's children in daily living

- 1. We have direct access to God, every day. But we know that we can be fooled into confusing our human spirit with the Holy Spirit.
- 2. The Holy Spirit and the church
 - a) All Friends are equal before God. None has exclusive or special access to His Word. God can speak to and through anyone.
 - b) The meeting becomes a community, which seeks to know God corporately. This serves as a check on the confusion of the human spirit with the Holy Spirit. Decisions are made by groups seeking the leading of the Holy Spirit.
 - c) The effect of this should be that we trust each other and are open to learning from each other. But sometimes the effect is "My Holy Spirit's as good as yours."

C. to bring God's children to spiritual maturity

1. The Holy Spirit and scripture

- a) The Holy Spirit that inspired the authors of the books of the Bible is the same Holy Spirit that dwells within us. He will not contradict Himself. Therefore the Bible is a primary source of authority for Friends. It serves as a standard against which our leadings can be tested.
- b) Scripture must always be interpreted by the Holy Spirit working in the mind of the believer. In this way the words of the Spirit are always alive, always current, always relevant.

- (1) "Quakers make a special approach to the Bible. Not merely by exegesis, not merely by grammar and Greek lexicon do we squeeze out the meaning of the texts, not merely understanding the historical setting of a book like Amos or Hosea or Isaiah do we find its meaning. We can go back into that Life within whom Amos and Isaiah lived, that Life in God's presence and vivid guidance, then we understand the writings from within." - Kelly, p. 56

Lesson 2 Outline: The Inner Presence of Christ

- (2) Fundamentalist Protestants run the risk of "bibliolatry" - equating the Bible with God. They forget that God is a Person. He is alive. We can know Him now. And if we don't - if our only experience of God is through the interpretation of the Bible - our faith is misplaced. We don't really know Him without personal experience of His presence.
- c) A particular interpretation of the scripture must not be given the weight of the scripture itself. As soon as an interpretation is written down, it dies (in that it can no longer change). That interpretation now stands between the believer and the Bible. It must not represent or replace the Truth of God, which must be experience directly.
- (1) "...there is no substitute for immediacy of revelation. Each individual soul must and can have direct illumination inside himself, from the living, revealing Spirit of God, now, today, for He is active in this world." - Kelly, p. 53
- 2. The inner presence of Christ is the essence of Christianity.
 - a) The Light is something to know by experience, not something to make theories about. It is the difference between knowing about Christ and knowing Christ, the difference between belief and faith.
 - (1) "We have here, then, a type of Christianity which begins with experience rather than with dogma." - Jones, p. 44
 - (2) "The Reformation tended to drift away from experience of vital energies to a sacred theory of salvation." - Jones, p. 48
 - b) Christian growth and maturity, then, has more to do with the depth of one's experience with God rather than with how much one knows.
- 3. Continued experience of the presence of Christ leads to growth in righteousness and in understanding of Truth.
 - a) Example: "Thus for some months, I had great trouble, there remaining in me an unsubjected will which rendered my labors fruitless, till at length through the merciful continuance of heavenly visitations I was made to bow down in spirit before the Lord... Thus being brought low, he helped me; and as I learned to bear the cross I felt refreshment come from his presence... As I lived under the cross and simply followed the openings of Truth my mind from day to day was more enlightened... Though I had been thus strengthened to bear the cross, I still found myself in great danger, having many weaknesses attending me and strong temptations to wrestle with... And as I was thus humbled and disciplined under the cross, my understanding became more strengthened to distinguish the language of the pure Spirit which inwardly moves upon the heart, and taught me to wait in silence, sometimes many weeks together, until I felt that rise which prepares the creature." - Woolman, pp. 56-61
 - b) "As we progress, God lets us deeper and deeper into His secrets. In Fox's terms, if we live up to our measure of the Light, and are faithful to it, then more will be given." - Punshon, p. 70
 - c) We not only begin to see ourselves and our actions in a new way - we also begin to see the world, and other people, in a new way. This occurs as we begin to see things more and more from God's point of view.
- 4. Paul says that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit (I Cor 6:15-19). As we grow in our experience of God, we become aware that He indeed dwells within us, and we know His presence.

Lesson 2 Outline: The Inner Presence of Christ

- a) "God doesn't live in a house with a peaked roof. God lives inside people. And if God isn't inside you, you needn't expect to find him in a house with a peaked roof that is outside you. God is within. And where He dwells, there is a holy place... It is a wonderful discovery, to find that you are a temple, that you have a church inside you, where God is. There is something awful, that is, awe-inspiring, down at the depths of our own soul. In hushed silence attend to it. It is a whisper of God Himself, particularizing Himself for you and in you, and speaking to the world through you. God isn't dead. 'The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him.'" - Kelly, p. 55

Questions for Lesson 2

1. How do you know what is right and what is wrong for you to do as a Christian? Through what sources does God guide you? Different Christians emphasize different sources of guidance. The diagrams below illustrate, in general, the emphases of different churches. (You may disagree with the percentages shown - that's okay.) What about your church? Yourself? Draw pie charts to illustrate the relative priority of the sources of guidance in your church and in your own life.

Some people may have difficulty understanding what is being asked for here. The question is not whether a church is led by God or not - the question is how (through what source) does He lead. The charts given on the handout are simply examples. They represent what I believe to be the traditional emphases of each church. You should discuss the implications of the charts, but do not be drawn into a debate over the accuracy of each example. The important thing is for each person to think through the priority of the sources of guidance for the church they're in, and for themselves. A comparison of the charts that the people in your group draw can lead to an interesting discussion.

2. Read the scriptures cited by Barclay in the quote on page 2. What do all of these terms have in common? How are they distinct?

What these terms have in common is that they are gifts of God, given by his grace. Clearly it is God drawing us to fellowship, not the other way around. Some of the terms are used in the context of salvation, others in the context of discipleship and spiritual growth, but all of them relate to bringing people into closer fellowship with God. Some of the terms relate to the work of God the Father, others to Christ, and others to the work of the Holy Spirit.

3. Why is it important to understand that the conscience is not the same as the Holy Spirit?

An example of seared conscience should serve to make the point. For instance, many Christians sincerely believed in the need to exterminate the Jews in Hitler's Germany. But the Holy Spirit would never have led them to that belief; their consciences were somehow damaged, and led them astray. See John 16:2.

4. How does the Holy Spirit work through the church? through the reading of the Bible?

The Holy Spirit guides each person, and moves in the hearts of His people as they meet together to consider how He would have them act. Through listening to the Spirit and each other, Friends arrive at a unified understanding of God's will.

As the Bible is read, the Holy Spirit interprets the words to each person. Each reading is therefore a fresh, real encounter with God. From that encounter, a person may receive new understanding of who God is, how He interacts with His people, and how He wants us to live.

The community also works together to interpret the words of the Bible. This shared understanding works against errors and extreme interpretations.

5. What's the difference between intellectual assent and a faith commitment?

You can agree that a certain set of words (e.g. the Bible) is true. But faith must have as its object something that's alive. In our case, we believe the Bible, but our faith is in the God who inspired it. Faith implies a personal commitment, a change of life. "Even the demons believe and shudder." (James 2:19)

6. How does the Holy Spirit help us to become mature in Christ?

As we learn to follow the Light, the Holy Spirit makes us aware of things in our life that need to be given over to God - sins that need repentance, attitudes that need to be changed, understandings that need to grow. As we allow God to change us in these ways, we become more like Christ.

7. How have you learned to recognize the inner voice of Christ?

You may want to rephrase the question in terms of the leading of the Spirit. Different people understand God's speaking to them in different ways - that's the point of this question. Some may be troubled because they haven't learned to do this. Help them to understand that building a deep relationship with God is a process, one that takes time. Obedience to God's will, experience with the Bible, regular time spent in prayer; all of these will build the relationship with God and help Christians to recognize Christ's voice.

Lesson 3 - The Presence of Christ in Worship

Radical forms of worship have characterized Friends from the very beginning. Taking seriously the words of Christ (John 4:24) that "God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth," George Fox preached against "prayings and singings, which stood in forms without power" and "their images and crosses and sprinkling of infants, with all their holy-days (so-called)." Taking as their model the style of worship practiced by early Christians and recorded in the New Testament, Fox and the early Friends made their worship services simple, direct, and powerful.

Contrary to what many people think, traditional Friends worship was not all silence. Silence is not the goal - but it is what happens sometimes when we seek the true goal of Friends worship: a sense of the presence of the living Christ. When we know the presence of Christ, and have talked with him and listened to him, we know that we have indeed worshipped in spirit and in truth.

Perhaps a better name than "silent worship" for a Friends meeting would be "unbounded worship." Friends do not require the presence of a priest or even a pastor to worship - there were no salaried Friends ministers until the late nineteenth century! Neither do Friends require a particular style of building or any particular forms of worship. All they require is the presence of Christ. And since the cornerstone of Friends belief is that Christ is present directly to each Christian, Friends can worship any time, any place, any way.

The Traditional Friends Meeting for Worship

The *meeting for worship* (this is the plain-speech term that Friends traditionally use for the worship service) is traditionally unplanned, allowing freedom for the Holy Spirit to work as he will, without the constraints of human guidance. Friends are en-

couraged to *center down*, which means preparing yourself for communion with Christ. Although it appears similar to meditation (which in many Eastern religions requires the emptying of the mind) it is quite different: Friends do sit in silence, but they invite God to fill their minds with the presence of his Holy Spirit. In centering down we do not shut out life; instead, we present our entire lives to him. Then we "wait upon the Lord" in silence, listening for his leading, ready to obey if he asks us to speak. This is called "Holy Obedience." Sometimes he speaks to us quickly - at other times we must be patient. Thus silence for Friends is a means, not an end - it is a context for listening and obeying.

Christ speaks to us in worship in a variety of ways, and Friends must listen actively and attentively. It is good to listen closely to others when they speak, and be open to responding with your own ministry if the Spirit leads. He can speak through other people, through music, or through that "still small voice" in our minds. Sometimes our minds wander, but if we give those thoughts to God He may speak to us through them as well.

A characteristic of Friends worship is therefore spontaneity. Friends believe that the Holy Spirit works to build up the church through the ministry gifts that he gives to each person. As Paul writes in I Corinthians 12:7, "To each one the manifestation (gift of ministry) of the Spirit is given for the common good." Rufus Jones, a prominent Friends historian and theological writer, has labelled Friends worship "a spiritual democracy," since God's message may come from any person present.

In the context of the meeting for worship, ministry is an activity, not an office or a profession. A person's gift of ministry may be temporary or permanent, depending on God's choice. It is not limited to persons

with a certain level of training, or members of a particular sex. In other words, according to Friends, **anyone** may become a minister. The authority for ministry among Friends comes from God alone, through his gifts and his leading. (Thus the Friends do not ordain ministers; believing that God alone can ordain, Friends instead *record* the God-directed ordination of ministers.)

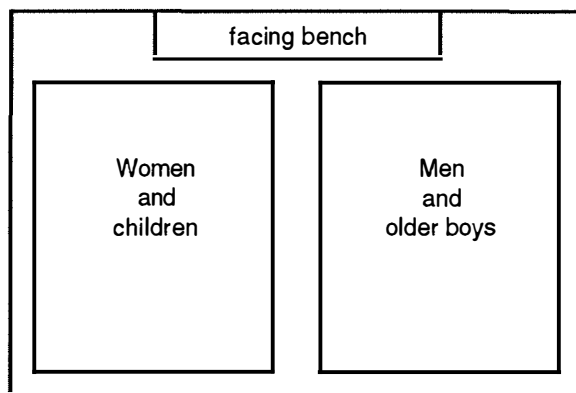
Effect of Friends Worship on Architecture

The Friends understanding of true worship can clearly be seen in the architecture of a traditional Friends church. Believing that God dwells in human hearts and not in man-made structures, Friends did not build large, beautiful church buildings or cathedrals.

Instead, their *meetinghouses* (this term was preferred over *church*, since the true church is God's people gathered) were simple, like their homes. Typically quite small, a traditional Quaker meeting house had no pulpit, no stained glass windows, no cross, indeed no symbol or decor of any kind. This was to keep anything from distracting one's attention from God, and to remove anything of the "creature."

There were usually separate seating areas for men and women, and a third area consisting of one or two pews called the *fac-*

ing bench because it faced the main group of benches. The elders and leaders of the meeting (both men and women) would usually sit on the facing bench, which was sometimes slightly elevated so that more people could see an elder who stood to speak, or to shake hands with a neighbor (the signal for the end of the meeting for worship).



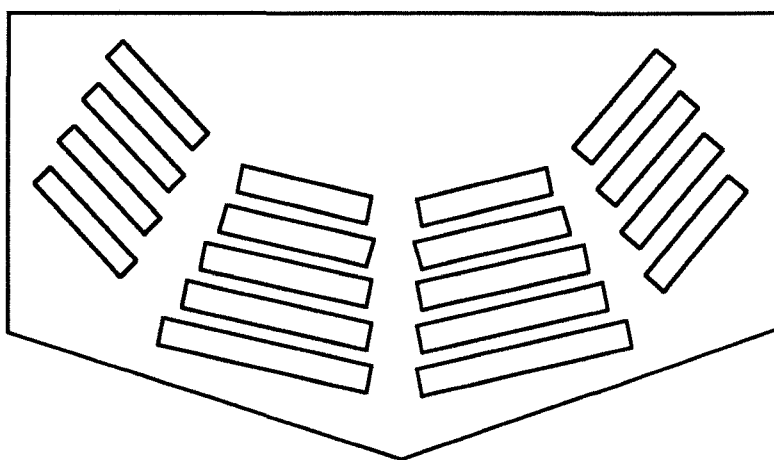
layout of a traditional Quaker meetinghouse

The facing bench had the effect of emphasizing a non-Quakerly distinction between the elders and the non-elders. Eventually seats closer to the front became more important, as Quakers developed their own hierarchy. A contemporary "Quaker" architecture (such as the one shown in the lower diagram) lets Friends see

one another, so anyone may speak and be seen, without overemphasizing the leaders.

The Difficulty of Spontaneity

Evaluating the worship experience is difficult for most



layout of a contemporary Quaker meetinghouse

churches. With traditional Friends meetings (known as *unprogrammed* since they were unplanned), it was especially so, since worship was supposed to be a spontaneous experience. Most Friends would agree that a successful worship

experience would be one in which Christ's presence was strong and the spoken minis-

try (if any) seemed to be from Holy Spirit, not just the human spirit.

Some Friends became fearful of what they called *creaturely activity*; that is, anything in worship that was not done by direct leading of the Holy Spirit, but done in response to the human spirit (the *creature*). The assumption was that the human spirit was wrong, and should be suppressed.

This strong distinction between human and divine activity led to a ban on group singing (for it must be rehearsed and “performed”) and on all other forms of prepared worship. Many Friends feared to speak in meeting, lest they be speaking from their own hearts and not by direct leading from God. Thus developed the well-known silent meeting - a pattern set in the early eighteenth century. The emphasis on silence became exaggerated, as the silence was valued in itself and not as a context for listening and obeying. This period became known in Quaker history as the Age of Quietism - a period that was not as productive for Friends as the age that preceded it. Suppression of the human spirit led naturally to the suppression of the Holy Spirit, and Friends began to decline in numbers and in effectiveness.

The impulse of Quietism was to... emphasize the principle of direct revelation by God beyond its proper importance. Quietism was therefore a personal, private and retiring form of religion... The Quietists reasoned that whatever is ultimately sensory or of the world—logic, reason, conscience, intellect, emotion, personality—is incapable of providing a certain knowledge of God. Indeed, such outward means, tainted as they are by human weakness, ignorance and sin, are positive obstacles to a true knowledge of the divine. So we should seek to escape the influence of all symbols... and rely instead on achieving a pure passivity or openness to God, wherein he will transmit a sense of his presence and a knowledge of his truth.¹

The pendulum had swung too far; in their determination to obey only God Friends became paralyzed by their own doctrine.

In the late nineteenth century evangelical Friends, having split off from the Quietists, began to adopt the ways of other Protestant denominations. The revival movement that swept the country at that time was one of the main reasons for the change in the ways of Friends (who cooperated with other churches and other Christian groups to promote the revivals). Friends experienced growth, which leads to change. They hired pastors, used music in worship, and got over their fear of planning the meeting for worship. The pendulum has continued its swing, and today it is difficult to distinguish Friends worship from that of most other evangelical denominations.

Famous Quaker author Elton Trueblood counsels a middle ground of approach to Friends worship. Regarding a traditional *unprogrammed* meeting Trueblood wrote:

“Those who enter such a Meeting can harm it in two specific ways: first, by an advance determination to speak; and second, by advance determination to keep silent. The only way in which a worshipper can help such a Meeting is by an advance determination to try to be responsive in listening to the still small voice and doing whatever may be commanded.”²

The Gathered Meeting

Anyone who has much experience with unprogrammed meetings, or with the common practice in pastoral Friends meetings of setting aside a time of unprogrammed worship, knows that there are some meetings where the presence of the Holy Spirit seems especially powerful, and many are blessed and built up by his ministry through the various speakers. Afterwards people tell each other how wonderful that worship time was. This experience is what Friends have called *The Gathered Meeting*. This ex-

² Trueblood, D. Elton. *The People Called Quakers*. Richmond, Indiana: Friends United Press, 1971, p. 86.

