

Lesson 3

TRUTH

SUMMARY FOR ADULTS

Quakers place a strong emphasis on seeking Truth as a central spiritual and philosophical pursuit. This search for Truth encompasses not only theological and religious understanding but also extends to personal growth, social justice, ethical living, and scientific inquiry. Quakers believe that this quest for both spiritual and existential Truth is ongoing and that it leads to a deeper understanding of oneself, the world, and God. The Quaker emphasis is on direct experience and inner revelation as key aspects of this journey.

In the pursuit of this divine Truth, Quakers discern an essential unity between that of God within themselves and within others. This resonance underscores the non-contradictory, indivisible nature of Truth. Truth by its definition is the same for all people.

Truth in its divine entirety, however, is only knowable to God. Friends have a central tenet that there is that of God in everyone, so anyone, therefore, may come to experience some part of that divine Truth. But that doesn't mean that there is truth in everything a person says or does, but that at the core of their very existence is the divine Truth that God exists for everyone and that each of us can experience it.

Guided by a spirit of inclusivity, Quakers derive wisdom from past insights but guard against allowing these insights to encumber present and future revelations. The absence of creeds or doctrine within Quakerism has engendered a diversity of perspectives on the divine, and individual beliefs are afforded the respect they deserve. For Quakers, actions and deeds occupy a more central role than strict adherence to ritual or beliefs.

Consequently, scientific discoveries seldom pose a challenge to the fundamental tenets of Quakerism. Quaker faith and practice align with the empirical and experiential, much akin to the scientific method. Quakers assert that Truth is apprehended through direct experience, echoing the methodology of science. In the words of Howard Brinton, "Quakerism is primarily a method, just as science is primarily a method."

Using such terms as "the Inward Light" and "the Seed of Truth," early Friends developed a rich lexicon to describe their inward experience of the Divine. In an attempt to acknowledge the equal contributions of both the male and female, the Light and Dark attributes of God, many Friends today are careful to use either non-sexist, non-racist names for the Divine or a variety of both feminine and masculine pronouns and metaphors.

In America today the need to discern what is real and not real has become an existential imperative. Teaching ourselves to be critical thinkers and consumers of information has become a very real exercise in the pursuit of Truth. It has also become imperative that we learn how to communicate with each other about that truth in ways that it can be heard.

"Love without Truth is Sentimental. Truth without Love is Cruelty."

"He who listens becomes he who understands." Maxims of Ptahhotep

*This lesson was Inspired and adapted from Marsha D. Holliday – [Exploring Quakerism: a Study Guide Teenager's Edition](#) 2018

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LESSON FOR CHILDREN

Quakers, or as we are also called, Friends, like to think about important things in life in a particular way. We believe that there is something that is always, eternally True for all of us. We think this big Truth comes from God and can only be known completely by God. It's as if there is a little bit of God inside everyone. It's like everyone has a piece of a puzzle, and when you put all the pieces together, you get the whole picture. We don't all have the same beliefs about God, but that's okay because we all see a different part of that Truth.

We believe that God keeps showing us more and more, so we always stay open to new ideas and thoughts and feelings. Quakers like to learn from what people believed in the past, but we don't want those old ideas to stop us from discovering new things. We want to keep learning as we grow and change and as our societies grow and change.

As we go about our daily lives, we try to see and think clearly and ask questions like: Is what I'm being told a fact? Did this really happen? Is this the whole story? Not everyone is always telling us what is real, sometimes they are not, but asking questions is a good way to find out. One way of finding out what's real is science, which is a method to ask questions about our experience. So we are excited when we hear about new scientific discoveries because that's just another new way to understand what's really True about the world around us.

When we are listening to someone or thinking of what to say to someone, it's helpful to whisper to ourselves: "T.H.I.N.K.S." This will help us evaluate what's being said, and act in ways that are helpful for all.

T – is it True?

H – is it Helpful?

I - is it Inspiring?

N – is it Necessary?

K – is it Kind?

S - is it Safe?

Here are some fun ways to test our search for truth:

Perception. This exercise highlights how different our experience and perceptions can be. Show a series of images for 10 seconds each – any complex photo image will do. If you want start with the classic Blue Dress/Gold Dress perception. Or the Duck/rabbit graphic. Have each person make a list of what they see in each image. Once complete, have them share their lists with each other and tell them that they should all be the same since they saw the same images. But are they? Note that humility and an awareness that we all don't have the same impressions as others is

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essential to conflict resolution. If our observations are different - people may see colors or shapes differently or describe them differently, how do the differences matter? What can we learn from the experience of others?

Game Two Truths and a Lie. Each player takes a turn sharing two facts and one fiction about themselves with the group. Other players must decide which statements are real, and which are inventions. This game is a way to get to know each other.

Seeking the Truth. Each person takes a turn asking the team to identify if something is true or false. The team asks questions or searches on their phones to try and determine the truth. It can be an urban legend, an historical fact, or something scientific or funny. It can also be something the answer is not yet entirely known to engage discussion. (“Have Aliens have landed on earth in the past”.)

QUERY

What is something you think is true for all people? Was there ever a time when you learned something new that was true? What other questions can you ask to determine the truth?

“La Verdad Adelgaza, Pero No Quiebra”

(The truth may be stretched thin, but it never breaks.)

Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra

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ACTIVITIES:

Review Southern Poverty Law Center Guides (available on their website). Building Resilience and Confronting Risk: A parent and Caregivers Guide to Online Radicalization and Building Networks & Addressing Harm: A Community Guide to Online Youth Radicalization. Some of their suggestions are:

DISCUSS the news with children in an age-appropriate way. Visit sites like the News Literacy Project to learn how you can avoid misinformation and propaganda.

EDUCATE children on the ways that propaganda and misinformation are used to manipulate people. Talk to them about both the styles and strategies of extremist propaganda (such as scapegoating or offering simple solutions to complex problems). Explain that propaganda can be delivered in any medium—writing, video, music, memes, etc.—and can often disguise itself as humor.

ENCOURAGE your children to critically examine messages they receive and to treat the information they consume as persuasive devices, meant to convince them of a worldview. Talk about what they can do if they encounter an extremist message online or in real life. These critical thinking skills and vigilance can help a child spot and overcome radicalizing messages.

Make Fanciful “T.H.I.N.K.S. hats. Use cardboard, tissue paper, staples, paints and other art supplies to make fanciful hats using the THINKS themes.

Print Stickers or business cards with T.H.I.N.K.S. and give them out.

FIELD TRIPS

Queens Science Museum

New York Historical Society

Museum of the City of New York

American Museum of Natural History

READINGS AND RESOURCES

The True Story of the Three Little Pigs by Jon Scieszka and Lane Smith (recommended by Susan Ryder)

Buzzing with Questions – the inquisitive mind of Charles Henry Turner by Janice N. Harrington

The Honest-to-Goodness Truth by Patricia C. McKissack