

Peace

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

1. What is the core philosophy of Quakerism as described in the sources?

Quakerism, as depicted in the provided texts, is fundamentally centered on the belief that "there is that of God in everyone," and that each individual possesses the "ability to communicate with that of God within them." This inner experience of discerning God's will in one's heart is considered the foundation of both Quakerism and Christianity. Quakers are called to actively respond to "that of God in others," viewing this as the "driving purpose" of their lives. They strive to minimize secular distractions and gather in silent meetings, seeking collective guidance from the "Inner Light" to which Jesus was so sensitive, with members sharing messages when "moved by the spirit."

2. How do the sources connect personal spiritual conviction with social action, particularly regarding war and societal problems?

The sources strongly link personal spiritual conviction with social action, especially concerning war and societal issues. For Quakers, discerning God's will is not merely an internal exercise but necessitates outward manifestation through action. This is evident in the numerous accounts of individuals, like Jeff, making "fundamental moral decisions" such as refusing to register for the draft due to deeply held pacifist beliefs. The concept of "civil disobedience" is presented as a necessary and "positive" action, even a "rebirth," when one "refuses to be corrupted" by laws or societal pressures that contradict their conscience. The Volunteer Service Mission (VSM) exemplifies this, being an "outward manifestation of an inner change," where individuals translate their beliefs into tangible service to address community needs, expressing a "personal commitment to Christ" and a desire "to solve problems together while living in community." The call to "show love," "be smart," and "take care of each other" also underscores this integration of personal ethics and collective responsibility.

3. What is the significance of "LANDBACK" and related concepts in the provided texts?

"LANDBACK" is presented as "the reclamation of everything stolen from the original Peoples." It's deeply connected to the critique of "profligate use of fossil fuels" and "extraction projects," which are viewed as "theft of land" even when legally sanctioned by eminent domain. The source connects this to indigenous rights, specifically advocating for the respect of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and tribal rights to free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC). The narrative

highlights instances of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) using force against Indigenous land defenders, emphasizing the need for their withdrawal from Wet'suwet'en lands. The broader implication is a call to action against systems of oppression and for the protection of "Mother Earth," where "agitating to stop the profligate use of fossil fuels has been my life's work," reflecting a spiritual and ethical commitment to the environment and justice for those dispossessed.

4. How do the sources illustrate the pressures and challenges faced by individuals who choose conscientious objection or civil disobedience?

The sources vividly illustrate the immense pressures and challenges faced by individuals choosing conscientious objection or civil disobedience. These pressures come from multiple directions: "tradition, parental and peer pressure, the law, etc." Jeff's experience with his parents' initial upset over his decision to turn in draft cards, and his father's subsequent support despite personal reservations, highlight the familial strain. The Selective Service System is described as exploiting these pressures by not widely publicizing alternatives. Individuals face internal "frustrating, anguish" struggles when "searching for truth, honesty and integrity," which can "stifle personal growth and lead to the loss of a spirit of idealism and faith in the goodness of men." John Griffith's experiences in jail, facing verbal abuse, extreme heat, and solitary confinement ("the hole"), demonstrate the physical and psychological hardships. The threat of legal consequences, including felony charges and the loss of civil rights like voting, further underscores the significant personal cost of such principled stands.

5. What role does "mutual aid" play in the themes presented?

Mutual aid plays a significant role, particularly as a practical manifestation of spiritual beliefs and a strategy for collective support. It is described as "spiritual tacit knowledge" within Doukhobor epistemology, signifying that acting with the "spirit of God against any form of authoritative persecution" and engaging in "pacifism to the point of vegetarianism" are deeply intertwined with their practice of mutual support. The Doukhobors, or "spirit wrestlers," embody this by "wrestl[ing] with and for the Spirit of God against those things that are evil," which inherently involves caring for one another. Des Moines Mutual Aid is mentioned as representing this concept in a contemporary context, explicitly acknowledging that beneficiaries are "standing on and directly benefiting from stolen land" and highlighting the "police state" as a foundation built on "stolen bodies." This implies that mutual aid is not just about charity but about addressing systemic injustices and building community resilience.

6. What is the concept of "story" and its importance as described in the sources?

The concept of "story" is presented as fundamental to human existence and connection: "ALL THAT WE ARE IS STORY." From birth to the spiritual journey beyond, individuals are "involved in the creation of the story of our time here," and it is "all we leave behind." This perspective asserts that humans are not defined by material possessions or deemed importance, but by their narrative. The significance lies in "the creation of the best possible story we can while we're here; you, me, us, together." Sharing these stories is seen as a transformative act that allows people to "get bigger inside, we see each other, we recognize our kinship — we change the world one story at a time." This highlights the power of personal narratives in fostering empathy, understanding, and collective action.

7. How do the texts address the relationship between individual conscience and governmental authority?

The texts explicitly address the tension between individual conscience and governmental authority, particularly in the context of conscription and war. Questions are posed directly, such as: "Is it not possible that an individual may be right and a government wrong? Are laws to be enforced simply because they are made?" This reflects a deep questioning of blind obedience to the law. The decision to resist the draft, despite "tremendous pressure" from legal and societal norms, is framed as an act of integrity driven by a commitment to "truth" and one's "Inner Light." The experiences of individuals like John Griffith, who endured imprisonment for his conscientious objection, and his father, who stood by him against a district attorney, underscore the belief that one's "religion and to his conscience" can legitimately override state demands, even if it leads to legal consequences. The idea that "civil disobedience is the only alternative when a man refuses to be corrupted" further emphasizes the moral imperative to act according to one's conscience against unjust authority.

8. What is the overarching message about personal growth and societal responsibility conveyed in these sources?

The overarching message emphasizes that personal growth is deeply intertwined with societal responsibility, often requiring courage, self-reflection, and a willingness to challenge the status quo. Individuals are urged to "get out of your way and just look around the corner at your real self and look at all the potential that this beautiful Earth and love has to offer you." This personal introspection leads to a discernment of "God's will" and a commitment to act on it, even when it means facing "doubt and persecution" or making "difficult and lonely" decisions. The stories of draft resistance and volunteer service illustrate a transition from internal struggle ("who am I?" and "what is my relationship to

God and my fellow man?" to outward action, where one's "actions compliment one's beliefs." The collective call is to "show love," "be smart," and "take care of each other," recognizing that "the whole world is watching." This culminates in a powerful imperative for individuals to actively contribute to a more harmonious and peaceful world, whether through challenging unjust systems, engaging in mutual aid, or simply living authentically according to their deepest convictions.