¹ Punshon, John. *Portrait in Grey: A Short History of the Quakers*. London: Quaker Home Service, 1984, p. 121-122.

perience of fellowship and community in the presence of Christ is what makes worship in the style of Friends so valuable. The Holy Spirit is present to each one individually, but the presence of brothers and sisters in Christ gives great opportunity for God to work in the meeting.

"In worship we have our neighbors to right and to left, before and behind, yet the Eternal Presence is over all and beneath all. Worship does not consist in achieving a mental state of concentrated isolation from one's fellows. But in the depth of common worship it is as if we found our separate lives were all one life, within whom we live and move and have our being. Communication seems to take place sometimes without words having been spoken. In the silence we received an unexpected commission to bear in loving intentness and spiritual need of another person sitting nearby. And that person goes away, uplifted and refreshed. Sometimes in that beautiful experience of living worship which Friends have called 'The Gathered Meeting' it is as if we joined hands and hearts, and lifted them together toward the unspeakable glory. Or it is as if that light and warmth dissolved us together into one."³

³ Kelly, Thomas. *The Eternal Promise*. New York: Harper & Row, 1966, p. 34.

Questions for Lesson 3

1. What is the true goal of a Friends meeting for worship?
2. Why did unprogrammed Friends meetings become known as silent meetings?
3. How can Quakers remain obedient to the leading of the Spirit and still plan the worship ahead of time?
4. How can worshippers prepare individually for worship, so that they are ready to encounter and respond to Christ in worship?
5. How can visitors be helped to understand and participate in traditional Friends worship?
6. How do you think George Fox and other first-generation Friends might respond to the worship meeting of your church? What would they appreciate? What might they want to change?
7. How is worship evaluated in your church? What makes for a good worship experience?
8. What are the strengths and weaknesses of unprogrammed worship? How would you strengthen your church's practice of worship?

The Presence of Christ in Meeting for Worship

I. Bible Study - I Cor. 11-14

A. Purpose is edification

1. building up a believer or non-believer (14:24-25)
2. strengthening the church (14:1-5, 27)

B. Keep things orderly (14:33)

1. Wait for each other to eat together (11:21,33-34)
2. Take turns speaking in church (14:29-32)

C. Don't be offensive

1. Women shouldn't disrupt the meeting (14:33-35)
2. Follow cultural mores (11:13-16)

D. Everyone participates (12:6-7; 14:26)

E. Everyone is equally important (12:21-27)

F. Without love, all is worthless (13:1-13)

II. Quaker Practice

A. A "spiritual democracy" (Jones) - the message may come from any person there

B. fear of creaturely activity - separation of human and divine activity - led to Quietism

1. Suppression of music as a planned activity

C. Advice for Silent Worship

1. "Those who enter such a Meeting can harm it in two specific ways: first, by an advance determination to speak; and second, by advance determination to keep silent. The only way in which a worshipper can help such a Meeting is by an advance determination to try to be responsive in listening to the still small voice and doing whatever may be commanded." - Trueblood, p. 86
2. Trueblood says that it is good to push all of one's own thoughts out of the mind, to concentrate on God.
3. On the other hand it is good to prepare for worship ahead of time, and bring our weeks and our thoughts to God, as if they were an offering.

D. Architecture

1. Plain structures, with clear glass, and no symbols. This was to keep anything from distracting one's attention from God, and to remove anything of the "creature."
2. Raised platform in front, for the elders, who were more likely to speak, and also to end the meeting by rising and shaking hands with their neighbors. This had the effect of emphasizing a non-Quakerly distinction between the elders and the non-elders. Eventually seats closer to the front became more important, and Quakers developed their own hierarchy.
3. Best architecture lets Friends see one another, so anyone may speak and be seen, and does not emphasize the leaders.

E. Weddings

1. Always public, always a service of worship. The couple rise in worship and declare their commitment to each other.
2. No magic clergy words needed to make them one in Christ. The entire community is witness and provides the necessary signatures.

F. fellowship - through unity

The Presence of Christ in Meeting for Worship

1. "In worship we have our neighbors to right and to left, before and behind, yet the Eternal Presence is over all and beneath all. Worship does not consist in achieving a mental state of concentrated isolation from one's fellows. But in the depth of common worship it is as if we found our separate lives were all one life, within whom we live and move and have our being. Communication seems to take place sometimes without words having been spoken. In the silence we received an unexpected commission to bear in loving intentness and spiritual need of another person sitting nearby. And that person goes away, uplifted and refreshed. Sometimes in that beautiful experience of living worship which Friends have called 'The Gathered Meeting' it is as if we joined hands and hearts, and lifted them together toward the unspeakable glory. Or it is as if that light and warmth dissolved us together into one." - Kelly, p. 34

III. Definition

A. It is not "silent worship" - it is unbounded worship. We are not bound to silence or to words or to a priest's blessing or presence. No human element is required for success. What is required for success is obedience to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

1. But this is not to say that all planning is wrong; just that it should not take precedence to the immediate leading of the HS.
 - a) The HS can guide any day of the week. He is not limited to Sunday.
 - b) It is inconsistent to allow some plans and forbid others. Should we not plan what to speak? What to pray? When to give? When to meet? "Early Quaker John Perot held that there should be no pre-scheduled time for worship. He held that if it were right for people to assemble at a certain time, they would be led to do so; and if people did not feel so led, they should not assemble. Needless to say, such reasoning did not work out in actual practice; it almost wrecked the local Society of Friends."
2. God works through the speaking of one to the edification of all. If we do not speak when prompted, we are as disobedient as if we spoke when not prompted.

B. Everyone participates equally. See Col. 3:16, I Cor. 14:26-29

C. centering down

1. preparing the soul for communion with God
2. not emptying the mind, but inviting God to visit it
3. "waiting upon the Lord" in silence
4. silence is a means, not an end

D. the experience of divine presence - communion

1. hearing and obeying
2. God initiates - we respond
3. "Quakers generally hold to a belief in Real Presence, as firm and solid as the belief of Roman Catholics in the Real Presence in the host, the bread and the wine of the Mass... Here the Quaker is very near the Roman Catholic. - Kelly, p. 81

E. ministry

1. authority comes from the work of the Spirit, not the person
 - a) therefore anyone can be a minister
 - b) may be temporary or permanent (in a person)
2. not an office or profession, but a response to divine initiative
 - a) prophetic - initiated and ordained by God alone
 - b) thus Friends do not ordain, they record
3. ministry takes place in the context of the gathered meeting
4. freely given and freely received
 - a) not for financial reward, and no required giving

The Presence of Christ in Meeting for Worship

b) historic practice - Friends had a testimony against paying the required tithes

5. different people have different ministries, according to their gifts

Questions for Lesson 3

1. What is the true goal of a Friends meeting for worship?

Friends seek to encounter God together in worship through an experience of the presence of Christ, and by being obedient to the Holy Spirit as He directs the ministry of each person.

2. Why did unprogrammed Friends meetings become known as silent meetings?

Friends became too fearful of "creaturely activity" - that is, they made a sharp distinction between the leading of the human spirit (bad) and the leading of the Holy Spirit (good), and suspected all leadings to be from the human spirit. Thus they were afraid to speak in meeting lest the message not be from God. Their religion turned inward, and their motivation for ministry declined.

3. How can Quakers remain obedient to the leading of the Spirit and still plan the worship ahead of time?

They should recognize that the Holy Spirit is not limited to leading and directing only during meeting for worship. We can plan our worship activities under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and still be open to His leading during the meeting. We must avoid rigidity, and seek to remain open to the way the Spirit wishes to work.

4. How can worshippers prepare individually for worship, so that they are ready to encounter and respond to Christ in worship?

A prepared worshipper understands that the responsibility for a good worship meeting does not lie entirely with the leaders, and perhaps will be more able to sense God's presence than one who rushes in directly from the busy world. To prepare, a worshipper might consider what she wants to bring to God, or what God might be wanting to talk to her about. It's also good to plan ahead - get things ready ahead of time, get plenty of sleep, avoid the last-minute rush to church. If possible, she might read the appropriate Bible text ahead of time, if it is published. A regular devotional life will also help a person to be prepared for worship.

5. How can visitors be helped to understand and participate in unprogrammed worship?

It is too much to expect the casual visitor to understand how to profitably use the time given in the unprogrammed meeting. On the other hand, it is probably inappropriate for most regular attenders for a verbal explanation to be offered every week. In many pastoral meetings a small pamphlet can be found in the pew rack, explaining the unprogrammed portion of worship.

6. How do you think George Fox and other first-generation Friends might respond to the worship meeting of your church? What would they appreciate? What might they want to change?

Fox would undoubtedly criticize the "hireling preacher." Early Friends believed that all believers were ministers. They always spoke out against the practice of hiring clergy, because it made too much of a hierarchy in the church. Fox would also object to having the same form of worship every week, and limiting the teaching to one or two people. He might also object to the music! But he would love good Bible teaching and the emphasis on a personal relationship with Christ.

7. How is worship evaluated in your church? What makes for a good worship experience?

In some churches a service is considered good if the preaching is exciting, or if the quiet time goes for a certain length, or if the music is inspiring, or if it ends by 12:00! As people share their ways of evaluating worship you may be able to point out the difference between evaluating on the basis of externals or on the basis of more spiritual criteria.

8. What are the strengths and weaknesses of unprogrammed worship? How would you strengthen your church's practice of worship?

Strengths: There is nothing more powerful than a direct experience of the presence of God, and those who learn to recognize His voice are regularly blessed by this form of worship. When God is free to work among us as He wills, and His people are obedient in ministry, we can experience a depth of fellowship and love not found in any other worship experience.

Weaknesses: Unprogrammed worship is difficult to learn, particularly for children. It is not easy to convince people that it is valuable. Visitors may have trouble seeing past the surface, and evangelical Friends are rightly fearful of discouraging visitors. Unprogrammed worship by its nature is uncontrolled, and Friends who practice it run the risk of inappropriate speaking or even disruptive behavior in worship. It can be difficult to strike a balance between openness to all forms of ministry and suppression of ministry that is not directed by the Holy Spirit.

Note to the leader: this should not be a time of picking apart the worship service. There is no absolute right or wrong. Rather, it should be a time of creative thinking, Encourage openness to new forms and new experiences, a willingness to experiment and see what God might do.

Lesson 4 - A Sacramental View of Life

Ask 10 Christians—even 10 Friends—“What makes Quakers unique?” and you can bet that 6 or 7 of them will say “They don’t believe in communion and baptism.” That’s a sad commentary on the ineffectiveness of the Friends testimony on the spiritual meaning of communion and baptism. The truth is that Friends **do** believe in communion and baptism - but historically they have not observed the sacraments associated with these terms. In this lesson we will explore the reasons behind this historic Friends Testimony, and discover that its emphasis is positive, not negative, as is commonly believed.

One of the characteristics of Friends through the years is that they refuse to declare certain times, places, or objects to be more *sacred* than others. After all, God is the Creator of all things. Wilmer Cooper has written, “...there are no uniquely sacred times or places; instead, all of life has the possibility of becoming an outward sign of an inward grace.”¹ The concept of *sacrament* limits the sense of sacredness to only a few times, elements, and practices. But Friends, as we have seen, find the possibility of Christ’s presence at all times and in all acts. The objection of the Friends to the sacraments is that the truth of Christ’s constant presence is downplayed, and that sacraments are sometimes misunderstood and abused.

The Origin of the Sacraments

Sacraments are a carryover from the Jewish faith of the Old Testament. For the Israelites, spiritual truth was normally conveyed through visible objects and actions. The animals sacrificed for sin represented the person who brought them. People wore the written law on their foreheads, literally binding it to them to show that it was part

of them. Boys were circumcised to show that they belonged to God.

But Jesus came to change all that. He said “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.” (Matthew 5:17) This theme is played out over and over again in the New Testament, as the rituals of the Jewish Law give way to the Holy Spirit-empowered life established by the new covenant. The apostle Paul says that we are no longer under law, but under grace. “...We have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.” (Romans 7:6)

The ritual of circumcision is a good example of this change. In the Old Testament, circumcision was a ritual act performed on a Jewish baby boy for the purpose of showing that he belonged to God. Obviously this was done by the choice of the parents, not the boy! Circumcision could hardly represent a spiritual reality to the recipient (although it did represent spiritual truth to the community). It is therefore no surprise that Paul, speaking from the New Testament point of view, declares circumcision to be of no value in the Christian era. “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.” (Galatians 5:6)

Other Old Testament rituals that the New Covenant in Christ made unnecessary include dietary laws and special days (see Romans 14:1-23) as well as sacrifices and rigid adherence to the Law (see Matthew 12:1-12).

The Problem of Sacraments

The Bible, in both Old and New Testaments, makes extensive use of symbolism. Symbols can be helpful as an aid to understanding spiritual concepts - they are like signposts,

¹ Cooper, Wilmer A. *A Living Faith: An Historical Study of Quaker Beliefs*. Richmond, Indiana: Friends United Press, 1990, p. 94.

pointing the way to Truth. But symbols do not contain the entire truth in themselves, any more than a highway sign contains the place that it is pointing to. Spiritual things are too *real* to be thus captured. Symbols are not alive - they're static. But God is alive, and our relationship with him is meant to be dynamic, not static.

Focusing on a symbol can be a hindrance to our relationship with God. With any ritual comes questions of observation. Who can baptize? How is it done? What words must be said? How old should the recipient of baptism be? Christians have disagreed on these issues for hundreds of years, and often the focus has turned away from the spiritual meaning of baptism to the correct observation of the rite. Friends prefer the reality to the symbol. It is the new life in Christ that is important, not the baptism in water.

Rituals can even be spiritually dangerous, leading to mistaken doctrine. Some churches have conveyed an almost magic quality to the rituals, as if the act earned favor with God. For years the Catholic church held the threat of excommunication over the heads of its people, telling them that they would lose their salvation if they could not participate in the communion ritual. Even today many Protestants are afraid not to participate in the sacrament of communion for fear that they will displease God. Is this a gospel of grace, or of works?

Friends believe that it is better to give God the glory in everything we do than to set aside certain actions and call them sacred. Christ is present not only during communion - he is present at all times. This is not to say anything against symbolism - we need symbols to remind us of what is meaningful. But let us always give priority to the reality over the symbol.

The Meaning of Communion and Baptism

So what is the reality of communion? As we look at the accounts of the Last Supper in the gospels, we find that Jesus used that occasion to teach several important spiritual truths to his disciples. He wanted them to see his death as a great act of deliverance just like God's freeing the Israelites from Egypt, which the Passover meal they were eating celebrated. So he commanded them to remember his death. He wanted them to understand the true nature of servant leadership, so he commanded them to wash each other's feet. He wanted them to know the necessity of full commitment to him, so he commanded them to join him in eating and drinking the symbols of his flesh and blood. All of these things were important enough for Jesus to command his disciples to do, yet the church has made only one of them into a sacrament.

A study of John 6:35-58 helps us to understand what Jesus really meant by the symbolic eating and drinking of his flesh and blood. In summary, eating his flesh and drinking his blood refer to a merger - bringing our lives into union with him. To *eat* and to *drink* are to invite Christ in your life - to make him part of your very essence. We become part of him, and he becomes part of us. This is a powerful spiritual truth. It is something that should happen every day. Friends are not willing to exchange it for a ritual to be performed occasionally on Sunday morning.

Similarly, Friends see baptism as something far too important to be confined to a ritual with water. In the New Testament, *baptism* (when it is not used metaphorically, as it is in Rom. 6:4) refers to a life-changing event - something that occurs to set the course of life in a new direction. There are several different baptisms mentioned in the New Testament, but the most important is the baptism of the Holy Spirit. In fact, any other

baptism is said to be insufficient without the baptism of the Holy Spirit. John the Baptist (Mark 1:8), the apostle Paul (Acts 19:1-6) and Jesus (John 3:5 and Acts 1:5) all emphasize the priority of Holy Spirit baptism.

The early church did practice the rituals of communion (with the elements) and baptism (with water), though exactly what took place in these rituals is not described. The lack of any specific instructions helps us to understand these practices as a carryover from earlier times, and not a prescription for all Christians for all time.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit takes place when Christ is invited into your life, and the Holy Spirit is sent as a Counselor and Guide. To be baptized in the Holy Spirit means to make a commitment of your life to God's direction. "Baptism means the immersion of the person's whole being in the love of Christ."² This baptism is clearly a spiritual event.

Historic Friends Practice

The spiritual emphasis of New Testament Christianity gave way, over the years, to a renewed emphasis on the necessity of ritual. The Protestant Reformation of the 16th century partially corrected this—they eliminated five of the seven sacraments of the Catholic church—but 17th-century Friends still found the churches of England to be largely dead in the Spirit even though consistent in their observance of the remaining sacraments. In reaction, Friends went further than the Reformers and declared all sacraments unnecessary.

Instead, they implemented a new form of worship - one in which Christ's leading was pre-eminent. Planning and ritual were discarded - all was left to the leading of the Spirit. In worship, Friends sat in silence, waiting for God's direction. Music, preach-

ing, all preparation were discarded as "creaturely" (not of the Spirit).

Contemporary Friends Practice

Friends do not say that observance of the baptism and communion rituals is wrong or sinful. If these actions are helpful in teaching and learning spiritual truths, then Christians should practice them. What Friends find wrong is the substitution of the ritual for the reality.

Most Friends today still do not use the outward symbols of baptism and communion. Some have allowed these practices if they are done in a helpful way (that is, if they are not seen as replacing the reality of Christ's presence and the Holy Spirit's work in our lives). Other groups of Friends allow for the practice of the rites in special services, away from the public meeting for worship.

