

## Spiritual Practice, Quaker Practice

**What is my spiritual practice?** I wait to enter into the place of the Spirit. Sometimes it is as if the Spirit comes over me. Then I seek to be one with the will of the Spirit. Listening and watching are my means.

**Personal retirement.** I wait, but I do not seek. I follow my breath to still my mind and body. When centered, I listen. When the Spirit moves me, I am moved to prayer and praise, sometimes with words, but most often without words. Sometimes concerns or images come and the light of the Spirit illuminates them to me, showing me what I am and who I am. I come to know the truth about myself, both the good and the bad. I find out which way to go and what action to take. The negative is taken away and the positive is given. Death is removed and life is offered. I see myself and the world for what it is, not for what I want the world and myself to be. The Spirit of the Truth and Life transforms me. I am humbled.

I find this difficult to do. I lack time, other things intrude, and I am fearful. Something about me does not want this transformation to take place. Yet something calls me on. When I do practice this discipline it is as if I am stepping into another world.

**Reverence and intentionality.** When I enter into the wilderness, I come to know that all is indeed given. I only need to accept it.

When honest, I let go of false notions. I see the nature of my desires and become less fearful. I become independent from others and the world's complications and from myself as well. For I see that the self is a construction of the mind. I understand the spiritual law in its simplicity. Where my faith is, so I am. Where my mind is, there I am. If I allow my body to follow, I am made whole again.

In the wilderness I learn to follow in love and appreciation. I begin to follow my bliss or my blessings or my happiness or my Lord. The Spirit is the object of my longing. This is a holy place because the eternal has broken through time and I remember that in Egypt, I was in bondage.

**Corporate worship.** Meeting for Worship is the meeting tent of the Lord. I give up myself and I wait and listen for the Spirit. This is the manner of worship in all meetings for worship, whether called for that express purpose only or for committee work, clearness, business, or worship sharing.

I seek to know the Spirit of truth for us all. I will hear it with my ears and I will see it with my eyes. I will know it in my heart and soul and mind. I will sense the oneness of it. All is Spirit and in the end will come in accord with the spiritual law. We are unified in the Love of the Spirit. I am naked; yet I know no fear. In the depths of the Silence, we are not alone. We sense the power of our eternal Being.

Having accepted the truth that I can choose to follow my egoistical will and mind or seek to be examined and then transformed by the light and power of the Spirit, I await the Living Presence. There are times when I am “inspired” by the Spirit. I partake in the Creative Spirit. When I sense that this is something to share with my fellow worshipers, I am moved to vocal ministry.

In meeting for worship with a concern for business, we center down in worship and wait for the Spirit, listening, seeking that cool state of independence from ourselves and from others.

Concerns and the business of the community are brought forth by the clerk. In the Kingdom of God, what do we seek? As always in worship, I wait, holding these concerns until the light of the Spirit reveals their nature to me. If I am “inspired,” I will share this as it is given to me, no more nor less. When others speak, I hold what is said in the Light, waiting for the Light to illuminate it.

If we stay inwardly focused and patiently wait for the Light of the Spirit to reveal the reality of the concern, then in time the clerk will be able to sense the Divine Will within the community.

No vote or parliamentary procedure is used. I suspect actions like standing in the way or standing aside. These are votes. A concern is voiced. Its weight is held and discerned in the light of the Spirit. If the sense of the meeting is that this concern needs further seasoning, it is laid over to a later meeting so that Friends can spend time with it in clearness procedures and prayer.

A meeting community that firmly believes that, as one clerk put it, “if we shut up and listen God will tell us what to do,” will make different choices and, as a result of those choices, will come out looking different from a meeting that believes that “what is most important is our sense of community and how we nurture each other” and that our business process is one of consensus and democracy. (E. Cazden, *Fellowships, Conferences and Associations*. 19)

Many times during meeting for worship with a concern for business, we never really seem to discern God’s will. There are a great many people who are not waiting on the Spirit, and hence, are not listening for the Spirit’s will. There are too many people not worshipping in the manner of Friends. They are worshipping in the manner of a parliament.

**Silence and harmony.** I practice being silent as a way into worship. Silence is the place where I meet the Spirit. Being silent enables me to focus inwardly. It aids in my ability to be still in my thoughts and listen for that which is deeper. It helps me from placing my own words or the words of others over and above that of the inward revelation of the Spirit’s word. I am beginning to use silence in my relations with others. The practice of being silent in everyday interactions promotes less confusion, minimizes disagreement, and increases my ability to listen deeply and to hold the world in the Light of the Holy Spirit. I think it helps me to make accurate assessments and sound judgments. We seek unity and harmony within ourselves, with each other, and with the cosmos itself.

**Simplicity.** Simplicity is how I keep true to the Life of the Spirit. Obligations, commitments, social and financial responsibilities, and entertainments can be distractions from prayer and following the Spirit. For me this is especially true within the fellowship of our faith community. Too much service, no matter how well intended, causes stress because it causes my attention to be focused too often outwardly and too seldom inwardly.

Addictions avoid the Life. I avoid attachments that distract, confuse, and take up a great deal of time. The simplicity of the spiritual truth should not be complicated by my desires, intellect, or imagination. I need to practice humility by grounding myself in the reality shown to me by the Light of the Spirit. As Fox taught: “keep down, be low, that nothing may rule nor reign in you but life itself.” (R. Ambler, *Truth of the Heart*. 78)

**Obedience and surrender.** In time and with patience, I will be given wisdom and initiative from within the depth of my self, but I must accept them. “[T]hey are happy that do obey the truth of what they are convinced; and if they do not, they will lose the days of their innocency and simplicity.” (R. Ambler, 78) When I hold these intentions in mind and wait on the creative power of the Spirit and when I submit to or enter into this creative power, I have faith that good fruit will blossom and ripen. I have had this experience of the Spirit and I know it to be true. I have escaped the chains of Egypt and taken the journey through the wilderness.

Safe journey, fellow travelers, wherever you are.

*Joe Garren, Brooklyn Meeting  
(from School of the Spirit essay)*