

Lesson(s) from a Book: *Holy Silence: A Gift of Quaker Spirituality*

by J. Brent Bill, Paraclete Press, 147 pp., 2005

Description:

Bill explores meeting for worship as a Quaker sacramental experience. (A sacrament is frequently understood to be an outward sign of a spiritual reality, and is a means of grace.)

Lesson plan age level:

High school age and adult Friends, as well as teenager and adults new to the meeting.

How many lessons from this book or pamphlet:

Each chapter can be read in advance or portions may be

read out loud in First Day School or in First or Second hour discussion. The six chapters are interspersed with "Quietude Queries." The lesson plan below is an example of how a lesson might be developed around a chapter, or portion of a chapter, in this case several sentences from chapter five.

Theme of the lesson:

Meeting for worship as time of thanksgiving for the life and work of the Spirit.

SUGGESTED LESSON PLAN

Opening:

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." Philippians 4:6, KJV

Quotation to help focus the lesson:

"In silence, without rite or symbol, we have known the Spirit of Christ so convincingly present in our quiet meetings that his grace dispels our faithlessness, our unwillingness, our fears, and sets our hearts aflame with the joy of adoration. We have thus felt the power of the Spirit renewing and recreating our love and friendship for all our fellows. This is our Eucharist and our Communion." — London Yearly Meeting, 1928, in *Quaker Faith & Practice*, Third Edition, 1995, 2005, The Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain, 26.15

Post this quote on a flip chart or poster in the space where the group will meet for the lesson.

Passage addressed in this lesson (e.g., page numbers, section title, chapter number):

"Silence, when worshiping with others, becomes a means of grace. That's because it brings us into God's presence. Worship becomes Eucharistic when we sense God present with our group." — *Gathering: Practicing Communal Silence*, chapter 5, page 91.

Suggestions:

Either post the quote above from chapter five or distribute the words to each person on slips of paper. Explain that the word Eucharist comes from the Greek, and literally means "to give thanks." Briefly review the traditional understanding of "sacrament" as a means of grace.

Activity:

Invite Friends into a worshipful space to center and reflect in silence on the word Eucharist (thanksgiving) using the following queries.

- How do I experience meeting for worship as a time of thanksgiving?
- Where are the places in my life in which I am thankful?

Allow 15 minutes for this time of reflection. Have paper and art media available for Friends to journal or work with if they wish. Include such things as colored pencils, markers, solid colored paper, and materials for collage. After the 15 minutes for reflection, invite people back into a large circle to share as they feel led, following worship sharing guidelines provided.

Optional Closing Song:

"Sing and Rejoice," #234, in *Worship in Song: A Friends Hymnal*, Quaker Press of Friends General Conference, 1996.

Lesson plan prepared by Paul Ricketts, Ft. Wayne Meeting, OVYM

