

The True Light

A Small Group Study Guide to the Gospel According to John

Friends Illuminated Study Guide Series — Volume 2 Companion

“When the Lord God and his son Jesus Christ sent me forth into the world to preach his everlasting gospel and kingdom, I was glad that I was commanded to turn people to that inward light, spirit, and grace, by which all might know their salvation and their way to God; even that divine spirit which would lead them into all truth, and which I infallibly knew would never deceive any.” — George Fox, *Journal*

How to Use This Guide

Welcome

You are about to spend eight sessions exploring the Gospel of John through the eyes of the early Quakers — those remarkable seventeenth-century Christians who found in this Gospel the theological bedrock of their entire movement. This study guide is designed to be used alongside the *Friends Illuminated Commentary on the Gospel of John*, though it can also stand on its own with a Bible in hand.

No other Gospel mattered more to the first Friends. John 1:9 — “That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world” — was the verse George Fox carried like a burning coal from village to village. John 4:23–24 was the foundation of their silent worship. John 10 shaped their rejection of hireling ministry. John 16:13 grounded their trust in the Spirit’s direct leading. John 18:36 anchored their peace testimony. To read John with the Quakers is to discover a Gospel more radical, more demanding, and more alive than you may have imagined.

This guide is built for a small group of 6–12 people meeting in a living room, a church parlor, a coffee shop — anywhere people can gather, read







Scripture together, and have an honest conversation. Each session is designed to take 30–45 minutes.

What You'll Need

- A Bible (King James Version preferred, since that is the translation the early Quakers used and quoted)
- A copy of the *Friends Illuminated Commentary on the Gospel of John* (or at minimum, the assigned reading sections)
- A notebook or journal for personal reflection
- An open heart and a willingness to be challenged

The Format




Each session follows the same structure:




Section	Time	What Happens
 Opening	5 min	An icebreaker question to warm up the group
 Reading Aloud	5 min	Read the KJV passage together as a group
 Discussion	20–30 min	8–10 questions moving from observation to interpretation to application
 Key Insight	2 min	One powerful takeaway to carry into the week
 Closing	3–5 min	A reflection question or prayer prompt, plus preview of next session
 Personal Study	—	A journal prompt and optional deeper reading for the week ahead

The Swedish Method

Throughout this guide, you will see three symbols. These come from a method of Bible reading developed in Sweden and used by small groups

around the world. They give you a simple vocabulary for responding to what you read:

-  **Light Bulb** — Something that illuminates, surprises you, or gives you a new insight. “I never saw that before!”
-  **Question Mark** — Something that confuses you, that you disagree with, or that you want to explore further. “I’m not sure about this.”
-  **Arrow** — Something that calls you to action, that demands a response, that you need to apply to your life. “I need to do something about this.”

As you read the commentary and the Scripture before each session, mark passages with these symbols. Bring your marked-up text to the group. Some of the best discussions will come from your , , and  moments.

Tips for Group Leaders

A few notes for whoever is facilitating:

- *You don’t need to be an expert on Quaker theology. You just need to be willing to read the material and guide a conversation.*
- *Don’t feel pressure to get through every question. The questions are there to serve the group, not the other way around. If one question sparks a twenty-minute conversation, that’s a good session.*
- *Protect the quieter voices. Some people need to be invited to speak. A simple “What do you think?” directed at a quiet member can open up the room.*
- *Don’t be afraid of silence. The Quakers built their entire worship practice around it. If the group goes quiet after a question, let it sit for fifteen seconds before moving on.*
- *The Gospel of John is long — twenty-one chapters. Some sessions cover more material than others. Don’t rush. If the group needs to spend extra time on a session, take two weeks instead of one.*
- *The Quaker readings are genuinely distinctive — sometimes controversial. That’s intentional. Lean into the tension rather than resolving it too quickly.*
- *End on time. Respect the group’s commitment by starting and stopping when you said you would.*

Eight-Session Reading Schedule

Session	Title	Scripture	Commentary Reading
1	The Word and the Light	John 1	Introduction + Chapter 1
2	Water to Wine, Born Again, Living Water	John 2–4	Chapters 2–4
3	The Son Does What Father Does	John 5–7	Chapters 5–7
4	Light of the World, Truth Sets Free	John 8–10	Chapters 8–10
5	The Re- surrection and the Life	John 11–12	Chapters 11–12
6	Love One Another	John 13–15	Chapters 13–15
7	The Spirit of Truth	John 16–17	Chapters 16–17
8	The King- dom Not of This World	John 18–21	Chapters 18–21 + Epilogue

Now turn the page and begin. The true Light is shining. Believe in it.

