

## Quaker Heritage Day 2017 Berkeley Friends Church

### Session One: Turning to Christ Within

#### Longing

**Mary Pennington:** Oh! the groans and cries in secret that were raised in me, that I might be visited of the Lord, and come to the knowledge of his way ... I would cry out: "I care not for [an inheritance] in this life: give it to those who care for it. I am miserable with it: it is acceptance with thee I desire and that alone can satisfy me. ... *I was like the parched heath,...so great was my thirst after that which I did not believe was near me.*

**Stephen Crisp:** I wanted power to answer the requirings of that in me, which witnesseth against evil in me, and this I lamented day and night. And when I was about nine or ten years old, I sought the power of God with great diligence and earnestness, with strong cries and tears; and if I had had the whole world I would have given it, to have known how to obtain power over my corruptions.

**George Fox:** I was grieved that any that made profession of religion should offer to do so [ie bet on drinking]. ... I was sensible they did not possess what they professed.

**Reflection questions:** Can you remember a recent time when you felt a desire for greater connection with God, or longed to live a life with greater love and integrity?

If you didn't feel longing, have you felt uneasy, restless, cynical, or despairing?

#### Seeking

**Francis Howgill:** "I fasted and prayed and walked mournfully in sorrow, and thought none was like me, tempted on every hand. So I ran to this man and the other, and they made promises to me, but it was only words.... Then there appeared more beauty in them called Independents, and I loved them, and so joined them. And I purchased books with all the money that I could get, and walked with them and owned them as more separate from the world.... But at last I saw it was but in words...."

**William Dewsbury:** "I met with none who could tell me what God had done for their souls, in redeeming them from the body of sin, which I groaned under, and which separated me from the presence of God; although I walked strictly with them in their outward observances and in running to hear one man after another, called ministers, yet I found no rest nor peace to my weary soul."

**Joan Vokins:** I did believe that there was a People or Church over whom Christ Jesus was Head, though I could yet not find them... yet long sought after it sorrowfully, with many strong and fervent cries and desires....

**Reflection Questions:** In what ways have you sought outside yourself for greater spiritual understanding or communion with God?

What kinds of thoughts, feelings, desires, fears, or intuitions motivate you to seek?

## Turning Within

**William Dewsbury:** [Finally I was] “turned within, by the power of the Lord, to wait in his counsel, the light in my conscience, to hear what the Lord would say.”

**George Fox:** I fasted much, and walked abroad in solitary places many days, and often took my Bible and went and sat in hollow trees and lonesome places till night came on; and frequently in the night walked mournfully about by myself, for I was a man of sorrows in the times of the first workings of the Lord in me. ... I kept myself much as a stranger, seeking heavenly wisdom and getting knowledge from the Lord, and was brought off from outward things to rely wholly on the Lord alone. And though my exercises and troubles were very great, yet were they not so continual but that I had some intermissions, and was sometimes brought into such an heavenly joy that I thought I had been in Abraham’s bosom.”

**Mary Penington:** Not having found what I sought after, and longed for, in the practice of religious duties.... In this restless, distressed state, I often retired to the country, without any company but my daughter and her maid; and there I spent many hours each day bemoaning myself, and desiring the knowledge of the truth.

**Francis Howgill:** [A]s we waited upon him in pure silence, our minds out of all things, his heavenly presence appeared in our assemblies, when there was no language, tongue, nor speech from any creature. The Kingdom of Heaven did gather us and catch us all, as in a net, and his heavenly power at one time drew many hundreds to land. We came to know a place to stand in and what to wait in; and the Lord appeared daily to us . . . .

**Isaac Penington:** That which God sows and brings up is a sensible plant, not a knowing mind; and thy right judgment is only in the sensibleness of that plant, not in the understanding or comprehension of thy mind.

**Isaac Penington:**

Be no more than God hath made thee.  
Give over thine own willing; give over thine own running;  
give over thine own desiring to know or to be any thing,  
and sink down to the seed which God sows in the heart,  
and let that grow in thee, and be in thee,  
and breathe in thee, and act in thee,  
and thou shalt find by sweet experience  
that the Lord knows that, and loves and owns that,  
and will lead it to the inheritance of life....

**Tender Heart Exercise:**

“What does your tender heart know right now?”      “Thank you.”      Pause and repeat.

**Reflection Questions:** At present, when or how do you turn inward? What makes it difficult ?  
What helps you to be patient or to "wait expectantly" when you turn your attention inward?

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### Session Two: Openings and The Refiner's Fire

#### Openings

**William Dewsbury:** And the word of the Lord came to me, and said, 'Put up thy sword into its scabbard; if my kingdom were of this world then would my children fight: knowest thou not, that if I needed, I could have twelve legions of angels from my Father?' Which word enlightened my heart, and discovered the mystery of iniquity; it showed the *kingdom of Christ to be within*, and that its enemies being within and spiritual, my weapons against them should be spiritual,--the power of God.

**George Fox:** [T]hen, Oh then, I heard a voice which said, 'There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition', and when I heard it, my heart did leap for joy.