A period of quiet in worship is sometimes called "communion after the manner of Friends." During this time, Friends are encouraged to acknowledge the immediate presence of God and engage in prayer and meditation, open to the leading of the Spirit for ministry.

Friends have adopted the traditional evangelical form of proclaiming repentance from sin and commitment to Jesus Christ by highlighting an event known as "accepting Christ as your personal Savior." Coming forward to pray at the altar in front of the church is one way to make public proclamation of the life-changing event. This takes the place of baptism, but Friends must be careful not to make this a ritual too!

A Challenge for Friends Today

How can contemporary Friends best express the truths of baptism and communion in worship? In their non-observance of the sacraments, Friends have tended to forget to emphasize the positive spiritual realities of communion and baptism. Thus the lack of

² Trueblood, Elton. *The People Called Quakers*. Richmond, Indiana: Friends United Press, 1971, p. 134.

ritual has led to the same problem as the ritual did - the true meaning is lost. This is not to argue for restoring the ritual, but instead to teach the real meaning of communion and baptism, and to find new ways of expressing these truths.

There may be occasions when it is appropriate to observe the rituals associated with baptism and communion. Evangelical Friends meetings have struggled with this issue for a long time, trying to balance the truth of the non-necessity of the rituals with the desire to minister to people who may have been become Christians in other traditions. It is important not to sacrifice the truth for the sake of increasing the size of the membership.

A contemporary expression of the baptism of the Holy Spirit must emphasize the life-changing nature of the event. It is more than repentance from sin - it is the time when I commit all of my life to God, and invite the Holy Spirit to fill me and change me into Christ-likeness. A contemporary expression of communion must emphasize the continuing presence of Christ, and his union with the Christian.

What do Friends communicate to other Christians in their non-observance of the sacrament rituals? As we have seen, the wrong message is getting across in all too many cases. Some Friends argue that not doing what most of the other Protestant denominations do leads to the mistaken impression that we do not believe in communion and baptism. Other Friends respond that by so refusing we set an example for people to understand and experience these realities more fully, whether they use the rituals or not.

This, then, is the challenge of this lesson: to find a way for Friends to effectively share the Truth of communion and baptism, with the full meaning that the New Testament brings to these testimonies.

Questions for Lesson 4

1. What is the fundamental objection of Friends to calling something a *sacrament*?
2. How are sacraments related more to the Old Testament than the New?
3. What are some of the problems associated with the observation of the sacraments?
4. What is the real spiritual meaning of communion?
5. What is the real spiritual meaning of baptism?
6. How have Friends expressed these meanings through their Testimonies?
7. What weaknesses have been apparent in the Friends Testimonies of communion and baptism?
8. How can contemporary Friends best communicate the Truth of communion and baptism to the world and in worship?

Lesson 4 Outline: A Sacramental View of Life

- I. Misunderstanding - Friends don't believe in baptism or communion
 - A. Friends believe that baptism and communion are absolutely essential.
 - B. Friends refuse to limit understanding of baptism and communion to a set of ritual acts.
- II. Bible Study
 - A. Gal. 5:2-6; 6:12-16 (Circumcision as merely the outward sign of an inward reality)
 - B. John 6:35-40; 47-58 (Jesus presents Himself as the Bread of Life, and commands His followers to eat His flesh and drink His blood.)
 - C. John 13:2-5; 12-17 (Jesus washes the disciples' feet, and instructs them to follow His example.)
 - D. Matthew 5:17 - "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them."
- III. The Friends Testimony of the Sacraments
 - A. Life as a sacrament
 1. "...there are no uniquely sacred times or places; instead, all of life has the possibility of becoming an outward sign of an inward grace." - Cooper, p. 94
 2. God has created everything - all creation is equally sacred to Him.
 - a) Everything we have come from and belongs to Him. James 1:17 - "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father..."
 - b) Everything we do can be done for Him. I Cor 10:31 - "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."
 3. A sacrament is the embodiment of spiritual truth in a physical object
 - a) a carryover from the Jewish faith
 - (1) sacrifices for sin - animal as substitution for person
 - (2) law upon the forehead and the doorpost - a symbol of God's word in the heart and home
 - (3) circumcision as a mark of belonging to God's chosen people
 - b) Christian symbols
 - (1) icons and statues in a Catholic church as symbols of spiritual reality
 - (2) cross as a symbol of salvation through Christ
 4. Jesus taught that spiritual realities are more important than physical objects or actions
 - a) arguments with the Pharisees over observation of the law
 - b) Sermon on the Mount - attitude of the heart is more important than outward observance.
Also see Mark 7:14-15.
 5. Problems arise when we give too much weight to the physical acts of the sacraments
 - a) Symbols are inadequate
 - (1) Symbols are remote. They hint at God. But God is with us, here, now.
 - (2) Symbols are not alive, they're static. But God is alive, not static, and our relationship with Him is just as dynamic.
 - b) They are a hindrance. They turn the focus away from the presence of the living Christ.
 - (1) questions of observation - who does it, when, how
 - (2) The rituals point to the reality. Friends prefer the reality of Christ, direct and unmediated. Christ is here *now* - not only in the past.
 - c) They can be dangerous. Religious observance is seen as a substitute or prerequisite for faith in Christ.
 - (1) Historically, the Catholic church has believed that real spiritual events occur in the sacraments. The bread and the wine become the actual body and blood of the Lord. This focuses too much on the physical and not on the reality of Christ's presence.

Lesson 4 Outline: A Sacramental View of Life

- (2) Historically, the Catholic Church (and some Protestant groups) has believed that the sacraments were a necessary part of being a Christian, and for some, a necessity for salvation. Excommunication from communion was the Catholic Church's ultimate threat against disobedient people.
 - (3) Many Protestants feel that they are being disobedient to Christ if they do not practice the sacraments. Thus the sacraments are given value as a Work - something we do to earn favor with God. This is contrary to the gospel of faith.
6. So why should we give special significance to certain objects or actions? Better to give God the glory in everything we have and do. Christ is not present only during communion - He is present at all times. This is not to say anything against symbolism - we need symbols to remind us of what is meaningful. But let us always give priority to the reality over the symbol.

B. True communion

1. At the Last Supper Jesus conveyed several spiritual truths to His disciples by giving them commandments
 - a) The fulfillment of the Passover (his death brings deliverance to God's people) - the commandment to understand and remember His death
 - b) The necessity of full commitment to Him (the command to join Him in eating and drinking)
 - c) The nature of true leadership (servanthood - as illustrated in the commandment to wash one another's feet)
 - d) To take one of these commandments and make it an ongoing required ritual is to rob the others of their importance, and can lead to trivial observance
2. In John 6 Jesus gives us the true understanding of communion - to eat His flesh and to drink His blood is to abide in Him. "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you." To *eat* and to *drink* are to invite Christ in your life - to make Him part of your very essence.

C. True baptism

1. Baptism in the NT is symbolic for a life-changing event - something that occurs that sets the course of life in a new direction.
 - a) Baptism without the Holy Spirit is seen as insufficient.
 - (1) Acts 19:1-6 - Paul explains the importance of the baptism of the Holy Spirit to the Ephesians, who had only known the baptism of John.
 - (2) Mark 1:8 - "I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."
 - b) The baptism of the Spirit is the most important baptism in the believer's life.
 - (1) John 3:5 - "I tell you the truth: no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit."
 - (2) Acts 1:5 - "For John baptized with water, but... you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."
 - (3) I Corinthians 12:13 - "For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink."
2. "Baptism means the immersion of the person's whole being in the love of Christ." - Trueblood, p. 134
 - a) To be baptized in the Holy Spirit means to make a commitment of your life to God's direction.
 - b) The baptism of the Holy Spirit takes place when Christ is invited into your life, and the Holy Spirit is sent as a Counselor and Guide.

IV. Historic Friends Practice

Lesson 4 Outline: A Sacramental View of Life

- A. Friends saw that the observance of the ritual sacraments and the formal liturgy did not lead to the Christ-like life. Instead, they implemented a new form of worship - one in which the Holy Spirit's leading was pre-eminent. Planning and ritual were discarded - all was left to the leading of the Spirit.
- B. The Reformers had discarded five of the seven sacraments of the Catholic Church as unnecessary. Friends did away with the other two, for the same reason. Baptism was seen as the commitment of one's life to Christ, with the consequent filling of the Holy Spirit. Communion was seen as the acknowledgement of the Presence of Christ and communication with Him.
- C. In worship, Friends sat in silence, waiting for the Holy Spirit to lead them. Music, preaching, all preparation were discarded as "creaturely" (not of the Spirit).

V. Contemporary Friends Practice

- A. Friends do not say that observance of the baptism and communion rituals is wrong or sinful. If these actions are helpful in teaching and learning spiritual truths, then Christians should practice them. What Friends find wrong is the substitution of the ritual for the reality.
- B. Some groups of Friends have allowed the practice of the rituals of communion and baptism in a Friends meeting, if they are done in a helpful way (that is, if they are not seen as replacing the reality of Christ's presence and the Holy Spirit's work in our lives). Other groups of Friends allow for the practice of the rites in special services, away from the public meeting for worship.
- C. A period of quiet in worship is sometimes called "communion after the manner of Friends." During this time, Friends are encouraged to acknowledge the immediate presence of God and engage in prayer and meditation, and to minister as the Spirit leads.
- D. A public proclamation of a person's first-time commitment to Christ could be seen as a contemporary equivalent of the ritual of baptism, as long as we don't require a certain formula of words or actions.

VI. Implications for Today

- A. In their non-observance of the rituals, Friends may forget to emphasize the positive spiritual realities of communion and baptism. Thus the lack of ritual could lead to the same problem as the ritual did - the true meaning is lost.
- B. A contemporary expression of the baptism of the Holy Spirit must emphasize the life-changing nature of the event. It is more than repentance from sin - it is the time when I commit all of my life to God, and invite the Holy Spirit to fill me and change me into Christ-likeness.
- C. A contemporary expression of communion must emphasize the union of Christ and the Christian, similar to the way Jesus talks about eating his flesh and drinking his blood in John 6. That's an unpleasant metaphor, but it makes the point.

Questions for Lesson 4

1. What is the fundamental objection of Friends to calling something a *sacrament*?

It implies that some actions, or things, are more sacred than others. To call something a *sacrament* limits the sense of sacredness to only a few times, elements, or practices. But Friends believe that Christ is always present, and the potential exists for him to make all things sacred.

2. How are sacraments related more to the Old Testament than the New?

Under the Old Testament Law God set up some actions and objects as representations of spiritual truth. These were intended to point to Him, not to convey special honor to the created thing, but over time the symbols tended to take on the sacredness of the Person they represented. But with the coming of Jesus and the New Testament, the old Law and its symbols are set aside in favor of Christ, God's final Word.

3. What are some of the problems associated with the observation of the sacraments?

In the Old Testament God gave precise instructions in the Law for the practice of each ritual, but no such instructions exist for "sacraments" in the church. As a result, there is a lot of disagreement as to the proper way to observe these rites. Another problem is the tendency of God's people to shift their focus (over time) to the symbol and away from the reality. Finally, there is a tendency for sacraments to become Law, shifting the focus of our salvation away from God's grace.

4. What is the real spiritual meaning of communion?

Communion is becoming one with Christ. The metaphor of eating His flesh and drinking His blood (see John 6:48-58) shows that we are to take Him into ourselves, making Him an essential part of our existence. This act is crucial to discipleship, which is becoming like Christ. In communion we know that intimacy with Christ, and true fellowship.

5. What is the real spiritual meaning of baptism?

Baptism is a general word for a one-time event that changes the course of life. In a spiritual context it represents the time of salvation, the time when Christ takes over as Lord of life and the Holy Spirit begins to dwell within the believer.

6. How have Friends expressed these meanings through their Testimonies?

Friends have practiced communion through unprogrammed worship. During this time each person is supposed to invite Christ to enter the mind and heart, and they will communicate through prayer and meditation. Friends recognize the presence of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life, calling it the Light of Christ Within. Evangelical Friends stress the importance of accepting Christ as personal Savior and Lord, and will invite people to indicate their decision to do this by going forward to pray at the altar rail or by some other act. This would be the spiritual equivalent of baptism, although it is not often referred to as such.

7. What weaknesses have been apparent in the Friends Testimonies of communion and baptism?

The non-observance of the sacraments has been an embarrassment to many evangelical Friends. Because of this, they tend to avoid the topic. Therefore teaching on communion (and the topics that usually accompany the sacrament of communion in other churches) is lacking among Friends, to their detriment. The same could be said of baptism. Friends have been guilty of conveying the wrong message to the world about communion and baptism.

8. How can contemporary Friends best communicate the Truth of communion and baptism to the world and in worship?

It will help if we start teaching of the true meaning of these terms in our worship and in our classrooms. Where the Truth is being taught, way will be found to properly express it. Most importantly, Friends must *experience* baptism of the Holy Spirit and true communion with Christ. They must know personally that intimacy with Jesus, and what it means to have your life turned around by the power of God. Communion and baptism are not just doctrines. They are a part of the Christian life.

Lesson 5 - The Presence of Christ in Meeting for Business

Christ is immediately present to each believer. As we have seen, this concept has had a profound effect on the Friends understanding of what it means to worship, indeed what it means to be a Christian. Now we shall see what difference this conviction makes in decision-making.

As we have seen, Friends hold a firm belief in the equality of all believers under the lordship of Christ. They will not have a hierarchy within the church. Instead, authority is vested in the whole church. No individual or small group will be considered to have better access to God than anyone else. This idea works well for worship and discipleship, but when it comes to decision-making such a view can lead easily to division. If each Quaker believes that he or she can hear what is right, directly from God, then unity in the church becomes most important.

One key to unity is listening; not only listening to God, but listening to each other as well. Friends who listen learn to trust each other, so they are not in contention (*my* leading vs. *your* leading) but in unity (trusting the discernment of the group).

The importance of unity in the church is clearly indicated in Paul's epistles:

I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is over all and through all and in all. (Ephesians 4:1-6)

If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ...then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to his own interests, but

also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as Christ Jesus. (Philippians 2:1-4)

Friends achieve unity in decision-making by following the example of Christ. We begin in unity with the common goal of discerning together how God is guiding us (and **not** with the goal of "winning" the decision). We practice unity during the meeting by listening and discerning God's will as it is revealed to us by the inner presence of Christ, and by his leading through the ministry of others. We end in unity by coming to a shared understanding of what God is saying to us.

Typically a business meeting is held monthly (thus a local Friends congregation is known as a *monthly meeting*). At the meeting, items for business are brought to the whole meeting for discussion and decision. Believing that Christ is present in the meeting for business, the goal of the meeting is to determine what his will is in each matter, and to be obedient to it. Thus there is no concept of *majority* and *minority* among Friends. The goal is not for one group's will to prevail over another's; the goal is for God's will to prevail over all.

Friends assume that God guides the church as a whole, just as he does each life that is a part of it. We know from Jesus' high-priestly prayer in John 17 that he had a great mission for the church, one which required the church to be in unity:

My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father... May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. (John 17:20-21,23)

Arriving at a unified understanding of Christ's will (known as *the sense of the meeting*) can be a long and difficult process, especially if there is substantial disagree-

ment on the matter at hand. Because of this, Friends have found it helpful to approach business in the context of worship.

Acknowledging the presence of Christ, centering down and opening the mind to hear his voice, learning to distinguish the human spirit from the Holy Spirit; all these activities, familiar from Friends worship experience, are important in business meeting as well.

Sometimes the process of discerning God's leading is assisted by the ministry of a "weighty Friend." The term does not refer to a person's size, but to the *weight* (influence) of that Friend's statements. Typically, these are people who have consistently demonstrated discernment and wisdom.

Determining the sense of the meeting is the task of the clerk. He or she guides the meeting, helping Friends to sort out their impressions of God's will and to come to unity. Some have called this process *consensus*, but more than consensus is required. The Friends concept of the sense of the meeting implies a unity that is greater than consensus, but not necessarily the absolute rule of unanimity. Some definitions may be helpful here.

Unanimity - everyone present agrees on the decision, with their whole heart. There is no dissenting opinion.

Consensus - everyone present agrees to go along with a particular decision, whether they agree with it or not. Those holding dissenting opinions give way to majority, and promise to support the decision even though they don't agree with it. Sometimes those who hold opposing views will bargain, trading off one point for another so that their interests can best be served. The decision is made in accord with a majority, and for the sake of progress.

Unity - similar to consensus, but the

decision is made in accordance with the perceived will of God. Those holding dissenting opinions (on all sides of the question) examine their own minds to be sure that what they believe is a matter of *conscience* (God's will) rather than *preference* (their own will). In any case, everyone promises to do whatever is necessary to support the decision.

Sometimes those who disagree may "stand aside", keeping their conscience clear, but declaring their willingness for the matter to go forward, trusting in the corporate judgment of the meeting, and for God to make his will clearly known in the matter if a decision has gone against it.

It is important for the meeting to make unity their goal, not a decision or a "win." Commitment to the discernment of God's will may require sacrificing a schedule or a plan that could have gone forward quickly if all had agreed. But sometimes a minority, or even one person, knows better than others what God's will is, and for that reason it is sometimes better to put off the decision until "all hearts are clear."

