



Journeys in the Spirit

inward outward upward downward

Children's work edition March 2015 Issue 96



Quakers and the Bible – how do we use it?

Getting ready

This issue of *Journeys in the spirit* offers ways to consider Quaker approaches to the Bible with children. In an historical context, this is easy because early Friends had strong personal connections with the Bible. Now, it is not so. We are a Religious Society containing a vast range of religious experiences and responses to the Bible. This includes those who are uncomfortable with Christian language and those with little or no contact with a Bible.

As you prepare to share this topic, think about how you perceive the Bible. What is it to you; what might it be to children in your meeting? In opening the Bible during children's meeting for worship, you are providing an opportunity for children to experience wonder and to develop their own views, feelings and thoughts about the Bible. They may find inspiration, insight, and guidance in how to live their lives, and perhaps gain an openness to connect with Bible references in literature and paintings.

The foundation of this issue is in *Journeys in the Spirit* issue 59. To ensure all children in your Meeting have had some interaction with the Bible, it helps to use that issue before introducing this one. It is available online if you don't already have a copy – see sidebar for a link.

Journeys in the Spirit offers resources and ideas to Quakers engaging with children and young people.

This children's work edition comes out monthly. It offers resources and ideas to Quakers engaging with 5–12 year olds in a Quaker setting.

It provides opportunities for exploring, creating and learning in an atmosphere of worship in partnership on our shared journey in the spirit.

Gather

Resources for this session: copies of pictures from Additional Resource 96.A; a small selection of natural objects – for example flowers, stones, shells, sand; a candle in a holder and enough small candles (tea lights in holders) for one for each child, matches.

One adult greets each child at the door, shaking their hand and welcoming them by name. Another adult sits on a large rug. Calmly and quietly, welcoming each child.

When everyone has arrived and settled, light a candle to remind everyone that God is present. Light a small candle for each child, saying their name, and then one candle for "absent Friends". Sit quietly for a moment. In the silence, place pictures from (*Additional Resource 96.A* – see sidebar for a link) and natural items in the circle. Ask children to look at the images and natural items, maintaining the quiet of worship. Ask which one they particularly like, makes them feel good, might make them happy if they are sad?

For older children, also ask them to think about if and when they have needed help to make a difficult decision. Ask if any of the images or items reminds them of who or what helped make a good decision. After silence, ask them to place their image/item beside them, and that they will use them again - now you are going to introduce them to a book full of big, sometimes helpful stories and poems.

Underpinning references:



Advices and queries: 1.02.5

Journeys in the Spirit issue 59 available at: www.quaker.org.uk/journeys-spirit-59-childrens-work-edition

Additional Resource 96.A can be found at: www.quaker.org.uk/resources-children

Engage

Introduce the Bible – a hidden treasure. *Resources: three different Bibles, including a children's Bible and one that is older and possibly bigger, each wrapped in cloth.*

Carefully and respectfully unwrap one of the Bibles – maybe the children's one - placing it carefully in front of you. Ask children to say what they think might be found in the Bible – exploring what they know already. Stories about people, things they did, decisions they made, parables or puzzles, poems. Listen, ask questions that encourage children to think or say more.

Keeping what you say as brief and concise as possible:

- Say something about how different people understand or 'see' the Bible differently – some people think every word is true and it comes direct God, other people think it is a book full of stories and history about people who listened to what they called God as a way of working out how to lead their lives. Adjust what you say according to the age of the children.
- Say that in these pages there are stories of adventures and danger and sadness. Stories about some difficult things like war, racism and about what can happen if people behave in unkind, greedy or hurtful ways.
- Say that there are stories that can help us. There might be stories and poems to think about when we are quiet and still in worship.

Unwrap the two remaining bibles, respectively placing them by the others. Explain each one contains the same stories and poems, but these might be told differently; some are in old English, some use present day language, some have more images. Tell children they will have time to look at these Bibles soon. Pause for some quiet. Continue with one of the following:

Exploring the Bible 1 – quotations and images. *Resources: collection of cut out Bible quotes and images (for young children) - see Additional Resources 96.B & 96.C for these.*

Cut up and spread out the quotes and images from *Additional Resources 96.B and 96.C* and ask the children to choose one. Invite children to look at the image or item they chose. Ask them if they can think of one short sentence that says something about their quote or image. After a moment of silence, ask those who want to, to share their sentence. Welcome their sharing with a nod and a smile. No need for verbal responses.