**Richard Farnsworth:** [I]n waiting upon the Lord, in the light of the Spirit of truth I found much inward peace, joy, comfort, and satisfaction to my soul, and the righteous law of the spirit of life set up within, convincing of sin.

**Mary Penington:** Immediately it arose in my mind, that if I would know whether that was truth they had spoken or not, I must do what I knew to be the Lord's will. What was contrary to it was now set before me, as to be removed; and I must come into a state of entire obedience, before I could be in a capacity to perceive or discover what it was which they laid down for their principles.

**Isaac Penington:** A]t length it pleased life to move in a low way...and by sinking low...out of the reason...trusting myself to it...at length there was some appearance of the deliverer, in such a poor, low, weak, despicable way, as could never have been welcomed, had not the soul been first brought to distress.... And then coming out of that into the feeling, into another part; here was a seed sprung up into a child...and I am daily strengthened in him, and daily weakened in that part which lived before. ...[T]here is a great difference between comprehending the knowledge of things and tasting the hidden life of them...I fed on the sweetness of the former, until finding the true manna of the latter."

**Thomas Ellwood:** My understanding began to open, and I felt some stirrings in my breast, tending to the work of a new creation in me. The general trouble and confusion of mind, which had for some days lain heavy upon me and pressed me down, without a distinct discovery of the particular cause for which it came, began to wear off, and some glimmerings of light began to break forth in me, which let me see my inward state and condition towards God. ... For the Lord was pleased to make His discoveries to me by degrees, that the sight of too great a work, and too many enemies to encounter with at once, might not discourage me and make me faint."

#### **Reflection Questions:**

Have you ever experienced openings, revelations, spiritual insights, guidance, intuitions, or consolations from God or Christ? Have you found it difficult to accept and remember them?

When and to whom have you talked about the openings you have received?

**The Refiner's Fire** *The Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple...  
But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears?  
For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap.... (Malachi 3:1, 2)*

**George Fox:** "But oh, then did I see my troubles, trials, and temptations more than ever I had done! As the light appeared, all appeared that is out of the light, darkness, death, temptations, the unrighteous, the ungodly; all was manifest and seen in the Light. Then after this there did appear a pure fire in me; then I saw how he sat as at a refiner's fire and as the fuller's soap; and then the spiritual discerning came into me, by which I did discern my own thoughts, groans and sighs, and what it was that did veil me, and what it was that did open me.

**William Smith:** so man comes out of Anger and Envy, into Meekness and Love,.... So a Drunkard turning to the Light, when it reproves him for Drunkenness, and yielding obedience to it, it leads him out of Drunkenness into Soberness, and delivers him from under the power of Satan, who hath him Captive at his will... and thus all *old things* is put off, and all things are *made new*, in the work of Regeneration, in which a new birth is raised, that abides in the Fathers House, and feeds upon [the] bread of Life.

**Margaret Fell:** "Let the Eternal Light search you, and try you for the good of your souls... It will rip you up and lie you open, and make all manifest which lodgeth in you... Therefore all to this come and by this be searched and judged and led and guided."

**John Banks:** I did not only come to be convinced by the living appearance of the Lord Jesus of the evil and vanity, sin and wickedness that the world lies in (and that I was so much a partaker thereof); .... But by taking true heed thereunto, through watchfulness and fear, I came by one little after another to be sensible of the work thereof in my heart and soul, in order to subdue and bring down, tame and subject the wild nature in me, and to wash, purge, and cleanse me inwardly from sin and corruption; for that end that I might be changed and converted.

**Mary Penington:** I feel and know when I have slipped in word, deed, or thought; and also know where my help lieth, who is my advocate, and have recourse to him who pardons and heals, and gives me to overcome, setting me on my watch-tower. ... Oh! that I may, by discovering my own weakness, ever be tender of the tempted; watching and praying, lest I also be tempted. Sweet is this state, though low; for in it I receive my daily bread, and enjoy that which he handeth forth continually; and live not, but as he breatheth the breath of life upon me every moment.

**Isaac Penington:** Belief in the light works patience, meekness, gentleness, tenderness, and long-suffering. It will bear anything for God, anything for men's souls sake. It will wait quietly and stilly for the carrying on of the work of God in its own soul, and for the manifestation of God's love and mercy to others. It will bear the contradiction and reproach of sinners, seeking their good, even .... Here is joy, unspeakable joy, joy which the world cannot see or touch, nor the powers of darkness come near to interrupt...and this joy is full of glory, which glory increaseth daily more and more, by the daily sight and feeling of the living virtue and power in Christ the light, whereby the soul is continually transformed, and changed more and more out of the corruptible into the incorruptible. ... in them that turns towards it, give up to it, and abide in it...it cleanseth out the thickness and darkness, and daily transformeth them into the image, purity, and perfection of the light.

**Reflection Questions:** When, if ever, have you felt God or the Light showing you things you are doing that are not God's will or not in keeping with love and truth? What is that like?