In discerning God's will, Friends must not become weary and seek to rush the process, and they must not engage in political action, seeking to influence the outcome. If the meeting is conducted in an atmosphere of worship, it may be characterized at times by silence or pauses for prayer while Friends seek to know what is right, and to distinguish preference from conscience. Those who speak aloud must be careful that their words are directed by the Holy Spirit. If Friends are faithful to the goal of obeying God, there will be times when new, creative alternatives come forth out of the meeting that will bring the desired unity. Hugh Barbour, Friends historian, has summed it up well in an address given on the tenth anniversary of the Earlham School of Religion:

Assuming that most of a meeting knows its mind, how does it deal with a member or small group who still feel in conscience that they cannot agree with the rest? But if we as a group expect the Spirit to guide us into what is true for the group's action, we must go deeper. If some say yes and some say no, the true answer may be neither yes nor no, nor even a compromise, but a new solution that combines what is true on both sides... Often then, a tough problem in a Quaker business meeting can be best met by asking, not 'what is right, abstractly?', but by seeing where we are as a group, and to what God now seems to call us.¹

¹ Barbour, Hugh. *The Three M's of Quakerism: Meeting • Message • Mission*. (Tenth Anniversary Lectures) Richmond, Indiana: Earlham School of Religion, Institute of Quaker Studies, 1971, p. 18.

Questions for Lesson 5

1. How can the concept of "business as worship" be helpful for Friends?
2. Why do Friends refuse to vote on issues? Do you think it would be all right to take a show of hands, even informally?
3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the Friends insistence on unity in decision-making?
4. In what circumstances should Friends "stand aside," making way for a decision with which they do not agree? When should they "stand firm" and not give way?
5. What is a "weighty Friend?"
6. How should the clerk proceed on a matter of great disagreement? Should she give preference to her own opinion, to the majority of Friends, or postpone the decision until unity can be achieved?

Lesson 5 Outline: The Presence of Christ in Meeting for Business

I. The Assumptions

- A. God will guide the meeting on specific matters
- B. God is present at the meeting as the Holy Spirit, and each person can communicate with Him
- C. The task of the meeting is to find God's will and obey it

II. Implications

- A. No majority or minority - rather, a group striving to arrive at unity
- B. The unity is to be found in the Light of Christ, through the leading of the Holy Spirit

III. The importance of unity

- A. Ephesians 4:1-6 (our calling as a church)
- B. Philippians 2:1-4 (our calling as disciples)

IV. Some terminology

- A. Monthly meeting
- B. Clerk - task is to bring the group to unity in decision-making
- C. Sense of the meeting

V. The meeting

- A. held in a context of worship (center down, open the mind to God's message)
- B. the task of the clerk is to discern what the members believe to be the sense of the meeting - that is, the leading of the Holy Spirit

VI. The goal

- A. Unanimity (everyone agrees with whole heart) is not required
- B. Consensus - recognizing majority, minority agrees to support it even though they may prefer otherwise. Essentially political, secular method that is effective in business.
- C. Unity - all submit to authority of God. Disagreements are settled in one of several ways:
 - 1. Continued waiting on the Lord in worship, with attempts to discern between "preference" and "conscience."
 - 2. Those who disagree may "stand aside", keeping their conscience clear, but declaring their willingness for the matter to go forward, trusting in the corporate judgement of the meeting
 - 3. Sometimes minorities are right, and for that reason it is sometimes better to put off the decision until a sense of the meeting can be discerned.
 - 4. A new idea: "Assuming that most of a meeting knows its mind, how does it deal with a member or small group who still feel in conscience that they cannot agree with the rest? But if we as a group expect the Spirit to guide us into what is true for the group's action, we must go deeper. If some say yes and some say no, the true answer may be neither yes nor no, nor even a compromise, but a new solution that combines what is true on both sides... Often then, a tough problem in a Quaker business meeting can be best met by asking, not 'what is right, abstractly?', but by seeing where we are as a group, and to what God now seems to call us." - MMM, Barbour, p. 18

VII. Important Considerations

- A. Do not use political pressure or other political techniques to get your way
- B. Each person must make unity the goal, not getting their way
- C. Do not become impatient. The process is as important as the result.
- D. Be careful that you are directed by the Holy Spirit when you speak.

Questions for Lesson 5

1. How can the concept of "business as worship" be helpful for Friends?

It helps to focus the attenders on the idea that Christ is really present, and that His will must be followed. It gives opportunity for "unprogrammed" worship, a time when the issues at hand can be considered in an atmosphere where authority is distinctly given to God's will, not the majority's will.

2. Why do Friends refuse to vote on issues? Do you think it would be all right to take a show of hands, even informally?

A vote emphasizes the division in the group; Friends seek unity instead. The goal is not to find out the majority's choice, because that would imply that the majority is right. But sometimes the majority is not right - the group must instead seek to know God's will. A show of hands may be helpful to determine the extent of feelings on an issue, but usually too much weight is given to the results of even an informal vote.

3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the Friends insistence on unity in decision-making?

Strengths: when a decision is reached, there is no bitter minority who will not support it. The authority in decision-making is given to God, not to a hierarchy or a majority group. **Weaknesses:** sometimes it can take a long time to come to a decision. The process is prone to error; in practice it can be difficult to distinguish preference from conscience (especially in somebody else's mind). It is difficult to know what to do with strong division or people who will not consider another point of view. Of course, other forms of group decision-making are sometimes less efficient than the Friends way.

4. In what circumstances should Friends "stand aside," making way for a decision with which they do not agree? When should they "stand firm" and not give way?

If the issue is not urgent or critical, some Friends may wish to make their point, then agree to support a decision that goes the other way. By so doing they demonstrate their commitment to unity, and to wait for God to make His will clear through the results of the decision. But if the issue is very important, and they feel a clear leading from God, Friends must not give way, even to a majority. God may be working through a minority, and the majority may be wrong.

5. What is a "weighty Friend?"

A person who has been a Quaker for many years, and has demonstrated a good understanding of God's will and the difference between preference and conscience is sometimes called a *weighty Friend*, because the opinions expressed by such a one are given much weight by the clerk and the rest of the meeting. A weighty Friend is not necessarily one who always gets her way, but she may frequently show the way between two dissenting groups of Friends.

6. How should the clerk proceed on a matter of great disagreement? Should she give preference to her own opinion, to the majority of Friends, or postpone the decision until unity can be achieved?

No absolute answer can be given to this question - it depends on the situation. But the clerk must strive to put her opinions aside in any case, and devote attention to discerning God's will. Because of the seeming urgency of the occasion, Friends are often reluctant to postpone a decision, and a strong majority is hard to ignore. But a few weeks' delay may bring unity where there was none before. If some facts or implications of a decision are not clear, it may sometimes be a good idea for the clerk to share her thoughts with the group, if it can be done with caution and without obviously favoring one way of thinking over another. The clerk's role is to discern the sense of the meeting, not to influence it.

Exercise for Lesson 5: Finding Unity Among Friends

You're the clerk of Middletown Monthly Meeting, a small (150 members) but growing congregation of Friends located in a similarly small but growing community. As you lead the meeting through this month's agenda, a proposal comes from the Trustees regarding the purchase of the vacant lot immediately to the north of the land on which the meetinghouse now sits.

The congregation currently has adequate land for the size of the building currently in use, including parking. There is, however, no room for a second building or for any significant addition to the existing building. The Trustees, looking ahead to growth, have proposed that the property to the north of the church be purchased for \$40,000. The purchase amount could be borrowed and repaid over a period of five years at a reasonable rate of interest. The payments would be about \$900 per month.

Various members of the meeting now rise to speak.

- Trustee Tom:** We recommend the purchase of this property. Our neighbors have been kind enough to offer us the first chance to buy it. If we don't buy it now, they'll put it on the market and we might not have another chance for many years. If we expect to continue the growth we've seen recently, we're going to need more space.
- Finance Fred:** We have not budgeted for such a purchase, of course, but the Finance Committee has examined the Trustees' proposal and we feel that we might be able to go ahead with the purchase. God has blessed our meeting, and giving has been up so far this year. Of course, if we take on this obligation, we will have to be extremely careful with expenditures for a while. We certainly would not be able to take on any other major projects.
- Elder Elaine:** The elders have been talking about our need for a youth minister, now that we have more young families in the church. We are not ready to bring you a proposal at this time, but we were hoping to complete it in time for next month's meeting. I'm afraid that if we make this decision today it will hurt our ministry to families.
- Athlete Alan:** Hi! I'm Alan, a new member here. I hope it's okay for me to speak? Thank you. We haven't lived in Middletown for very long, but we've already noticed that there just aren't very many sports facilities in town. Our kids don't really have many places to play, especially in the winter when the weather's bad. I think that if we built a gymnasium, it would be a great place for our kids to play, and kids from the town too. What better way to reach out to our community than to invite them to come play with us? I think we should buy this property and put a gym on it.
- Concerned Carla:** All of these sound like good ideas, but I'm afraid we are being a little selfish. We have people right in our own town who don't have enough money to live on. If we have 900 extra dollars a month, I say that we shouldn't be selfish and spend all of it on ourselves. We could minister to the poor. I believe God would have us do this.
- Parent Peter:** It seems to me that if we invest our money in ministry to youth, we'll continue to grow, and then maybe we'll have more money for these other projects. I have several friends who are looking for a church with a good youth minister. I would like to recommend ours. Besides, my daughter's going to be in junior high school next year and I have to think about her. I think a gymnasium is a great idea, but if we don't have anybody on staff to supervise the kids who play there we won't be able to open it.
- Trustee Tom:** We haven't got any room in our building for a youth group to meet. I don't see how

you can expand the ministry of the meeting without having a place to expand into.

Elder Elaine: It seems to me that each of us has a little different idea of how we'd like to spend our money. Before we get into an argument about it, let me remind you all that we are Friends. Our goal here is not to get our own way; our goal is to find out what God's will is in this matter and to obey Him. I think each of us should sit quietly before God for a time, and consider how He would have us decide.

Clerk (You): I think Elaine has spoken wisely here. Let's take a few moments, Friends, and sit in the presence of God, and ask Him to guide us by His Holy Spirit. For those of you who are new: we try to distinguish between preference and conscience. Preference is what **you** would prefer; conscience is what **God** would prefer. Try to sort those out in your mind.

The meeting sits in silence. You pray, asking God to reveal His will. You know that you must declare the sense of the meeting, and that decision will be binding. What will you look for as a sign of His will? What are the options available? How will you decide what to do? How will you deal with those who disagree?

Remember, unanimity is not required to make the decision. The clerk may discern God's leading even though some people disagree. These people may even approve the clerk's discernment, knowing themselves to be in disagreement but willing to hold this disagreement in suspension for a time, and support the decision for the sake of unity.

Lesson 6 - A Life of Integrity

All Christians know that God wants us to be honest. One of the first things we're taught is to tell the truth, and that lying is wrong. But few of us would claim that we know how to be honest in all our ways. Living a life of integrity is not easy. Friends have had a reputation for integrity from the very beginning. In this lesson we'll explore why they thought that was so important, and look at some of the ways they showed their honesty through their testimonies and queries. Finally, we'll explore what integrity might mean in our own lives.

The Quakers based their convictions about honesty on the Bible, which has a lot to say on this topic. The Bible seems to say not only that it's good to be honest, but that honesty is a quality that should stand out in us.

II Cor 4:2 - "We have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."

Psalms 24:3-5 - "Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false. He will receive blessing from the Lord and vindication from God his Savior."

I Peter 2:12 - "Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us."

Luke 16:10-13 - "Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly riches, who will trust you with true riches? And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own? No servant can serve two masters. Either he

will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money."

This last scripture (a quote from Jesus) distinguishes honest people from dishonest people. Those who show themselves to be trustworthy with the things of this world prove that their commitment is to God, not money. Those who are dishonest show that they value something else more highly than God. Dishonesty reveals a lack of faith in the promise of Christ that the truth shall set you free.

Honesty in Business Practices

Quakers took all this very seriously, and took steps to ensure honesty in all walks of life. This had a powerful effect on their practice of business in the community. Quakers set new standards for integrity in business on both sides of the Atlantic. The popular saying was "A Quaker's word is as good as his bond." They kept their promises, and did not cheat people.

Quakers were responsible for the establishment of the single price system in retail sales. They would set a price for goods that did not exceed their value, and they would charge the same price to everyone - no bartering, and no price gouging. Over time, they gained a reputation for honesty and reliability - so much so, that people began to have Friends keep their money for them in areas where there were no banks. Eventually, Quakers founded banks, such as Barclay's and Lloyd's.

Swearing Oaths

Another statement of honesty was the Friends testimony against swearing oaths. Friends took literally the words of Jesus in Matthew 5:34-37:

"But I say to you, do not swear at all,...either by heaven,...or by the earth,...or by Jerusalem... And do not swear by your head...Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; any-

thing more than this comes from evil."

What is the evil that Jesus speaks of? Friends interpreted it to be a double standard, something that is condemned by both Jesus (Luke 16:10-13) and James (James 1:7-8). To swear an oath is to admit to a double standard of truth, and Friends will admit to only one: complete honesty, all the time.

"Friends proposed to live a daily life of truth, integrity and sincerity, and they could not consent to imply that they followed one standard on some rare occasions and another standard on the common level of life."¹

So Quakers refused to take oaths in court, and many were given opportunity to show the strength of their convictions in jail, even to the point of martyrdom. Later, the law was changed to allow Quakers to "affirm" that they were, as always, telling the truth.

Maintaining a Life of Integrity

The Quakers wanted to be sure that they were honest with themselves, too. They developed a system of self-examination called "Queries" - a series of questions which were used to help Friends assess the quality of their testimonies. These questions, which were written by regional bodies of Friends (known as Yearly Meetings) were at one time intended as written examinations. The monthly meetings were required to write answers to the questions every year and submit them to the yearly meeting.

The Queries were accompanied by extensive instructions. They were to be read aloud in the Meeting, with a "suitable" pause between each question. In the silence, each Friend was directed to allow the Spirit to search his heart, submitting his life to the Light for examination. In this way any inconsistency or dishonesty would be revealed, and repentance could then take place.

¹ Jones, Rufus M. *The Later Periods of Quakerism*, Vol I. London: MacMillan and Co., 1921, p. 168

One Query regarding business practices read as follows:

"Are Friends careful to live within the bounds of their circumstances, and to keep to moderation in their trade or business? Are they punctual to their promises, and just in the payment of their debts?"²

Thus Quakers were careful to maintain their reputation of honesty in business as well as in other matters of life. If a Friend was found to be dishonest or guilty of mismanagement, he was in danger of being disowned by the meeting. No distinction was made between "spiritual" life and any other part of life; all of it was God's. George Fox wrote:

"So everyone strive to be rich in the life, and in the kingdom and things of the world, and let him that buys or sells, or possesses, or uses this world, be as if he did not."

Early Quakers strongly emphasized the importance of *authenticity*, evidenced by the integration of faith and life. The observation that others lacked this quality was the thing that set George Fox off on his quest for truth as a young man. He noted that some people who called themselves Christians did not live the quality of life that Christ calls for. Fox called these people "professors" - those who profess the faith, but do not live it.

Over the years, the use of queries changed. Meetings were no longer required to write written answers to the questions, and the Queries were only read aloud, to help members examine their personal lives. New queries were written as various Friends groups emphasized new values. Gradually the regular use of queries declined, and now in some churches it is unusual to hear them.

² Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, *Advices and Queries*, 1834

An Up-to-date Testimony of Integrity

The biblical mandate of honesty lies no less heavily on contemporary Quakers than it did on early Friends. We too must find ways to live lives of integrity, not only because God requires us to, but as a testimony to God's truth.

Each of us should start with a careful examination of all that we say. Is it the truth in every case? It is so easy to justify "shades" of truth in today's society. Do we report all our income on our tax returns? Do we always give an honest account of ourselves, our accomplishments, and our possessions? Do we always obey the traffic laws? There are many such questions we could ask.

Integrity means more than simply telling the truth. Early Friends had reputations for setting fair policies, for treating everyone the same, for refusing to take advantage of others, and for being reliable. None of these practices has gone out of style.

Questions for Lesson 6

1. Why is it so important for honesty to be a visible quality of our lives?
2. The lesson says, "If we are dishonest, it is because we value something else more highly than God." Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?
3. Why was the single price system such a powerful expression of the testimony of honesty? Can you think of an equivalent statement in today's consumer-oriented marketplace?
4. Do you agree that the swearing of oaths implies a double standard? Would refusal to swear oaths be an effective testimony for Quakers today? Why or why not?
5. Look through the Queries from Philadelphia Yearly Meeting in 1834. Which of them would be useful today? In the same way, evaluate the Queries in your Yearly Meeting's Faith & Practice booklet.
6. What were the strengths and weaknesses of the Queries, as originally intended? Should Friends use Queries, or something similar in purpose, to assess the integrity of their lives today?
7. Write one or two Queries that would be useful in examining your own life, to ensure your integrity as a Christian.

Advices and Queries, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 1834¹

QUERIES

It is agreed, that the eight queries belong to meetings for Discipline, be read, deliberately considered, and answered in each Preparative and Monthly Meeting once a year; in order to convey an explicit account in writing to the Quarterly Meeting next preceding the Yearly Meeting, that so this meeting may be clearly informed of the state of all our meetings.

It is further agreed, that at the time when the eight queries are read in the Preparative and Monthly Meetings, the advices and cautions subjoined shall be also distinctly read and solidly ponder; as a means of putting the members present upon considering, whether there be any occasion for an extension of care in those respects: and, if there is, of stirring them up to a faithful discharge of the duty as individuals, one to another.

