

Suggested Queries on Simplicity (for Illinois Yearly Meeting Worship Sharing, June 2009)

1. (a) "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Luke 12:32-34

Does this message, given by Jesus to his disciples, counsel simplicity, poverty, or something else entirely?

(b) Heedless of the message of Luke 12:32-34, many American Christians continue to amass, and waste, wealth, often to the detriment of others. For example, the average US citizen uses more than four times the worldwide average of energy and almost three times as much water, producing more than twice the average amount of rubbish and five times the amount of carbon dioxide (figures from a 10/06 article in British publication The Independent on Sunday); meanwhile, the United Nations Millennium Project estimates that basic health and nutrition could be provided for all the world's poor for just \$13 billion—about 1/4th of what we spend on soda pop each year. (\$9 billion—less than we spend on DVD rentals—would provide safe water and sanitation for all; and \$6 billion—less than we spend annually on bottled water—would achieve basic education for all.)

In what ways might a practice of "voluntary simplicity" increase Friends' spiritual wealth?

2. "Those who commit themselves to too many projects can succumb to violence...The frenzy of the activist can destroy the fruitfulness of work because it kills the root of inner wisdom which makes work fruitful." (From: Charles de Foucauld, "hermit of the Sahara," quoted by Mennonite pastor Joe Roos in "Eating the Bread of Anxious Toil," © 1982 Sojourners)

Do these words speak to your condition? Do they counsel simplicity? If so, how? Also: how does the idea of "sustainability" compare to that of "simplicity" for you?

3. "I saw that a humble man, with the Blessing of the Lord, might live on a little, and that where the heart was set on greatness, success in business did not satisfy the craving; but that commonly with an increase of wealth, the desire for wealth increased. There was a care on my mind so to pass my time, as to things outward, that nothing might hinder me from the most steady attention to the voice of the True Shepherd." (John Woolman, 1743; from PYM Faith & Practice, p. 157.) Does this journal entry of John Woolman speak to your condition? If so, how?

4. (suggested for Saturday in the case of groups also meeting Thurs. and/or Fri.) In what way(s) has attendance at Illinois Yearly Meeting's Annual Sessions this year fostered your living testimony of simplicity? In what way(s), if any, has it not?