

SESSION TWO. OUR VALUES, OUR LIVES

from *Be the Change: Five study group sessions exploring Quaker witness to our values*. Full pack available for download at www.livingwitness.org.uk

This session explores our values, the way we live them in our lives, and their links to the Quaker Testimonies. It seeks to affirm Friends in the values they are living, and to begin to empower them to live more congruently with their ideals.

Time guide

Opening worship	10 min
Facilitator's introduction	5-10 min
Thought-shower on values	15 min
Individual reflection	5-10 min
Small group discussion of values	20 min
Feedback and discussion	20 min
Closing worship	5 min
Total	90 min approx

Resources

Large sheets of paper or flipchart and several coloured pens
Paper and pens/pencils for participants to make notes, draw etc.

Before the session

If possible, contact members of the group to make sure they are coming. It may seem unnecessary but it really can make a difference if they feel that their presence matters to the group!

Prepare the facilitator's introduction – around 500 words or one side of typed A4 – or use text below

Write up the session plan on a large sheet of paper or flipchart.

Write out the questions for individual reflection on a large sheet of paper or flipchart.

Session plan

Opening worship (10 min)

Facilitator's introduction (5-10 min)

While Quakers do not have a single shared theology or belief system, we do tend to share a range of values, in particular those expressed in the testimonies to simplicity, truth, integrity, equality, justice and peace. We also emphasise the values central to the Christian tradition – such as love, compassion and forgiveness. We share an understanding that our lives should speak for our values.

Even when we do share values, often they come from very different sources. We are all influenced by our own psychological make-up, our childhood and later experiences, our spirituality, theology, the ideas we have been exposed to and our personal circumstances.

In this session we aim to gain a better understanding of each other's values, and perhaps a little of their foundations. We will ask which values are reflected in our lives, and which we find hard to measure up to. This is not about guilt: above all we aim to affirm each other in the way we are living our values, and to understand where the challenges lie.

Thought shower on values (15 mins)

Introduce the questions for this part of the session: what values are important to us, as individuals and as Quakers? the Testimonies; other values?

Take participants responses in the form of a thought shower (see glossary in Appendix A): ask participants to call out their thoughts; to be brief; to make sure everyone has a chance to speak; to refrain from commenting on each other's thoughts at this stage: there will be time for discussion later. One facilitator should write the thoughts up on the flipchart using language as close as possible to that offered.

Participants could be prompted to identify values that they would like to see reflected 1) in their own lives; 2) in their relationships with others and in their community, Quaker or otherwise; and 3) in the wider world.

Individual reflection (5-10 mins) followed by small group discussion of values (20 mins)

Display the questions to be asked prominently:

1. How do I live out my values? What helps me?
2. What values would I like to live better? What stops me?

In introducing this activity, it may be helpful for a facilitator to model the type of response being sought, by briefly and frankly describing one way in which they live out their values, and an area where they would like to live closer to their values.

Follow the general guidance in the introduction on working with small groups. Make notepaper and pens/pencils available for participants to write down or draw their thoughts.

Ask the group divide into groups of three, and to start with a period of silent reflection. It is probably best for you to tell them when the time for reflection is up – allow 5-10 minutes. Then ask them to take turns addressing the two questions.

They should split the group time equally and follow the practice of creative listening (this involves focused, reflective listening without interruption or comment: see glossary in Appendix A).

Feedback and discussion (20 min)

Invite participants to share what came up for them in the small groups. Remind them not to repeat what others have said but to speak from their own experience. This time could be taken as worship sharing or free-flowing discussion. If you do decide on worship sharing, remind participants of the following guidelines:

- The session is in the spirit of worship, grounded in silence.
- Participants should speak when they are ready, from their own experience.
- Others should focus on listening, upholding the speaker, letting go of any desire to react or respond.
- Leave some silence between contributions so that the group remains centred.
- Participants should not speak more than once, at least before everyone has spoken.
- You could place a stone or talking stick in the centre of the group for participants to hold when they speak. Let the group know how long is available for each contribution plus silence.
- When everyone who wants to has shared, tell the group that you are moving on to closing worship.

Closing worship (5 min, close by holding hands)