First Query. Are all our religious meetings for Worship and Discipline duly attended in the hour observed; are Friends clear of sleeping, and of all other unbecoming behavior therein?

Second Query. Are love and unity maintained among you? Are tale-bearing and detraction discouraged? And where any differences arise, are endeavors used to speedily end them?

Third Query. Are Friends careful to bring up those under their direction, in plainness of speech, behavior and apparel; in frequently reading the Holy Scriptures; and to restrain them from reading pernicious books, and from the corrupt conversation of the world? And are they good examples in these respects themselves?

Fourth Query. Are Friends careful to discourage the unnecessary distillation and use of spiritous liquors, and the frequenting of taverns; to avoid places of diversion and to keep in true moderation and temperance on the account of marriages, burials, and all other occasions?

Fifth Query. Are poor Friends necessities duly inspected, and they relieved or assisted in such business as they are capable of? Do their children freely partake of learning to fit them for business; and are they and other Friends' children places among Friends?

Sixth Query. Do you maintain a faithful testimony against oaths; an hireling ministry; bearing arms, training, and other military services; being concerned in any

¹ Rules of Discipline of the Yearly Meeting of Friends, For Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, and the Eastern Parts of Maryland. Stereotype Edition. Philadelphia: Friends Book Store, 1880, pages 111-117.

fraudulent or clandestine trade; buying or vending goods so imported, or prize goods; and against encouraging lotteries of any kind?

Seventh Query. Are Friends careful to live within the bounds of their circumstances, and to keep to moderation in their trade or business? Are they punctual to their promises, and just in the payment of their debts; and are such as give reasonable grounds for fear on these accounts, timely labored with for their preservation and recovery?

Eighth Query. Do you take due care regularly to deal with all offenders in the spirit of meekness, without partiality or unnecessary delay, in order for their help; and where such labor is ineffectual, to place judgment upon them, in the authority of Truth?

Lesson 6: Honesty and Integrity

I. Biblical references

- A. He distinguished himself from the other religious people as being a person who spoke the truth (John 7:18,8:44-47; 18:37). Others recognized this fact as well (Mt. 22:16)
- B. Eph 4:15 - Speak the truth in love
- C. II Cor 4:2 - "We have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."
- D. Proverbs 12:22 - "The Lord detests lying lips, but he delights in men who are truthful."
- E. Psalm 24:3-5 - "Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false. He will receive blessing from the Lord and vindication from God his Savior."
- F. I Peter 2:12 - "Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us."
- G. Our honesty is an indicator of our commitment to God. If we are dishonest, it is because we value something else higher than God. Luke 16:10-13 "Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly riches, who will trust you with true riches? And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own? No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money."

II. historic practice

A. honesty in all expression and business

- 1. lack of honesty reveals lack of faith in the promise of Christ that the truth shall set you free
- 2. "A Quaker's word is as good as his bond" - Quakers set standards for business integrity. They kept their promises. As a result many were very successful in business.
- 3. single price system: the price set should not exceed the value
- 4. stick to the stated price: no bargaining.
- 5. people had Quakers keep their money for them when there were no banks. Barclay's and Lloyd's banks were founded by Quakers.

B. refusal to swear oaths in court

- 1. the Bible says to do this (Mt. 5:33-37)
- 2. to swear an oath is to admit to a double standard of truth. Friends tell the truth all the time. "Friends proposed to live a daily life of truth, integrity and sincerity, and they could not consent to imply that they followed one standard on some rare occasions and another standard on the common level of life." - Jones, Later Periods of Quakerism, Vol. I, p. 168
- 3. Friends refused to take the oath in court, and many were imprisoned or fined as a result.

C. honesty in self-assessment

- 1. Queries - required written answers at first, as part of standard report. Used to examine individuals and meetings.
- 2. self-examination: every Friend was supposed to submit his life to the Light for examination, so that any inconsistency or dishonesty would be revealed
- 3. query: "Are Friends careful to live within the bounds of their circumstances, and to avoid launching into trade or business beyond their ability to manage?"
- 4. Fox: "So everyone strive to be rich in the life, and in the kingdom and things of the world, and let him that buys or sells, or possesses, or uses this world, be as if he did not."
- 5. Queries became rhetorical over time, and some Friends meetings do not pay much attention to them.

Lesson 6: Honesty and Integrity

D. reputation for honesty

1. dishonest Friends or Friends guilty of mismanagement were disowned by the meeting
2. Quakers were preferred as vendors, and prospered

Questions for Lesson 6

1. Why is it so important for honesty to be a visible quality of our lives?

Our lives are a testimony for God. When people see hypocrisy (which is really a form of lying) in Christians, their opinion of God is distorted and they don't want to trust him. In order to do effective work for the Kingdom of God, we must be trustworthy representatives.

2. The lesson says, "If we are dishonest, it is because we value something else more highly than God." Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?

Dishonesty and hypocrisy reveal the presence of more than one value system. If a person has two sets of priorities at some times and another set at other times, he or she is what the Bible calls "double-minded." See James 1:5-9 and Luke 16:10-13. In the latter passage Jesus clearly indicates that we must make a choice between God and money - we cannot have both as our master.

3. Why was the single price system such a powerful expression of the testimony of honesty? Can you think of an equivalent statement in today's consumer-oriented marketplace?

The single price system essentially says, "I am basing the price on the value of the goods, not on the maximum amount that I think I can get from you." It means that people can even send their children to make purchases, knowing that they will be treated fairly. Today, in the American consumer culture, something that would stand out in a similar way would be truth in advertising, or setting prices according to cost, not market value, or making sure of the highest quality in all merchandise, or treating all customers equally well.

4. Do you agree that the swearing of oaths implies a double standard? Would refusal to swear oaths be an effective testimony for Quakers today? Why or why not?

By using the language "affirm" in court, Friends can still call attention to themselves and their testimony in a way that is positive.

5. Look through the Queries from Philadelphia Yearly Meeting in 1834. Which of them would be useful today? In the same way, evaluate the Queries in your Yearly Meeting's Faith & Practice booklet.

Queries can be evaluated for both individual and corporate application. In considering their usefulness, it's a good idea to think about how they might be used. How much accountability can we expect from one another? Does the size of the group make a difference? The use of queries in weekly small group settings might be helpful to some.

6. What were the strengths and weaknesses of the Queries, as originally intended? Should Friends use Queries, or something similar in purpose, to assess the integrity of their lives today?

Queries are strong reminders of the various Testimonies and the importance of a well-balanced Christian life. They help to prevent us from giving too much attention to some things and not enough to others. Queries can be controversial, when the assumed answer is not universally agreed upon by all members of the group.

7. Write one or two Queries that would be useful in examining your own life, to ensure your integrity as a Christian.

We have found it interesting to compile the queries that people write and distribute copies to all. It's a good exercise in class, to help people think about holding each other accountable.

Lesson 7 - Equality in Christ

Much of the power of the Testimonies of early Friends came from their attempts to change culture to meet their convictions. When culture was slow to change, Friends changed anyway - without fear of any consequences. Some of the most dramatic cultural shifts originated from a very simple principle: that all people have equal worth.

Like the other Testimonies, the Quaker Testimony of Equality is based on biblical truth.

"For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. For, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'" Rom. 10:12-13

See also I Tim. 2:3-6 and Acts 10:34-35. The latter reference points to the end of the story of Peter and Cornelius, a fascinating episode in which God teaches the principle of equality to the Apostle Peter in a highly dramatic way. In these verses, as well as in several others, God's viewpoint is clearly explained. God does not show partiality to people based on race or other characteristics.

Those characteristics are relatively unimportant to God. What is most important to him is the relationship that he has with us.

"There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus." Gal. 3:28

Paul says much the same thing in Col. 3:11-12. The influence of the Inner Light of Christ, ever increasing within those of us who are committed to him, obliterates all other distinctions from God's point of view.

Since all humans have equal value

before God, God treats them all the same: as his beloved. And he wants us to follow his example. We are to treat all people as children of God, even those whose behavior demonstrates that they are not committed to him.

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous." Mt. 5:43-45

Similarly, the second chapter of the Epistle of James contains a stern warning against showing favoritism:

"If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, 'Love your neighbor as yourself,' you are doing right. But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers." James 2:8-9

God wants us to think of all people as equal, and treat them all equally well, without regard to race, sex, or station in life.

"Render service with enthusiasm, as to the Lord and not to men and women, knowing that whatever good we do, we will receive the same again from the Lord, whether we are slaves or free. And, masters, do the same to them. Stop threatening them, for you know that both of you have the same Master in heaven, and with him there is no partiality." Eph. 6:7-9

This passage deals with the relationships between masters and slaves, two types of people assumed to be unequal in that culture. Yet Paul's instructions are to treat each other as equals, since that's how God sees it.

Jesus' encounter with the woman at the well in Samaria (John 4:5-42) was

shocking to his disciples, since Jesus treated her as an equal, even though as a woman and a Samaritan she had two strikes against her in that culture.

Friends have determined from the beginning that these spiritual truths were not simply theoretical goals to be realized in some future heaven. The Truth must not only be proclaimed; it must be lived. The effects of these truths were manifested in several ways.

Hat Honor

In 17th-century England it was customary for men to doff their hats as a way of honoring another person. Their culture was a class hierarchy, and showing hat honor was a way of acknowledging to a member of the higher class that he was superior. But Friends knew the Truth: all are equal in the sight of God, and God's Light is given to every person. As Testimony to the Truth, Friends refused to give hat honor. Only God, they reasoned, should be honored as superior, so only in worship would Friends men remove their hats.

By refusing to give hat honor, Friends drew attention to themselves, thereby creating opportunities to witness to the Truth. It was not that they had low respect for other people; indeed, all people are worthy of high honor, for all are created in God's image. Since God is no respecter of persons, we should not be either.

Plain speech

What Friends have called "plain speech" was a Testimony of Equality and also of the Focused Life (see Lesson 8). As a Testimony of Equality, Friends avoided honorific forms of address. They refused to use titles such as "Your Honor" or "Reverend," believing that such

honorifics appealed to the pride in other people. This would get them into a lot of trouble, just as their refusal to give hat honor did, but it also provided opportunities to witness to the Truth.

The English language of the 17th century featured two forms of the pronoun for the second person, one formal and the other informal (a distinction preserved today in many languages, but not in contemporary English). "You" was the word to use in polite conversation. It showed respect, in a way similar to hat honor. "Thee" was the word used to address an intimate friend, a member of the family, any child, or a person whom one did not wish to honor.

Friends began to use "thee" whenever they talked to anyone. The principle was the same as with hat honor - we should not acknowledge anyone but God as our superior.

The tradition of plain speech continues to this day among some Friends. Few use "thee" any more (except within the family or local meeting, or as a term of honor used to address God in prayer), but most Friends do not call their pastor "Reverend."

Testimony Against Slavery

With convictions and Testimonies such as those that have been described, it should come as no surprise that Friends came to hold a strong Testimony against slavery, and actively worked to end the practice long before the Civil War. The Testimony against slavery developed slowly, but once it was adopted it became nearly universal.

Friends first encouraged slaveholders to treat slaves well and share the Gospel with them. Later, trading of slaves was discouraged, as was passing them on to

descendants after death. Finally, the practice of even keeping slaves was recognized as wrong.

"Fox indeed, when he visited Barbados in 1671, had advised Friends to deal mildly and gently with their negroes and to make them free after thirty years' servitude, and urged the holding of family meetings with them, while in 1688 the German Friends who had migrated to Pennsylvania addressed the Yearly Meeting there against the buying and keeping of slaves."¹

John Woolman worked for most of his life against the keeping of slaves. He was one of the most influential of Friends in the development of the Testimony against slavery. Here is his description of slaves:

"These are the people by whose labor the other inhabitants are in a great measure supported, and many of them in the luxuries of life. These are the people who have made no agreement to serve us, and who have not forfeited their liberty that we know of. These are the souls for whom Christ died, and for our conduct towards them we must answer before Him who is no respecter of persons."²

By the patient, consistent ministry of Woolman and other Friends, the Quaker Testimony against slavery was developed.

Equality in Ministry

A natural extension of the conviction that all people are equal in God's sight is the belief that God has called all of us to minister. In 17th-century England, with its required tithes for the state-supported church, such a concept was truly radical. As a Testimony against the hierarchical clergy and against the corruption that was evident in the church, Friends

refused to pay the tithes, and suffered the consequences of their disobedience.

On the positive side, Friends recognized that ministry is not restricted to those with special training; anyone can minister. People do not become qualified for ministry because of what they have learned or what they have done; they become qualified only as a result of what God has done in them, and by his call to ministry.

Traditionally, the call to ministry has been seen as a one-time event that happens to only a few special people called forth on the path to a lifetime of service. But Friends taught that many people are called to ministry. They considered ministry an everyday thing. A person might be led to perform a certain ministry one day, but not the next. Woolman's *Journal* records his struggle with listening to the immediate leading of the Spirit. During each meeting he asked himself whether God leading him to speak that day or not.

Our responsibility, according to Friends, is to always stay tuned to the leading of the Holy Spirit, and obedient to his call. Our leading to ministry arises out of our relationship to God.

"But unless you know God, immediately, every day communing with Him, rejoicing in Him, exalting in Him, opening your life in Joyful obedience toward Him and feeling Him speaking to you and guiding you into ever fuller loving obedience to Him, you aren't fit to be a minister."³

Their commitment to the principle of equality made it easy for Friends to accept the fact that God calls women as well as men to ministry. It was easy to see how God blessed the work of Friends women in a wide variety of ministries,

³ Kelly, Thomas. *The Eternal Promise*. New York: Harper & Row, 1966, p. 54.

¹ Braithwaite, William C. *The Second Period of Quakerism*. London: MacMillan and Co., 1919.

² Woolman, John. *The Journal of John Woolman*. Philadelphia: Friends Book Store, 1914, p. 109.

and this continues today. As Christ meets with us in worship we can see that he might choose anyone (women included) to bear the message. When we see women who have been gifted and feel called to ministry we must welcome their work among us, since it is God who has sent them.

Since the beginning Friends have had women ministers, and women have been involved in the governance of the organization. George Fox established "women's meetings" for business in 1671. The women were kept separate from the men's meetings in order to prevent the men from dominating. They often dealt with different issues, and this worked to broaden the ministry of Friends.

In Friends meeting houses, where it was customary for women and children to sit on one side and men on the other for worship, a partition would be put down the center aisle so that two separate business meetings could be conducted simultaneously. Messengers would be sent back and forth between the two meetings to aid communications.

There are many books filled with the stories of the work of women ministers among Friends. Margaret Fell, Elizabeth Fry, and Hannah Whitall Smith are three of the best-known women ministers. Perhaps you could name others, even from within your meeting.

The Testimony of Equality Today

As with other Testimonies, some expressions of the Testimony of Equality have decayed into mere traditions, like the continued use of "thee" which is practiced by some Friends. The Testimonies regarding Hat Honor and Plain Speech would convey the wrong

message in our culture. We all agree that slavery is wrong, so a Testimony against it is hardly earth-shaking. How can Friends best bear witness today to the truth of equality?

As we look around our world we still see people mistreating others, looking on them as inferiors, maintaining class distinctions. We still see sweatshops and unjust treatment of immigrants. We still see people giving exaggerated honor to those from whom they wish to receive special favors, and those who expect special treatment by virtue of their accomplishments, position, or wealth. As long as that sort of injustice remains, Friends have a Testimony of Equality to offer.

We may no longer have slaves, but we have employers and employees. We may no longer have rigid class structures, but we have the poor, the disadvantaged, the handicapped - these people too are created in God's image, and he loves them without limit. The Testimony of Equality is needed today as much as it ever was, and Friends who are sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit will discover that God can speak this Truth through their lives and their words.

Lesson 7 Questions

1. The lesson states that since God loves us all equally and treats us all equally, we should do the same. Do you agree or disagree?
2. In our culture, no one shows hat honor. Do we have a custom that is parallel, a way that we show honor (if only by convention) to individuals? Is it right for Friends to do this?
3. If you grew up in the church, how were you taught to address your pastor? What influence did this teaching have on the way you thought of him or her?
4. What forms of honorific address are in common use today? Do you think it is right for Friends to use such titles in addressing other people? Do you address people differently according to their station in life?
5. The United States of America is based today on the principle that all people are created equal. Do you think Friends need to develop a Testimony in our culture to bear witness to the Truth of Equality?
6. Originally, Friends believed that anyone who is called could and should minister, and that ministry was done in response to an immediate leading, not as a lifetime vocation. Now many Friends ministers are seminary-trained and committed to ministry as a professional career. Is it still true that anyone can be a minister? If it is true, what sort of Testimony should Friends have to that Truth?
7. Some denominations do not allow women to become pastors or hold certain leadership positions in the church. How can Friends best testify to the truth that God does not show partiality in calling people to ministry?

Lesson 7: Equality

I. Bible Study

A. God does not make distinctions between people

1. Rom. 10:12-13 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. For, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."
2. 1Tim. 2:3-6 This is right and is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God; there is also one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human, who gave himself a ransom for all-- this was attested at the right time.
3. Acts 10:34-35 Then Peter began to speak to them: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him."

B. Our relationship to Him is more significant than the differences between us.

1. Col. 3:11-12 In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all! As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.
2. Gal. 3:28 There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

C. God wants us, His children, to take on His character (Christlikeness). God gives us the model for dealing with people: treat them all the same, as beloved of God. The way we treat people should not depend primarily on what they do or who they are.

