

Lessons from a Book: *Here I am, Lord*

by Ernestine and Vincent Buscemi

Pamphlet, 43rd J. Barnard Walton Memorial Lecture, presented at the Annual Southeastern Yearly Meeting Gathering of Friends, April 15, 2006. Southeastern Yearly Meeting Publications, 2006. Available from QuakerBooks of Friends General Conference.

Description:

The pamphlet is a transcript of a collaborative lecture by Ernestine and Vincent Buscemi, with each voice identified. It consists of stories of their attempts to respond faithfully to the leadings of the Spirit.

Lesson plan age level:

Older teen, young adult, parent, adult, elder adult, adult new member, etc.

How many lessons from this book or pamphlet:

May be used for one to six sessions.

Lesson focus, or foci if more than one lesson:

“Acting faithfully and becoming a servant of God.” (page 3 of pamphlet)

Reading the text:

There are topic subheadings throughout the text. Individual sections or combinations of them may be used for multiple lessons, or the entire pamphlet may be covered in one lesson. For a lesson based on the whole pamphlet, participants should be encouraged to read the text in advance of the session. Otherwise, the text may be read by the group in session.

SUGGESTED LESSON PLAN(S)

Opening:

Participants give their names. When there are multiple lessons on the pamphlet, this need not be repeated. For small enough groups, have each person mention one thing that spoke to them while reading the pamphlet

Quotation to help focus the lesson:

Read the Thomas Kelly quote on p. 4. Also note, as Ernie does on page five, that the response, “Here I am,” is used twelve times in the Bible as “a response signifying obedience and faithful willingness to fulfill the calling.”

Discussion questions, worship sharing queries and/or activity suggestions:

Explain that our challenge in this lesson is to go deep in sharing from our own experience, not on Ernie's and Vince's. Their words, however, may facilitate our going deeper. After the introduction, invite participants to share in pairs. Ideas for questions that may guide the sharing: How have you responded to nudges in your life? What practices do you use to build your relationship with God/the Spirit? How do you use your religious community to test your sense of a leading? Which of Vince and Ernie's leadings spoke to you? Which ones challenged you? After 8 to 10 minutes, bring the group back together and ask if there are parts of the conversations that folks feel led to share with the whole group. Close with at least 20 minutes of worship sharing. If the group is unfamiliar with worship sharing, go over the guidelines. Some sample worship sharing queries are:

- When have I given myself over to the movements of the Spirit? What happened?
- What is the greatest challenge I am currently struggling with in my spiritual life?
- Where do I find support for my spiritual journey?

Write out whatever queries you use and display them prominently.

Closing:

Close by closing worship sharing with a handshake. Add a prayer or comment if so led.

Additional pamphlets by Friends of Color for those wishing to hear diverse Quaker voices include (available from QuakerBooks of Friends General Conference):

Equality, by Deborah Saunders, The 36th annual J. Barnard Walton Memorial Lecture, Southeastern Yearly Meeting, 1999.

Letting Go of Illusion, Engaging Truth: Healing!, by Niyonu D. Spann, the 2007 Annual Michener Lecture, Southeastern Yearly Meeting.

Facing Unbearable Truths, by Dr. Harold Weaver, the 2008 Weed Lecture, Beacon Hill Friends House

The Seed Cracked Open, by Vanessa Julye, keynote address for the July 2005 New York Yearly Meeting annual sessions, Quaker Press of FGC, 2006.

Lesson plan by Gail Thomas, Bethesda Friends Meeting, Baltimore Yearly Meeting

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