If you are working with older children, hold the Bible, explain: there is so much in the Bible, so many stories about people's lives you wanted them to choose something for themselves. Invite them to choose another quote or image and sit quietly reading/look at it. Encourage them to note how they feel, and what, if any, images, thoughts or memories arise.

Exploring the Bible 2 - the Fruits of the Spirit. *Resources: Bible quote - see Additional Resource 96.D.*

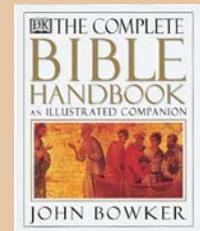
Ask children what they think the word spirit means. Just listen to the answers and answer any questions children have. Read the quote from the book in the Bible, Galatians, as on *Additional Resource 96.D* – simplify it as necessary. Go on to the Respond activity.

Exploring the Bible 3. Standing up to bullies. *Resources: copy of the story on Additional Resource 96.E, Bible to tell the story in your words (Exodus 1.1– 22).*

Remind the children that the Bible that some stories in the Bible are about difficult things like bullying. Reading these stories can help us with our own problems. Tell the children you have chosen just one such story: this one is about two friends who challenged a bully; they didn't do what he wanted. Explain: Shiphrah and Pauh were every day people, like you and me, not royalty or someone specially chosen by God. They stood up to a bully, a man with a lot of power: a Pharaoh, (like a king). See *Additional Resource 96.E*. Tell the story.

References & other resources

The Complete Bible Handbook



ISBN 10:
0789481545

An accessible, inspirational, comprehensive guide to the Bible. Every book of the Bible is outlined and explained. Written by a multi-denominational team. Includes 500 colour illustrations. Recommended by *The Friend* and Woodbrooke.

Christian Sunday schools programmes about bullying, no resources but a bible needed

http://stmonicaindy.org/mediafiles/uploaded/b/0e2388741_1376773269_bully-bibleages10-16.pdf

Additional Resources 96.B, 96.C, 96.D, 96.E. can be found at: www.quaker.org.uk/resources-children

References & other resources

Splashes of God-light. Edited by Terence Copley and others. Bible Society £5.99.

This is an anthology of 19 Bible stories for audiences of all ages, retold by practising Jews and Christians in their own present day language. Each story is accompanied by a note explaining its personal significance for the teller. The book's introduction provides useful suggestions on how to use the stories, which relate to vulnerability, encounters and destiny.

Additional Resource 96.D can be found at: www.quaker.org.uk/resources-children

Respond

Exploring the Bible 1– quotations and images. *Resources: In a space away from where you all sit, have baskets of some or all of the following: paper, coloured pencils, crayons, paints, brushes, water, paper towels or cloths (if needed for spills), scissors, glue, play dough & paper plates, natural items: e.g. rocks, leaves/flowers, pine cones, shells. Set apart a variety of Bibles; small characters (doll house dolls, animals) and other small objects for gazing at and thinking about.*

After some silence, point out the creative resources. Tell the children that for the next 20 minutes they may use the resources to help them quietly draw, write or colour about their quote or picture. How does it link with their life and any feelings or thoughts they may have. Clarify there are items to create with, and items simply for reflecting. Invite them to choose some resources, and to quietly find a comfortable space to use them.

When it is nearly time to come back together, quietly go to each child and let them know it is time to return the materials where they came from and to put creations in a (designated) place; not the centre of their circle. This to avoid presenting creations in a “show & tell”.

Exploring the Bible 2 - the Fruits of the Spirit. *Resources: A variety of different types of fruit, large bowl, some cutting boards, knives (be aware of safety), access to a sink (to wash hands), paper towels/cloths; images of the fruit and the fruit of the spirit words - see Additional Resource 96.D.*

Arrange children into two groups (or more) considering literacy and cooperation abilities. Spread a set of the images of fruit and spirit words in front of each group. Invite children to think which word fits which fruit and pair them up accordingly.