Session 1: The Word and the Light

John 1 — In the Beginning, the True Light, and the Lamb of God

 **Assigned Reading:** Commentary Introduction (“Why John Is the Quaker Gospel”) + Chapter 1

 **Scripture:** John 1

Opening (5 min)

Icebreaker: Think of a time when you walked from a dark space into bright light — stepping outside after a movie, turning on the lights in a dark house, sunrise after a long drive. What happened to your eyes? What did you notice that you hadn’t seen before? Share briefly: *What did the light reveal?*

Reading Aloud (5 min)

Have someone read John 1:1–18 aloud from the KJV. Then have someone else read verses 35–51. (The middle section — John the Baptist’s testimony — can be summarized by the leader.)

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 The same was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. 4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men.

5 And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not...

9 That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world...

12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name...

14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.



Leader note: After the second reading, invite the group to sit in silence for 30 seconds. Let the words settle. This is the Prologue — the overture to the entire Gospel. Everything that follows unfolds from these eighteen verses.

Discussion (20–30 min)

Observation — What Does the Text Say?

1. John opens not with a birth narrative but with a cosmic declaration: “In the beginning was the Word.” Why do you think John starts here — before Bethlehem, before creation itself? What does it do to your understanding of Jesus to encounter him first as the eternal Word?
2. Verse 9 says the true Light “lighteth every man that cometh into the world.” Not some men. Not the elect. Not Christians. *Every* man. What are the implications of that claim? What questions does it raise?

Interpretation — What Does It Mean?

3.  George Fox described the very commission that launched the Quaker movement in the language of this chapter: “*I was sent to turn people from darkness to the light, that they might receive Christ Jesus: for, to as many as should receive him in his light, I saw that he would give power to become the sons of God... I saw that Christ died for all men, and was a propitiation for all; and enlightened all men and women with his divine and saving light; and that none could be a true believer, but who believed in it*” (Fox, *Journal*, chunk 84). Fox saw the Light of John 1:9 and the power to become “sons of God” of John 1:12 as one single reality. Does that change how you think about the “Light”? Is it an abstract concept, or a living Person?
4.  Edward Burrough refused to let anyone treat the Light as neutral or optional: “*If you love this Light, you love Christ, who will save you from all your [sins] and from condemnation; If you hate this Light, you hate Christ, and you remain in your sins to be everlastingly condemned... all people mind this Light which is of God, this will lead you up to God; this is the way to the Father*” (Burrough, *Memorable Works*, chunk 317). For Burrough the Light and Christ are not two things — to love one is to love the other. Is that fair? Can a person honestly claim to love Christ while turning away from the Light that shows them their sin?

5. Isaac Penington described the eternal Word as something startlingly close and active: *“This is the Word that stands at the door of the heart, and speaks to be let in... and when it is let in, it speaks in the heart what is to be heard and done. It is nigh; it is in the heart, and in the mouth... The living Word... reacheth to the very inmost of the heart, and cuts between the roots”* (Penington, *Works* Vol. 1, chunk 26). The early Friends insisted the Word of John 1:1 is not found primarily in the pages of a book but in the depths of the heart. How does this compare to how you normally think about the “Word of God”?

6. 💡 William Dewsbury called people directly inward from this chapter: *“Turn your minds within, and examine your Hearts, search and try your ways with the Light Christ Jesus hath enlightened you withal, that shews you in your Hearts what is Sin... there’s your Teacher, the Spirit of the Lord within”* (Dewsbury, *Faithful Testimony*, chunk 334). The Light is already given. It is already showing you what is sin. The question is not whether you have the Light but whether you attend to it. Does this shift how you think about spiritual seeking?

Application — How Does This Change How We Live?