1. Mt. 5:38-47 "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you. "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?"

2. James 2 - warning against favoritism

D. God wants us to think of all people as equal

1. parable of the good Samaritan (Lk 10:30-37) is statement against racism
2. Eph. 6:7-9 Render service with enthusiasm, as to the Lord and not to men and women, knowing that whatever good we do, we will receive the same again from the Lord, whether we are slaves or free. And, masters, do the same to them. Stop threatening them, for you know that both of you have the same Master in heaven, and with him there is no partiality.

II. Equality and Relationships

A. historic practice - refusal to use worldly forms of address or to recognize social distinctions

1. Friends did not give "hat honor" - they would not bow to their superiors
 - a) This draws attention to the fact that God is no respecter of persons
 - b) This was not because others were lower; it is because all are higher. We are all precious in the sight of God because we are all created in the image of God.
 - c) If the Light of Christ is within each person - then everyone is equally important
 - d) Only God should be worshipped and honored as superior. Only in worship would Friends remove their hats.
2. Use of plain speech

Lesson 7: Equality

- a) They would not use formal titles, like "Your Honor" or "Reverend"
- b) use of "thee" and "thou" as terms of familiarity instead of the more honoring "you"
- c) use of honorific forms of address is a mark of pride

B. equality of humanity

1. Friends first encouraged slaveholders to treat slaves well and share the Gospel with them
 - a) "Fox indeed, when he visited Barbados in 1671, had advised Friends to deal mildly and gently with their negroes and to make them free after thirty years' servitude, and urged the holding of family meetings with them, while in 1688 the German Friends who had migrated to Pennsylvania addressed the Yearly Meeting there against the buying and keeping of slaves."
2. Eventually the testimony against keeping slaves developed
 - a) John Woolman
 - (1) "These are the people by whose labor the other inhabitants are in a great measure supported, and many of them in the luxuries of life. These are the people who have made no agreement to serve us, and who have not forfeited their liberty that we know of. These are the souls for whom Christ died, and for our conduct towards them we must answer before Him who is no respecter of persons." Woolman, Journal, p. 109-110

C. equality of ministry

1. ministry is not restricted to those with special training; anyone can minister
 - a) Ministry occurs as a result of what God has done and is doing in you, not out of what you have done or learned with other people.
 - (1) "But unless you know God, immediately, every day communing with Him, rejoicing in Him, exalting in Him, opening your life in Joyful obedience toward Him and feeling Him speaking to you and guiding you into ever fuller loving obedience to Him, you aren't fit to be a minister." - Kelly, p. 54
2. ministry is not restricted to men - men and women are seen as equal in value and potential
 - a) Establishment of women's meetings by George Fox in 1671. The women had a strong voice in the decision making process of Friends. The meetings were established separately to prevent the men from dominating. They used shutters down the center of the room to separate the groups, and sent messengers back and forth.
 - b) Examples:

D. Possible modern expressions of this testimony

1. Use of inclusive language
2. Treating the poor as well as we treat the rich; treating people of all races alike
3. the poor, disadvantaged, handicapped deserve good treatment
4. Equality in employer-employee relationships, working conditions

Lesson 7 Questions

1. The lesson states that since God loves us all equally and treats us all equally, we should do the same. Do you agree or disagree?

Since our goal as Christians is to grow up in every way to become more like Christ (see Ephesians 4) it makes sense that we should take on his character. Also, the Bible is pretty clear in telling us to avoid favoritism.

2. In our culture, no one shows hat honor. Do we have a custom that is parallel, a way that we show honor (if only by convention) to individuals? Is it right for Friends to do this?

Honoring people is not wrong. What is wrong is favoritism - showing more honor to one type of person than to another. For example, churches and other Christian organizations are sometimes guilty of showing favoritism toward those who give more money than others. Jesus showed us a different way to think of givers (see Luke 21:1-4). The adoration and royal treatment given to movie stars, rock stars and other famous people is a blatant example of favoritism in our contemporary culture.

Perhaps a suitable (even better) alternative to refusing to honor anyone specially is to hold everyone in high esteem. Treat everyone as if they were valuable. From God's point of view, everyone is.

3. If you grew up in the church, how were you taught to address your pastor? What influence did this teaching have on the way you thought of him or her?

Some Friends were taught as children to address adult Friends (including the pastor) by their first names, as a testimony of equality. The adults and pastor might have been considered more approachable as a result. Titles tend to put a certain distance between people.

4. What forms of honorific address are in common use today? Do you think it is right for Friends to use such titles in addressing other people? Do you address people differently according to their station in life?

The usage varies with the setting (workplace, church, school) and the area of the country. In a university setting the use of titles is based on a person's earned degree, so by encouraging students to use his or her first name a Quaker professor may make an effective statement about equality. (It may have other, unwanted effects as well.) In a business setting where people normally use "Mr." or "sir" in speaking to management a Friend might address all people in that way, showing all people the same honor. People in service positions (custodial work, food service, clerical) often receive poor treatment - by treating them well, Friends can maintain an effective Testimony.

5. The United States of America is based today on the principle that all people are created equal. Do you think Friends need to develop a Testimony in our culture to bear witness to the Truth of Equality?

Our Testimony of Equality is needed wherever people are being treated as inferior. It is not hard to find situations like this. Try to identify a few, and brainstorm about ways that your class could demonstrate the Testimony in that situation.

6. Originally, Friends believed that anyone who is called could and should minister, and that ministry was done in response to an immediate leading, not as a lifetime vocation. Now many Friends ministers are seminary-trained and committed to ministry as a professional career. Is it still true that anyone can be a minister? If it is true, what sort of Testimony should Friends have to that Truth?

The Bible teaches that all Christians are given gifts of ministry by the Holy Spirit, for use in doing God's work and building up the body of Christ (I Cor. 12, Romans 12, Ephesians 4). A pastor in a Friends meeting should recognize this and work toward the development of ministry gifts in each person. Friends have traditionally made public recognition of leadership gifts, and there is nothing wrong with that as long as everyone understands that ministry is not restricted to the recognized leaders. A meeting in which all Friends were engaged in ministry according to their spiritual gifts would indeed be an effective testimony.

7. Some denominations do not allow women to become pastors or hold certain leadership positions in the church. How can Friends best testify to the truth that God does not show partiality in calling people to ministry?

The best way to testify to the Truth is to live it. Look for partiality and when it is found, get rid of it. It might be interesting to examine your local meeting. What leadership roles are occupied by women? Are women encouraged to get training and build up their leadership skills? Have certain positions traditionally been filled by men? If so, what would happen if women were given that opportunity?

Lesson 8 - The Focused Life

Quakers have been well-known for their testimony of "simplicity" - a trait that has had as its outward signs plain grey clothing and unusual habits of speech. Perhaps no other testimony has led to as much misunderstanding of Friends. Because of it, they have been confused with the Amish, and thought to be (like the Amish) a group that refuses to be part of the predominant culture.

The confusion results from a tendency to mistake the evidence of the testimony for the testimony itself. Simplicity is the visible effect of the focused life, but it is wrong to strive for expressions of simplicity as virtues independent of the testimony that produces them. The virtue lies in the testimony - the testimony of the Focused Life.

What is the Focused Life?

The foundation for this testimony comes from the Sermon on the Mount.

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also... No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth." - Matthew 6:19-21, 24

Jesus lays out the truth very simply. Either you are his, or you aren't. Friends took this very seriously, and attempted to remove everything from their lives that wasn't dedicated to God. The result was lives that were radically different from those of people who were not Friends. The focused life proclaims its allegiance loud and clear. Most people will

give top priority to their own basic needs: food, shelter, security. In the same Sermon, Jesus says otherwise:

"But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." - Matthew 6:30-33

Early Friends knew that a life with Christ as first priority would not necessarily be comfortable. Jesus' words to his would-be follower make that clear: "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." (Matthew 8:19) By saying this he was making clear the cost of discipleship: it means that Jesus must have **first** priority in your life, even over basic needs.

The priority of Jesus applies to what you already have, as well. Another would-be follower of Christ was told, "There is still one thing lacking. Sell all that you own and distribute the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." (Luke 18:22) Some would read into this that Jesus was making a virtue of giving away one's possessions, but that's not it. The virtue comes from putting Christ ahead of everything else. The Focused Life is an attitude of the heart, not a statement of accounts.

In seeking the Focused Life, Friends made their goal the attitude that Paul expressed in Philippians 4:11-13:

Not that I am referring to being in need; for I have learned to be content with whatever I have. I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

What this means is that a Friend's happiness does not depend on external circumstances! Like Paul, they could sing and worship God in prison cells. Like Stephen, they could endure torture and even martyrdom for their faith. Unlike the rich young ruler of Luke 18, they were able to change their life goals from providing for themselves to following Christ.

"Do not love the world or the things in the world. The love of the Father is not in those who love the world; for all that is in the world—the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, the pride in riches—comes not from the Father but from the world." (1 John 2:15-16)

The Focused Life, then, consists primarily in what your life is *focused* on - your goals and purposes in life. Friends aimed for a life focused on Christ, as Paul describes in Philippians 3:10-15:

I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do; forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us then who are mature be of the same mind; and if you think differently about anything, this too God will reveal to you.

Historic Friends Expressions of the Focused Life

18th-century Friend John Woolman knew what it was like to struggle with life's priorities. A successful businessman, he found that his work occupied more and more of his attention. He had to make a difficult decision.

"The increase of business became my burden; for though my natural inclination was toward merchandise, yet I believed truth required me to live more free from outward cumbers; and there was now a strife in my mind between the two. In this exercise my prayers were put up to the Lord, who graciously heard me, and gave me a heart resigned to his holy will. Then I lessened my outward business, and, as I had opportunity, told my customers of my intentions..."¹

"I saw that an humble man, with the blessing of the Lord, might live on a little, and that where the heart was set on greatness, success in business did not satisfy the craving; but that commonly with an increase of wealth the desire of wealth increased. There was a care on my mind so to pass my time that nothing might hinder me from the most steady attention to the voice of the Shepherd."²

20th-century Quaker author Thomas Kelly, in describing what we have referred to as the focused life, called it "Life from the Center."

"I think it is clear that I am talking about a revolutionary way of living. Religion isn't something to be added to our other duties, and thus make our lives yet more complex. The life with God is the center of life, and all else is remodelled and integrated by it."³

"Life from the Center is a life of unhurried peace and power. It is simple. It is serene. It is amazing. It is triumphant. It is radiant. It takes no time, but it occupies all our time.

¹ Woolman, John. *The Journal of John Woolman*. Philadelphia: Friends Book Store, 1914, p.91.

² *Ibid.*, p. 68.

³ Kelly, Thomas R. *A Testament of Devotion*. New York: Harper, 1941, p. 97.

And it makes our life programs new and overcoming. We need not get frantic. He is at the helm."⁴

The Focused Life found expression in many different ways among Friends. One of the most famous was the custom of *plain dress*. Quakers thought that attention should be paid to the soul more than to the appearance, so they dressed in a way that did not call attention to themselves. They wore ordinary, simple, inexpensive clothing, that which was available to everyone. Since they were focused on Christ, they did not want to give clothing any priority. They wanted their reputations to be based on character rather than on clothing. Rufus Jones writes, "The persistent aim of Quaker simplicity is to put dress in proper subordination to life itself."⁵

Similarly, Quakers adopted the practice of *plain speech*. At its core, this means that Quakers say what they mean, no more and no less. As we have noted in the lesson on equality, it was common in the custom of the times to use formal, flowery language in certain situations, and to address honored persons with much flattery and high praise. Friends used plain language at all times, so that they would not be giving priority to any person over Christ, whose instructions were "Let your yea be yea and your nay be nay."

To show their allegiance to Christ, Friends avoided the common names of the months and days of the week, since many of these were derived from the names of human rulers and false gods (e.g. Thursday = Thor's Day). Instead,

they used simple numbers. In place of Sunday School Friends had First Day School, and the first month of the year was not January but simply "First Month."

Even their architecture reflected Friends' commitment to the focused life. Believing that God does not dwell in houses made by human hands, but in hearts, Friends refused to give priority to building fancy structures. Indeed the buildings where they met were simply called meetinghouses, not churches. In many cases they were actual homes. Those that were built specially for Quaker meetings were usually designed more like homes than like the large stone buildings with tall steeples that characterized the church buildings of other denominations. Friends meetinghouses were plain both inside and out, and sparsely furnished, but God was present when they worshipped, and that was what mattered.

Some Friends avoided all displays of personal prosperity as well. Their homes were inexpensive, and their furniture was simple and utilitarian. They did not wear any jewelry. Basically, they avoided anything that would take their focus away from Christ.

Other Friends became wealthy, however, as their reputations for quality and honesty caused their businesses to grow. This forced a difficult decision: how to practice simplicity in the context of prosperity? Some Friends meetinghouses, homes, and clothing began to look a little better - the grey cloth became a little finer.

As the years passed goals began to subtly change as Friends began to become legalistic. Legalism, not uncommon for practitioners of any religion, did not

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

⁵ Jones, Rufus M. *The Faith and Practice of the Quakers*. Richmond, Indiana: Friends United Press, 1980. [Originally published approximately 1924] p. 96.

happen to all Friends, nor were all affected to the same degree. Simplicity, which in the beginning was merely the visible effect of the Focused Life, was elevated to a goal or an insignia of Friends. Some Friends became proud of their simplicity, their separateness from the world. They became "a peculiar people." Their goals shifted from inward, invisible and spiritual to outward, visible and material.

Legalism made simplicity a badge of peculiarity. The plain speech and plain dress were made into requirements, and Friends continued these practices well after they had any routine place in contemporary culture. As a result, plain speech and dress came to be something that drew attention to Friends - the exact opposite of the original reason for these practices! Thus, some Friends fell prey to the tendency of many Christians - letting a testimony become merely a tradition.

The Focused Life Today

How can Friends bear witness to the testimony of the Focused Life today? The answer will be different for each one. Our first priority should be to God, but the effect of that decision will be different for each person.

But there are some things that all disciples of Christ should hold in common. Certainly Friends should avoid conspicuous consumption or the ostentatious display of wealth. Another sign of putting Christ first is the arrangement of our personal schedules to indicate our priorities. The way we spend our time and money is an excellent indicator of our true priorities in life.

What draws your heart away from God? What scatters your attention, diverts your purpose, clouds your goals? These are the things that we learn to avoid as

we focus our lives on Christ. Richard Foster's book *Freedom of Simplicity* is an excellent source for Friends who are looking to learn this discipline.

A Christian should also adopt the priorities that Jesus had, to a certain extent. Concern for the poor, love for all people, and the various fruits of the Spirit should characterize any follower of Christ. We must be careful, however, not to let any particular expression of the testimony become law. The Focused Life means nothing more than that we focus on obeying Christ.

Lesson 8 Questions

1. Why is "The Focused Life" better than "Simplicity" as a name for this Testimony?
2. What are the characteristics of the Focused Life with regard to goals, possessions and attitude?
3. Why did Quakers originally come up with plain dress and plain speech as expressions of the testimony of the Focused Life?
4. How can meetinghouse/church architecture bear witness to this Testimony?
5. How should Friends be witnesses of the Testimony in today's culture?
6. How can we practice simplicity in an age of prosperity?
7. How can Friends avoid the tendency toward legalism in the practice of simplicity?

Lesson 8 Outline: The Focused Life (Simplicity)

I. What Does it Mean

A. Imitation of Christ

1. Focus on goals

- a) Mt. 6:19 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; 20 but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. 24 "No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.
- b) Mt. 6:30 But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you-- you of little faith? 31 Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' 32 For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.
- c) "Unclouded honesty at the heart and centre of the man is the true basis of simplicity." - Jones, p. 90
- d) "Quaker simplicity is concerned more with inner sincerity than it is with plainness of dress and speech." - Hinshaw, p.63

2. Denial of self

- a) Mt. 8:19 A scribe then approached and said, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go." 20 And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head."
- b) the Son of Man had nowhere to lay His head - those who would follow Him must be the same

B. Allegiance to God

1. Rejection of rival gods

- a) Lk. 18:22 When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "There is still one thing lacking. Sell all that you own and distribute the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." 23 But when he heard this, he became sad; for he was very rich.
- b) "Simplicity has to do with sufficiency as a counterweight to pride and ostentation, rather than with poverty as a way of imitating Christ." - Punshon, p. 62
- c) Rom. 7:7 I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, "You shall not covet." 8 But sin, seizing an opportunity in the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. Apart from the law sin lies dead. 9 I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived 10 and I died, and the very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me.
- d) Phil. 4:11 Not that I am referring to being in need; for I have learned to be content with whatever I have. 12 I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. 13 I can do all things through him who strengthens me.
- e) spiritual struggle against covetousness - belief that the source of evil is from within, not from without
- f) 1Jn. 2:15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. The love of the Father is not in those who love the world; 16 for all that is in the world-- the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, the pride in riches-- comes not from the Father but from the world.
- g) Pursuing your vocation to the glory of God and to the betterment of humanity (instead of the world's goals of wealth, power, entertainment)

Lesson 8 Outline: The Focused Life (Simplicity)

2. Obedience to God's leading

- a) All things are holy, sacred, consecrated to God - there is no *secular* in the focused life
- b) Phil. 3:10 I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, 11 if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead. 12 Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. 13 Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus. 15 Let those of us then who are mature be of the same mind; and if you think differently about anything, this too God will reveal to you.