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### Session Three: All Who Are Led By The Spirit

#### Gathered into Community

**John Banks:** And in the same inward sense, and feeling of the Lord's power and presence, we enjoyed one another, and were near and dear one unto another. But it was through various trials and deep exercises, with fear and trembling, that on this wise we were made partakers.

**Margaret Fell:** [E]very one, in their measures, may be serviceable to the whole body, in what is called for, and required: and who dwells in the Light, it makes subject, to be serviceable to the Body. ... So let that Love constrain you to love one another, and be serviceable to one another....

**Katharine Evans and Sarah Chevers:** we did see you our dear friends,...and did behold your order, and steadfastness of your faith and love to all saints, and were refreshed in all the faithful hearted, and felt the issues of love and life which did stream from the hearts of those that were wholly joined to the fountain, and were made sensible of the benefit of your prayers.

#### **Reflection Questions:**

How does being part of a gathered spiritual community help us live faithful lives?

What claims does God make upon us when we are gathered together into community?

#### Leadings

**William Caton:** This thing settled in me, and grew clearer and clearer...for the longer it continued the more assurance I came to have in my self, of the thing being of the Lord.... And in the mean time it came to be shown unto me, how I should proceed in the thing: As first of all...I was to propound it to some dear friends to hear and receive their advice...and so much subjection I found then in my spirit that if they...had no unity with the thing that then I could (I believe) have let the thing [fall] and...rested satisfied...about it....

**Marmaduke Stephenson:** “[A]s I walked after the plough, I was filled with the love and living presence of the Living God, which did ravish my heart when I felt it; for it did increase and abound in me like a living stream, so did the love and life of God run through me like precious ointment, giving a pleasant smell; which made me to stand still; and as I stood a little still with my heart and mind stayed on the Lord, the Word of the Lord came to me in a still small voice, which I did hear perfectly, saying to me in the secret of my heart and conscience: ‘I have ordained thee a prophet to the nations.’ And at the hearing of the Word of the Lord, I was put to a stand, being that I was but a child for such a weighty matter. So at the time appointed, Barbados was set before me, unto which I was required of the Lord to go, and leave my dear and loving wife and tender children. For the Lord said to me immediately by his Spirit that he would be as a husband to my wife and as a father to my children, and they should not want in my absence, for he would provide for them when I was gone. And I believed that the Lord would perform what he had spoken, because I was made willing to give up myself to his work and service, to leave all and follow him, whose presence is with me....”

**Reflection Questions:** What leadings have you experienced about how to live? When have you felt led by the Spirit to undertake a particular action, big or small? What happens when you ignore a leading or guidance? What helps us test a leading and respond faithfully?

## Living in the Cross

**Barbara Blaugdone:** [A]s the Evil was made manifest, I departed from it, and willingly took up the Cross, and yielded Obedience unto it, in plainness of Speech and in my Habit: & the people were so offended with it, when I went into their Public Places and Steeple-houses to speak, that they took away their Children from me, so that I lost almost all my Employment; and they kept me in Prison a quarter of a Year at a time: And great was my Sufferings in that Day, but the Lord so filled me with his Power, that I was preserved through it all....

**Elizabeth Hooton:** O dear friends, when the lord that set you free and brought you into joy, then you think you have overcome all, but there is a daily Cross to be taken up while the fleshly will remaineth....

**Reflection Questions:** What is your experience of "a cross to our wills"? When have you chosen to sacrifice your personal desires for a higher purpose? How do you struggle when you feel led to do something that is uncomfortable or risky? Have you found peace when surrendering your personal will to follow God's will?

## Abiding in Divine Love and Power

**Edward Burrough:** And while waiting upon the Lord in silence, as often we did for many hours together, with our minds and hearts toward him, ...we received often the pouring down of the Spirit upon us, and the gift of God's holy eternal Spirit...and our hearts were made glad...."

**Francis Howgill:** We came to know a place to stand in and what to wait in; and the Lord appeared daily to us, to our astonishment, amazement and great admiration, insomuch that we often said one unto another with great joy of heart: "What, is the Kingdom of God come to be with men? ... And holy resolutions were kindled in our hearts as a fire which the Life kindled in us to serve the Lord while we had a being... And from that day forward, our hearts were knit unto the Lord and one unto another in true and fervent love, in the covenant of Life with God... And thus the Lord, in short, did form us to be a people for his praise in our generation.

**Elizabeth Hooton:** All this and much more I have gone through and suffered, and much more could I for the Seed's sake which is Buried and Oppressed... Yes, the Love that I bear to the Souls of all Men, making me willing to undergo whatsoever can be inflicted.

**Mary Fisher:** There is a love begot in me towards them which is endless.... [T]hough they be called Turks, the seed of them is near unto God, and their kindness hath...been shown....

**Mary Dyer:** [T]his is to me an hour of the greatest joy I ever had in this World. No ear can hear, no tongue can utter, no heart can understand the sweet incomes or influence, and the refreshings of the Spirit of the Lord which now I feel.

### **Reflection Questions:**

Have you ever been moved to act by a love greater than yourself? Have you served people because of a sense of God's love for them, or sacrificed for another? In what ways have you or your community experienced God's power?