Once the children have done this, invite them to look at the different groups pairings and comment on what was similar, what was different. Use differences as analogy of how people understand the Bible differently. Invite them to explain how they came to their pairing of words and fruit, and what is their favourite. Bring in the basket of fruit. Explain that, with the real fruit, they are going to make a fruit salad while they silently thought about the fruit and words. Guide carefully, e.g. some peel and split oranges, others cut hard fruit. The fruit salad can be shared at the end of children's meeting or with everybody else in meeting.



Exploring the Bible 3 - standing up to bullies. *Resources: A1, A2 paper, coloured pencils, markers, crayons; lined A4 paper; possibly paints...*

This *respond* could continue over more than one Children's Meeting.

Ask the children the following wondering questions - giving time for responses and encouraging moments of silence between comments: I wonder what you would have done if you were the two people in the story? I wonder what we can do in this Meeting to remind people to be helpful and kind and to do their best to stand up to bullies. Encourage children to develop their ideas and work together to do so. Suggestions: write a story, make and give a presentation or perform a play; create a radio, television or magazine advertisement; make a poster; make puppets and a puppet show... Support the children to share their message widely, e.g. if they create a magazine advert, perhaps *The Friend* might publish it or a local newspaper; posters: talk with children about where their poster might be displayed in community shops, library or schools.

Reflect

Resources: small bowls/plates, spoons, cups of water/juice, napkins and fruit salad to share a piece of fruit to each child.

Gather the children together and have them sit quietly for a moment.

Exploring the Bible 1. Invite children to read their quote/show their image and a brief comment. It's okay if they wish to remain silent.

Exploring the Bible 2. Acknowledge to the children they were all inspired in different ways from the Bible quote – Galatians. Tell them you are going to read a poem inspired by the same quote. *The Spiritual Fruit Tree* by the Quaker, Margaret Holman. See *Additional Resource 96.F*.

Exploring the Bible 3. Light a candle and ask children to sit quietly, watching the flames of the candle, and to think positive thoughts about someone who needs their good thoughts/prayers; it may be someone who is bullying or being bullied.

Closing good byes. Say: "We lit one large candle to remind us that God is present with us and within us. As this Meeting for Worship draws to a close, we extinguish the candles for those present." You may choose to say each child's name as you extinguish each candle. Then, "for absent friends" and extinguish. Lastly, extinguish the large candle, reminding "God is with us always, even when we can't see his light" (or words that you are comfortable with).

After a moment of silence, say that you are all going to share some food together: ask children's help to pass around small bowls/plates, cups of water/juice, napkins and fruit salad or a piece of fruit to each child. When done, encourage children to tidy up with you.

Review

Remember: you may not know what each child gained. Consider:

Do you feel the Meeting was worshipful? Did it respect the Quaker testimonies? Were all children able to participate?

Did each child reflect, even a little, on something about her/his thoughts and feelings?

Did you and children have fun?

What went really well; what is there for you to learn from this session and what might you do differently another time?

This issue was written by Eugene Nanning and edited by Chris Nickolay and Howard Nurden.

Journeys in the Spirit is published in two formats – on alternate months. One month the issue is on a theme with an easy to use structure set out in a four page booklet with additional online resources. The alternate month the issue is a topical activity - this is about something in the news or of seasonal interest.

Available from 1 April 2015: **Topical Activity**. Quakers and social justice – new posters from Manchester social justice group.

Available from 1 May 2015: **Issue 97** is the eighth in the series about *Living as a Quaker* and is about the Nobel Peace Prize and the Friends Ambulance Unit.

Available from 1 June 2015: **Topical Activity**. Kites not drones – a summer campaign.

Materials available online are:

Current issue additional Resources Sheets

An easy to use plan for a Children's Meeting

A simple plan for an all age Meeting for Worship

Also a 'How to use *Journeys in the Spirit*' guide; a link to special issues; an archive of previous issues; a discussion forum and a link to the *Journeys in the Spirit* Youth edition.

Go to:

www.quaker.org.uk/journeyschildren and choose from the range of links in the sidebar.

Published by Children & Young People's Staff Team, Quaker Life

Available free by subscription.

Contact:
CYP Staff Team,
Friends House,
173 Euston Road,
London NW1 2BJ

Phone: 020 7663 1013

Email:
cypadmin@quaker.org.uk

Website:
www.quaker.org.uk/cyp