II. Historic Practice

A. rejection of all personal habits that tend to ostentation or display

1. plain dress

- a) "The persistent aim of Quaker simplicity is to put dress in proper subordination to life itself." - Jones, p. 96
- b) Quakers felt that attention should be paid to the soul more than to the appearance, and so they dressed in a way that did not call attention to themselves. They wanted their reputations to be based on character rather than on clothing.

2. plain speech

- a) "Let your yea be yea and your nay be nay" - speaking the simple truth
- b) "The so-called plain language of the Quakers (*thee* and *thou*) was an effort to speak in terms of simple and truthful words; to avoid using the plural *you* in addressing a single person; and to avoid all flattering and dishonest titles." - Hinshaw, p. 64
- c) Quakers attempted to avoid the words for days and months that were named after other gods, and so used terms like "First Day" and "Third Month".

3. type of buildings

- a) simple meetinghouse
- b) plain homes, simple furniture

B. distorted practice - elevation of Simplicity to a goal or requirement - Friends as a peculiar people, separated from the world. It substituted the outer change for the inner. It removed the need for the leading of the Spirit.

- 1. use of "thee" and "thou", "First Day" as a "badge of peculiarity"
- 2. adoption of uniform dress

III. contemporary practice

- A. Economic justice - giving what you have to help others
- B. environmental protection
- C. avoiding superfluous consumption
- D. avoiding tobacco, alcohol, drugs
- E. simplifying the schedule

Lesson 8 Questions

1. Why is “The Focused Life” better than “Simplicity” as a name for this Testimony?

A simplified lifestyle is often one of the effects of the Focused Life, but it is not the goal. The goal is to make Jesus Christ top priority in life. The effects of setting one's priorities in order are far-reaching, including more than what a person wears or owns. The Testimony should be named for its goal.

2. What are the characteristics of the Focused Life with regard to goals, possessions and attitude?

Christ must be given priority over all things, even the basic needs of food, clothing, and shelter. Our possessions must be subject to His dominion and rights of distribution. Our attitude should be one of contentment with whatever role in life that God has planned for us.

This set of priorities and attitudes does not mean that the Christian is passive and does not try to accomplish things in life. It means that we must dedicate our activity and our advancement to God, not taking the credit for ourselves nor assuming that a certain level of material comfort is our due.

3. Why did Quakers originally come up with plain dress and plain speech as expressions of the testimony of the Focused Life?

To show that Christ came first, Quakers chose to de-emphasize material things such as clothing and possessions. They wanted to tell the world about their priorities, not keep them private. Early Friends lived in a time when one's reputation was made by fancy clothing and by flowery speech. Friends wanted to focus attention on God, not themselves. By wearing clothing that was plain and simply functional, and speaking in plain language Friends were able to bear witness to the testimonies of Equality and Honesty as well as the Focused Life.

4. How can meeting house architecture bear witness to this Testimony?

Friends meetinghouses (the very name is illustrative of plain speech) were built in stark contrast to the churches of the other denominations. They were simple, one-story structures with no distinctive architecture. This emphasized the Truth that God does not live in buildings but in human hearts, and that the Church is the people, not the building.

5. How should Friends be witnesses of the Testimony in today's culture?

If we make Christ first priority in our lives, He will show us what needs to change. It is dangerous to prescribe a certain lifestyle as definitively Focused, but excessive materialism and self-centered living should not characterize any Christian.

6. How can we practice simplicity in an age of prosperity?

Simplicity is not the same thing as poverty. It's a matter of stewardship - what have we done with the things God has given us? See Mt. 25:14-30. Many wealthy Christians have used their money for God's work and avoided the temptations of luxury. Ron Sider's book *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger* is a good source of additional material on this subject.

7. How can Friends avoid the tendency toward legalism in the practice of simplicity?

The important thing is to follow the leading of Christ. He will not fall into the trap of tradition! When Friends begin evaluating their lifestyles by comparing them to “the way it used to be,” that should be a tipoff that the testimony is going “stale.” We must always subject our lives and priorities to the leadership of Christ.

Lesson 9 - Becoming Peacemakers

“Primitive Christianity Revived” was the hallmark of early Quakers. Their goal was to recreate the New Testament Church, freed from the misrepresentations, distortions and corruptions they saw in the Church of England. As they read the New Testament, seeking an understanding of the characters of Jesus, Peter, Paul and the others, perhaps no character trait was so pervasive as that of love. Love motivated every act.

Contrary to the record of the church that followed it, no one is ever killed in the name of Christ, or God, in the New Testament. No act of violence against another person is ever committed by the followers of Christ. Indeed, there is no New Testament record of Christ or any of the Christians who followed him ever even defending themselves against physical attack (although they had no lack of opportunity.)

The Quakers, therefore, became pacifists, believing that killing and violence are wrong. Perhaps no other Testimony has been the cause of so much disagreement, not only between Friends and other Christians but also within the Quaker movement.

The bases of the Testimony are clear: the New Testament is full of teachings about love, the value of all people, and peace. The foundation for these teachings, however, are found in the Old Testament, back at the beginning.

The Value of Persons

Genesis 1:27 says that we are created in God's image. Many different interpretations have been given as to the nature of that image, but one thing seems clear: the fact of that image makes each life precious. Traditional Quaker doctrine holds this Truth dearly.

Psalms 139 reinforces this, especially verses 13-14 which tell how God made each one of us carefully and uniquely. Jesus, too, tells of the value that God places on each individual:

“Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.” -Mt. 10:29-31

Our value is intrinsic - it is built into our very nature. Yet God has a goal for each one of us that makes us even more valuable. He desires our fellowship, and wants every person to have an intimate family relationship with him. God doesn't want to lose a single one of us. (1 Tim 2:4) In order to make that possible, he sacrificed his Son for us. That's how important we are to God. (John 3:16)

The Character of Christ

Jesus came to earth as a sacrifice for our sins, but not only that - he came to show us what God intended for our lives. We are to become Jesus' disciples, like him in every way (Luke 6:40). Paul says “...we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is Christ.” (Eph. 4:15)

So if Christ is to be our model, what are his characteristics? Foremost among them is his love and care for others, even his enemies. Jesus consistently placed the needs of others before his own. During the events of his arrest, trial, and crucifixion, for example, he took the trouble to make sure that:

- His disciples were safe (John 18:8)
- The ear of the high priest's servant was healed (Luke 22:51)
- His executioners were forgiven (Luke 23:34)
- The thief on the next cross was given salvation (Luke 23:43)
- His mother was cared for (John 19:26-27)

Jesus taught that the greatest love a person could show was to give up his or her life for someone else (John 15:12-13). In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul amplified the definition of love:

“Love is patient, love is kind... It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs... It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.” (1 Cor. 13:4-7)

In short, the love that Christ modeled and intends for us to show is the kind of love that would never have anything to do with war. Instead, says Jesus, we should sacrifice ourselves. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gave specific instructions for our behavior with people that we would otherwise go to war against (Mt. 5:38-48). When faced with our enemies, Jesus says that we should:

- Not resist them
- Give them more than they ask for
- Show love to them and pray for them

Jesus demonstrated this behavior Himself, in dealing with those who would be his enemies (see Mt. 8:5-13).

One of the keys to understanding the character of Jesus is the realization that he very intentionally rejected the values and power systems of our world. Luke 4:5-8 records Jesus' decision to refuse this type of power. Having made that decision, he stuck to it, proclaiming instead the kingdom of God:

“Jesus said, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If

it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place.” (John 18:36)

That’s why Jesus did not defend himself physically. This man who showed such boldness in proclaiming God’s truth and condemning the distortions and corruption of the popular religion went voluntarily to his own arrest and death, suffering physical torture along the way. Nor did he allow others to use force in his defense.

The disciples should not have been surprised at this; Jesus had told them to expect suffering. His behavior at the end of his life was a perfect model of his teaching. Jesus clearly stated that anyone who wants to be his disciple should not expect to have security in this life. Indeed, he said, God will work his will through your suffering, and your endurance will result in your salvation (Luke 21:12-19). For this reason, Jesus said, suffering should be looked on as a blessing (Mt. 5:11).

Therefore, instead of trying to figure out ways to defeat earthly enemies, Christians should be more concerned about the enemies of Christ’s kingdom.

“Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in hell.” (Mt. 10:28)

Spiritual Origins of War

The real battle, say Jesus and the writers of the New Testament, is fought at the spiritual level. Sin is the ultimate cause of war.

“What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don’t get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God.” (James 4:1-2)

“The acts of the sinful nature are obvious:... hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy;... those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.” (Gal. 5:19-21)

Similarly, Jesus (Mt. 5:21-26) and John (I John 3:11-15) teach that sustained anger and hatred are sinful acts, equivalent to murder in the sight of God, because they dehumanize (devalue) people created in the image of God.

The Example of First-Century Christians

The book of Acts records the efforts of the early church to spread the gospel. In doing this crucial work

for God’s kingdom, Jesus’ disciples showed that they had learned from his teaching and example.

Acts 5, which records one of the first witnesses to the gospel by believers filled with the Holy Spirit, tells how Peter and John refused to defend themselves physically, but instead rejoiced in their opportunity to suffer for the sake of God’s kingdom. Their fellow believers rose to their defense, but it was a spiritual battle that was being fought, not a physical one. Their military tactics? Prayer and fasting (Acts 4:23-31, 12:5-13).

The martyrdom of Stephen (Acts 7) is another example of the obedience of the disciples to the teachings of Jesus. He did not lift a hand to his own defense, and neither did any of the other Christians. But God used Stephen’s suffering and death to accomplish his will in the life of Saul of Tarsus, one of Stephen’s accusers, who became the great apostle to the Gentiles.

Paul’s life demonstrated that he too had learned the Christian value system. There are numerous examples in the book of Acts, but the story (in Acts 16:23-34) of Paul and Silas in the Philippian jail most clearly demonstrates how the disciples allowed God to work through their suffering. These two Christians never showed any care for themselves - they knew they were doing God’s work and that God would be responsible for their safety. Instead, they rejoiced in their sufferings and took every opportunity to care for others, those who had been their enemies. The result was that the gospel was proclaimed and received. It was a victory for the kingdom of God.

Pacifism and Peacemaking among Early Friends

With Jesus and the first Christians as their model, the first Quakers rejected the methods and weapons of violence and war in all situations. But they were careful to distinguish “pacifism” from “passivism”. Friends resisted evil, but they would not use the weapons and methods of war to do so. They refused to resort to personal violence in any circumstances. Instead, they behaved like New Testament Christians.

The standard for Quaker behavior was set early on by George Fox himself. Rufus Jones tells the story of “...the famous response which Fox made while in Derby jail to the Commissioners who proposed to make him the captain of a troop of soldiers in the Commonwealth Army. ‘I told them,’ he says, ‘that I lived in the virtue of that life and power that takes away the occasion of all wars.’”¹

But Friends were not only pacifists - they were peace-

¹ Jones, Rufus M. *The Faith and Practice of the Quakers*. Richmond, Indiana: Friends United Press, 1980. [Originally published approximately 1924]

makers as well. Throughout their 350-year history, Friends have engaged in making peace by working against the causes and effects of war. American Quakers are famous for their relief efforts during and following every war that the United States has been involved in. Two Quaker organizations received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1947, but Friends have often been subjected to ridicule and persecution for their troubles.

Quakers are active in reconciliation efforts, providing training in non-violent methods of conflict resolution and resisting evil. They engage in non-violent anti-war protests. They study issues, researching difficult problems to find solutions without bloodshed, publishing pamphlets and articles in an attempt to persuade people to give peace a chance. They work for peace in government and other organizations.

Ironically, Friends have been forced to respond to conflict from within their ranks as well. Perhaps no Quaker testimony is less commonly held among Quakers than the Peace Testimony. Evangelical Friends in particular have been influenced by other evangelical denominations which do not have traditions of pacifism. Yet Quakers have always been tolerant of individual differences in belief, knowing that the Holy Spirit works differently with each individual, and that each person is ultimately responsible to this inner voice of God.

The story is told of William Penn as a young man, then a new convert to Quakerism in England. The son of a famous admiral who was wealthy and powerful in this world, Penn had to make quite an adjustment to the new value system that George Fox was preaching. On first hearing the Testimony of Peace, Penn was doubtful. He wanted to join the Friends, but wasn't ready to accept this difficult doctrine. He approached Fox, and asked if he must remove his sword. Fox, knowing that the Holy Spirit would deal with him in time, replied to Penn, "Wear it as long as thou canst."

A Question of Values

Throughout their history Quakers have preached that the pacifist stance and the life of peacemaking were but two of the natural effects of trying to live a Christlike life. Conversely, they saw violence and war as two of the natural effects of sin. The ultimate rule of life, then, is not peace, but righteousness in Christ. Peace and other virtues are the natural result.

"...it seemed to [Fox] that the new and higher life entailed a spirit and method of life which were essentially Christlike. It is a way of life that practises love and forbearance. It seeks to give rather than to get. It conquers by grace and gentleness. It prefers to suffer by injustice than in

the slightest degree to do it. It wins and triumphs by sacrifice and self-giving. It spreads abroad an atmosphere of trust and confidence and proposes to prepare the way for a new world by creation of a new spirit—which is essentially the spirit of the Cross. If everyone lived thus, there would be 'no occasion of war' but 'a covenant of peace.'"²

The proposition of contemporary Friends scholar John Punshon is more radical:

"Can anger ever be justified, even as the handmaid of compassion? In one circumstance only, I would argue—when it expresses the anger of God, and the human being knowingly acts as the instrument and not the collaborator."³

This is, indeed, an extreme point of view—but so was that of Jesus, who condemned anger in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5:21-26).

A pacifist stance and a life of peacemaking make no sense apart from a radical restructuring of one's priorities and values in life. We must cast off the world and its value systems, and take on Christ's. The chart on the next page shows the essential differences between the world's value system and that of the New Testament characters and authors quoted above.

The Real World

People often make hypothetical objections to pacifism. They pair simple, context-free settings with results that are known in advance - hardly a typical situation - and demand answers according to their rules. By this method they hope to demonstrate the necessity for physical violence in certain situations.

Not only is this method of argument illogical and unfair, it ignores the real world that both the New Testament authors and early Quakers lived in. Those who would live the Testimony of Peace must avoid the hypothetical and focus on the reality - doing what God has called them to do.

Those who would use hypothetical arguments against pacifism believe that the way of peace is not effective or practical. The reality is that war, and the preparation for war, are not good solutions for the problems of the world. A study of history shows that the spirit of violence is habit-forming and contagious. Wars and violence lead inevitably to more wars and violence, in an ever-increasing spiral pattern.

² *ibid.*, p. 105-6.

³ Punshon, John. *Testimony & Tradition*. Swarthmore Lecture 1990. London: Quaker Home Service, 1990, p. 61.

A Comparison of Value Systems	The World's Value System	New Testament Value System
What is our leader, gives us direction	Political Authority. Power that everyone recognizes	Spiritual Authority. Power that's invisible, not yet apparent
Our highest values	Life on earth, freedom, security, happiness for self	Righteousness, Christlike character, eternal life, the good of others
Our enemies	Those who threaten our values and our political structures	Those who encourage the spread of sin and evil
Our most potent weapon	Physical power that compels people to obedience	Prayer, the persuasive power of the Holy Spirit, and God's power to act in the world
The value of a human life	Varies with the person's quality of life, citizenship, abilities, deeds	The same for all, since all are created in God's image and for God's purposes
Our ethic	The greatest good for the greatest number	The greatest good for each individual

War is accompanied by wrong thinking. People on both sides believe that theirs is the right, that they stand for what is good, and that God is on their side. This cannot possibly be true. Furthermore, people who live in the other country are considered less than human, not worthy of life. A study of American attitudes toward the people of Japan and Germany during World War II will demonstrate this point.

When the war is over, the two sides remain enemies - people on both sides continue to hate the others. Both "winner" and "loser" suffer greatly from the effects of war. It causes more problems than it solves.

Peacemaking, in contrast, often has positive results in this world. It transforms dangerous situations and people. Quaker histories are full of stories of positive solutions in difficult situations, when peacemaking methods are used. The climate of peace is also beneficial to the spread of the gospel. This is hardly the case in war - how can you share Jesus' love with

someone you're trying to kill?

Pacifists are often asked if they believe in law enforcement. "It's pretty easy," goes the argument, "to be a pacifist as long as somebody else is keeping the peace." There are two false assumptions here. One is that the force (or show of force) is solely responsible for the peace. In fact, the Bible (Romans 13:1 and other passages) makes it clear that governments and law, even in this world, are established and upheld by God. God is the real power at work behind the visible authorities. The second false assumption is that the pacifist would change convictions if conditions were different. But as we have seen, New Testament values do not depend on the situations of this world.

"But what if someone attacks your family?" someone will ask. Again, the question is based on the false assumption that the any reasonable and effective response to such a situation must involve violence. This question is too hypothetical to answer easily - too

many assumptions must be made. The key to living as a peacemaker does not lie in the ability to answer hypothetical questions - it is real life, where one's true priorities and values are demonstrated daily.

I am committed to Christ first. Of course, I would always do everything I could to protect my family, but I would hope to do so without disobeying Christ. In other words, I would hope to behave in this situation as I would any other: as a disciple of Christ. I will not allow circumstances to weaken my commitment.

If we have adopted the New Testament's value system, we must not make the mistake of evaluating the success or worthiness of pacifist practices by their visible results. God does not promise protection from harm, and physical security is not the highest value. (See Acts 5:40-41.)

Another common mistake made by American Christians is to confuse our country with Old Testament Israel. We may have many Christians in the U.S., and God may have blessed us, but that does not mean that it is right for us to go to war to defeat other nations.

Becoming a peacemaker, living the Testimony of Peace, requires a radical shift in our thinking, as we have seen. But it doesn't stop there. We cannot live apart from the world as pacifists. We must be **peacemakers** as well.

"Anyone who is intending to claim his own right to walk the path of peace must take also his share of the heavy burden of trying to build a world in which the gentler forces of kindness, love, sympathy and co-operation are put into function."⁴

Critical Questions for Peacemakers

We may ignore hypothetical questions, but peacemakers must face reality: How do we fight evil? It is not an easy question to answer, because it is not an easy thing to do. But our goal must be to find a way (to ask God to show us a way) of combatting evil in a way that does not cause us to do evil ourselves. We must not fall prey to the same snare that tripped up the U.S. in World War II: in stopping a great evil, they committed great evil.

If it is possible, try to deal with evil before it causes violence. Work to help people who are hurting, to end injustice. Learn methods of conciliation and reconciliation. There are many organizations, both Christian and secular, that are working for peace in various ways. There is no lack of opportunity.

It is even more important to be a peacemaker where

you are right now. All of us live in situations and environments that are prone to conflict. Examine your own behavior in difficult situations. Do you always try to "win?" Do you put other people down? Do you show love to your "enemies?" Are you always looking out for your own security? Your behavior under the stress of confrontations and conflict will clearly indicate where your values lie.

It's difficult to consistently maintain New Testament values. But it's important to recognize the differences between them and the world's values, and to seek God's help in living a Christ-like life. That's the first step in becoming a peacemaker.

⁴ Jones, *op.cit.*, p. 113

Questions for Lesson 9

1. The lesson states that a pacifist stance requires a value system that is radically different from the prevailing world view. Some pacifists are not Christians, however. What is there about pacifism and peacemaking that is specifically Christian?
2. Psalm 139 has often been used by Christians as an argument against abortion. Does the same argument apply against killing in war, or in capital punishment?
3. Jesus' warnings about suffering, and his declaration that those who suffer are blessed, refer to the suffering caused deliberately, by religious persecution. What about difficult times that come for other reasons? Should Christians rejoice in them too, or expect something better?
4. Do you agree with John Punshon that all anger (except when we share God's anger against evil) is sinful? If not, what sort of anger is not sinful?
5. Why is agreement with the Testimony of Peace so uncommon among evangelical Christians today?
6. How do Friends like William Penn come eventually to lay aside their swords?
7. Our value systems determine our opinions on difficult issues. What are the key differences in value systems that lead to the two opposing views on abortion, for example? What about physician-assisted suicide?
8. What can you do to make peace in your family, job, church, or other parts of your world?

Lesson 9

I. Biblical Case for Peacemaking

A. The value of human life

1. God values us very highly - Mt. 10:29-31 "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows."
2. I Tim 2:4 - God desires all people to be saved
3. Ps. 139:13-14 - God created each of us uniquely special (the same arguments that work against abortion work against killing people who have already been born)
4. Genesis 1:27 - All of us are made in the image of God

B. The character of Christ - our example, our model

1. unconditional love - like God's
 - a) Love that gives (John 15:12-13, I Cor. 13:4-7) - The very opposite of self-centered.
 - b) He placed others' value ahead of his own through his whole arrest and death
 - (1) His disciples ("if I'm the one you're looking for, let these others go.")
 - (2) The high priest's slave - Jesus healed his ear
 - (3) Jesus forgave those who crucified him
 - (4) The repentant thief on the cross
2. sacrifice of self - like God's (Mt. 5:38-48)
 - a) Do not resist the evil doer
 - b) Give them more than they ask for (stun them with kindness)
 - c) Show love to them and pray for them
 - d) Treat everyone - even your enemies - equally well (Jesus healed the centurion's servant and the high priest's slave, even though both were his enemies)
3. Jesus rejected the opportunity to rule with earthly power (Luke 4:5-7, John 18:36)
4. expect and rejoice in sufferings - as Jesus did
 - a) Mt. 5:11 - "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me."
 - b) Mt. 10:28 - "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in hell."
 - c) Suffering is an opportunity for witness. Luke 21:12-19 (note parallel to Christ's persecution and death)
 - (1) Expect to be persecuted. Physical suffering will happen to Christians.
 - (2) Don't worry about preparing a defense. God will work through you.
 - (3) Endurance will result in God's saving you.
 - d) Jesus refused to defend himself physically
 - (1) He went voluntarily to his own arrest and death, and suffered through physical torture on the way
 - (2) He refused to let anyone defend him

C. war originates in sin

1. Sustained anger and hatred are sinful acts (Mt. 5:22, I John 3:15)
2. Gal. 5:19-21 "The acts of the sinful nature are obvious:... hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy;... those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God."
3. James 4:1-2 "What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God."

D. The example of the early church - in each case the Christlike example of the believers' response to violence and suffering led to God's saving work. What if they had responded with violence?

Lesson 9

1. Peter & John rejoice in their suffering (Acts 5)
2. Stephen did not resist his stoning (Acts 7)
3. Paul & Silas cooperate & help their jailer (Acts 16)

II. Historical Practice

A. The Testimony of early Friends

1. refusal to resort to personal violence in any circumstances
2. not “passivists” - Friends resist evil, but will not use the methods of war to do so
3. Friends also opposed capital punishment - consistent with value placed on human life
4. “...the famous response which Fox made while in Derby jail to the Commissioners who proposed to make him the captain of a troop of soldiers in the Commonwealth Army. ‘I told them,’ he says, ‘that I lived in the virtue of that life and power that takes away the occasion of all wars.’” - Jones, p. 105

B. How Friends made peace

1. anti-war protests
2. relief, reconstruction, reconciliation
3. training in conflict resolution and non-violent methods of resisting evil
4. studying issues, researching better solutions to problems
5. working for peace in government and other organizations

C. Not all Friends were Peacemakers

III. Peacemaking Today

A. A Question of Values

1. “The peace testimony arises out of the virtue of compassion.” - Punshon, p. 59
2. “Can anger ever be justified, even as the handmaid of compassion? In one circumstance only, I would argue—when it expresses the anger of God, and the human being knowingly acts as the instrument and not the collaborator.” - Punshon, p. 61
3. “...it seemed to [Fox] that the new and higher life entailed a spirit and method of life which were essentially Christlike. It is a way of life that practises love and forbearance. It seeks to give rather than to get. It conquers by grace and gentleness. It prefers to suffer by injustice than in the slightest degree to do it. It wins and triumphs by sacrifice and self-giving. It spreads abroad an atmosphere of trust and confidence and proposes to prepare the way for a new world by creation of a new spirit—which is essentially the spirit of the Cross. If everyone lived thus, there would be ‘no occasion of war’ but ‘a covenant of peace.’” - Jones, p. 105-6
4. The value of human life - if everyone is created in God’s image, then each life is precious.

B. The Real World

1. In our thinking - avoid the hypothetical - focus on reality
 - a) The effect of violence on the person doing it - the spirit of violence is habit-forming and contagious
 - b) War does not work. It is harmful to both winner and loser. It causes more problems than it solves.
 - c) War causes, and results from, delusions.
 - (1) War is not possible without dehumanizing the enemy.
 - (2) Each side believes that God is with them and against the other side.
 - d) Peacemaking works
 - (1) it transforms dangerous situations and people
 - (2) it opens hearts to the gospel
 - e) Expect trouble.
 - (1) God does not promise protection from harm. Physical security is not the highest value. (Acts 5:40-41) Jesus promised persecution for His disciples.

Lesson 9

- (2) What is it worth to you to follow Jesus? What are you willing to give up?
- f) Remember that Jesus is alive. He is in charge.
- (1) We are NOT Israel. God has not appointed us as His righteous nation.
- (2) Jesus' command was to love, not to kill.
- 2. In our actions - make peace where God puts you, as He leads you
 - a) refusal to pay war taxes
 - b) One cannot live apart from the world as a pacifist. One must become a peace-maker, working in the world to make it peaceful. Work of Friends to repair the damages of war and to help the suffering people.
 - c) "Anyone who is intending to claim his own right to walk the path of peace must take also his share of the heavy burden of trying to build a world in which the gentler forces of kindness, love, sympathy and co-operation are put into function." - Jones, p. 113
- 3. The critical question: How do I fight evil?
 - a) Not an easy thing to do. But the goal is to find a way of combatting evil in a way that does not cause us to do evil ourselves. (In ending WW II we out-Hitlered Hitler.)
 - b) Deal with the evil before it turns to war. Work to end injustice, to help people.
 - c) "Do you believe in law enforcement?" We are not responsible for our environment - just our response to it. The "evil" Roman government also made it possible for Jesus to walk the land and for the gospel to spread. Rom. 13:1 says that God is the establisher of governments, and several other passages agree.
 - d) "What if someone attacks your family?" I am committed to Christ first. I would do everything I could do to protect my family without disobeying Christ.

Questions for Lesson 9

1. The lesson states that a pacifist stance requires a value system that is radically different from the prevailing world view. Some pacifists are not Christians, however. What is there about pacifism and peacemaking that is specifically Christian?

The sovereignty of God (the concept that God is in control of the world and has all the power necessary to maintain it) is one of the most significant assumptions behind Christian pacifism. If God is sovereign, then our first priority is to live Christ-like lives, and we can trust that things will work out according to God's will. Another significant assumption for Christians is that Jesus is our role model. Our spiritual goal is to grow up to become like Christ in every way.

2. Psalm 139 has often been used by Christians as an argument against abortion. Does the same argument apply against killing in war, or in capital punishment?

Psalm 139 shows us that God is intimately involved in our being. He has made each one of us uniquely. God puts a high value on each one of us. Mt. 10:29-31 (quoted in the text) says much the same thing. If God, who created us, values each individual so highly, who are we to take someone's life, and with it their opportunity to serve God? The principle here is the essential value of life, which does not vary with context.

3. Jesus' warnings about suffering, and his declaration that those who suffer are blessed, refer to the suffering caused deliberately, by religious persecution. What about difficult times that come for other reasons? Should Christians rejoice in them too, or expect something better?

The book of James (James 1) tells us to count trials as if they were joy. Paul (Philippians 4) tells us to learn to be content in all circumstances, and reminds us (Romans 8) that nothing, no matter how disastrous it seems, can separate us from God's love. These and other similar scriptures indicate that adversity (for any reason) is not an unexpected phenomenon in a Christian's life. We are not called to two ethics - one for good times, another for hard times. Christ's character remained consistent throughout his life.

4. Do you agree with John Punshon that all anger (except when we share God's anger against evil) is sinful? If not, what sort of anger is not sinful?

We usually get angry when we perceive that someone has violated our rights, or someone else's rights. Another cause of anger is loss of patience. To the extent that the target of anger is limited to actions, not people, such anger seems (to me) not to be sinful. But this distinction is difficult to make (particularly when you're angry!). Most anger is aimed at people, and this leads to sinful violence of thought, if not action.

5. Why is agreement with the Testimony of Peace uncommon among evangelical Christians today?

Most Christians have bought into the prevailing world view that violence is undesirable, but necessary to solve serious problems in the world. They fail to trust God. In this they are like King Asa of Judah (II Chronicles 16), a God-fearing man who, when threatened, trusted the defenses of war more than God's power, in spite of the fact that God had proved trustworthy in the past.

6. How do Friends like William Penn come eventually to lay aside their swords?

Somehow it doesn't seem right to "force" a Quaker to be a pacifist! Fortunately, Friends have never done this. Friends become pacifists as they learn from the example of other Friends, and

see how trustworthy God really is. As they grow in Christ, the Holy Spirit develops their character, and peace is an integral part of that. Priority should be given to peaceful living over political persuasions. A pacifist world view flows more naturally from the character of one who is a peacemaker every day.

7. Our value systems determine our opinions on difficult issues. What are the key differences in value systems that lead to the two opposing views on abortion, for example? What about physician-assisted suicide?

The primary difference is in views on the sovereignty of God, and on whether one's chief orientation is on this life or on eternal life. Those who do not believe in God's sovereignty and who are primarily focused on the present life will value more highly choices that enhance the quality of life for those who are hurting at the present moment. Those who believe that God is in charge, and that eternal happiness is more important than present happiness, will choose the pro-life and anti-suicide views.

8. What can you do to make peace in your family, job, church, or other parts of your world?

First you must commit your life to peace. Trust God, and obey the New Testament's call to peacemaking. Reduce the frequency of anger and hatred in your life. The effects of this change will be great. You can also work for peace with an organization dedicated to that purpose. Your Friends meeting has a committee (they go by names like "Christian Social Concerns" or "Peace and Service") that will serve as a starting point and suggest other ways to work for peace.

An Example of Successful Nonviolent Resistance

Some people claim that pacifism is “impractical” - that only violence can overthrow tyranny and injustice. Besides the fact that it betrays an alliance to the world’s value system, this claim is untrue. History records many cases where nonviolent means were used successfully to fight evil.

In his book *Exploring Nonviolent Alternatives*, written in 1970, Gene Sharp lists 85 cases of nonviolent action ranging from 494 B.C. to the present century, by individuals, small groups, and large groups.¹

The following story, quoted from Sharp’s book, is but one example.

On December 1, 1955, in Montgomery, Alabama, a tired Negro seamstress, along with three others, was asked, in accordance with local practice, to give up her bus seat to a newly-boarded white man, and stand.² Three complied, but Mrs. Parks, having had enough of such treatment, refused.

A one-day protest against her arrest by boycotting the buses on December 5th was nearly 100 per cent effective. It was decided to continue the boycott indefinitely until major reforms in the policy were made. Evening mass meetings in churches overflowed. The response, in both numbers and spirit, exceeded all hopes.

¹ Sharp, Gene. *Exploring Nonviolent Alternatives*. Boston: Porter Sargent Publisher, 1970, pp. 115-123.

² Martin Luther King, Jr., *Stride Toward Freedom*. New York: Harper & Row, 1958.

Negroes walked, took taxis and shared rides, but stayed off the buses. A new spirit of dignity and self-respect permeated the negro community. The whites were confronted by qualities they had not believed the Negroes possessed.



Photo by Francis Miller in LIFE magazine, 1960

The aim became improvement of the whole community. The appeal was to Christian love. The young Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., and his co-workers, found themselves thrust into leadership and international prominence.

Negotiations failed to produce a satisfactory settlement. The use of taxis at reduced fares was prohibited. A car pool of 300 vehicles was organized. Money began to pour in, and a fleet of over 15 new station wagons was added. Many Negroes preferred to walk as a concrete expression of their determination and

dedication. They grew in awareness of the nature of nonviolent action and love in conflict.

False rumors were spread about the movement’s leaders, along with false reports of a settlement. Negro drivers were arrested for minor, often imaginary, traffic violations. Police intimidation became common.

Rev. King was arrested on a charge of speeding. Over thirty threatening phone calls and letters reached the leaders daily, often signed “KKK.” King’s home was bombed; Negroes nearly broke into violence, but calm was restored. Another home was bombed. Nearly 100 Negro leaders were arrested, charged with violating an anti-boycott law.

Fear, long known by Southern Negroes, was cast off. Many went to the sheriff’s office, hoping to be among those “wanted.” The trial—receiving world attention—became a testimony of fearlessness and a recounting of grievances. The movement

gained new momentum.

A suit was filed by the Negroes in the Federal District Court, which declared the city bus segregation laws unconstitutional. The city appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Meanwhile the bus protest continued, asking now an end to bus segregation. Insurance policies on the station wagons were cancelled; they were transferred to a London firm. City officials declared the car pool illegal. The same day the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed the unconstitutionality of the bus segregation laws.

That night the mass meeting emphasized love, dignity and refusal to ride the buses until segregation was abolished. Also, that night the Ku Klux Klan rode through the Negro district. Instead of locked dark houses of terrified Negroes, the lights were on, the doors open, and people watched the Klan parade, a few even waving. Nonplussed, the Klan disappeared.

With the car pool prohibited, each area worked out its own share-the-ride plan, and many walked. The buses remained empty. In the mass meetings, detailed plans were presented for resuming—after over a year—the use of the buses on an integrated basis. There must be no boasting of rights, no pushing, but courtesy, it was insisted. This was a victory, not over the white man, but for justice and democracy.

The Court's bus integration order finally reached Montgomery on December 20th. On the first day of integration, there were no major incidents.

Then the white extremists began a reign of terror. Shots were fired at buses. A teenage girl was beaten. A pregnant Negro woman was shot in the leg. The Klan paraded again. But the Negroes' fear of them had gone. A small Negro boy warmed his hands at one of the burning crosses.

Then the homes of more leaders and several Negro churches were bombed. This turned the tide against the white supremacists. The local newspaper, several white ministers and the businessman's association denounced the bombings.

The Negroes adhered to nonviolence. More bombs exploded. Arrested whites were quickly found not guilty, but the disturbances abruptly ceased. The desegregation proceeded smoothly, and in a few weeks transport was back to normal, with Negroes and whites sitting where they pleased on integrated buses—a compliance with the court order

that would have been virtually inconceivable, without the forces set in operation by the Negroes' nonviolent action.³

³ Sharp, *op.cit.*, pp. 16-18

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