7. Robert Barclay was careful to say the Light is not merely your own conscience: *“some of us have fitly compared it to a lantern, and the Light of Christ to the candle: a lantern is useful when a clear candle burns and shines in it, but otherwise of no use. To the Light of Christ then in the conscience, and not to man’s natural conscience, it is that we continually commend men”* (Barclay, *Apology*, chunk 109). The lantern is your conscience; the candle is Christ. If the Light within you is not just your own good intentions but the living candle of Christ, what would change in how you live this week?

8. Verse 46: Nathanael asks, “Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?” Philip answers simply, “Come and see.” Penington used this to show how the religious world despises the true spiritual appearing when it comes in an unexpected form — *“At his country, or place of his education and residence, which was Nazareth of Galilee. ‘Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?’”* (Penington, *Works* Vol. 1, chunk 176). Is there anything in your spiritual life that you’ve dismissed because it came from an unexpected source — a tradition you don’t respect, a person without credentials, a quiet inner conviction you’ve ignored?

9. ➡ Edward Burrough testified that no one is left out: “*Jesus Christ... hath given a measure of Light and Life unto every man, and there is a Light from him that shines in the heart of all men, shining in Darkness... for in him was Life, and the Life was the Light of men*” (Burrough, *Memorable Works*, chunk 699). A *measure* — not the fullness, but a real portion of divine Light. What measure of Light have you been given? Are you walking in it — or have you been ignoring it, explaining it away, or waiting for more before you obey what you already have?

Key Insight (2 min)

Isaac Penington answered the question “What is this light which we so earnestly testify of?” with these words:

“It is that which shineth from God in the heart, wherein God is near to men... the light is near all mankind, to discover to them, and help them against the darkness; and the love is near to help them against the enmity which destroyeth, and so to save them. For whosoever joineth to the light of God’s Spirit, cannot but witness salvation thereby; for it is of a saving nature.” (Penington, *Works Vol. 3, chunk 201*)

The Light is *near*. This is John 1:5 and 1:9 in a sentence: the light shineth in the darkness, and it shines into every human heart. The darkness is real, but the Light is greater — and it is of a *saving* nature. It has been shining since before the world began, and it shines still, in every dark corner of every life. That is the foundation of everything that follows in the Gospel of John.

Closing (3–5 min)

Reflection: In silence, consider this question: *Have I received the Light — or only admired it? Have I believed in it — or only studied it?* John 1:12 says that those who *receive* Christ are given the power to become children of God. Receiving is not the same as understanding. It is not the same as agreeing. It is something deeper — an opening, a turning, a surrender.

After a minute of silence, invite anyone who wishes to share a brief prayer or reflection aloud.

Next Session Preview: Read John 2–4 and the corresponding commentary sections. Next session covers the wedding at Cana (water transformed to

wine), the encounter with Nicodemus (you must be born again), and the woman at the well (worship in spirit and truth). These three encounters show Christ transforming everything he touches — water, religion, worship — from outward form to inward reality.

Personal Study


Journal Prompt: John 1:9 says the true Light “lighteth every man that cometh into the world.” Take ten minutes in silence this week. Sit still. Don’t pray words — just attend. Ask the Light to show you one thing about yourself that you have been avoiding. Write down what comes. This is what it means to turn to the Light: not to generate insight by effort, but to attend to what is already shining.

Optional Deeper Reading: Read the Introduction to the *Friends Illuminated Commentary on the Gospel of John* (“Why John Is the Quaker Gospel”), which traces how John’s Gospel shaped every major Quaker testimony and practice. Also consider reading the opening of Robert Barclay’s *Apology for the True Christian Divinity* (1678), available free online, where he grounds his entire systematic theology in the eternal Word of John 1.

Session 2: Water to Wine, Born Again, Living Water

John 2–4 — Transformation, the New Birth, and Worship in Spirit and Truth

 **Assigned Reading:** Commentary Chapters 2–4

 **Scripture:** John 2–4 (key passages: 2:1–11; 3:1–21; 4:7–26)

Opening (5 min)

Icebreaker: Think of something in your life that was completely transformed — a relationship, a habit, a belief, a place. Not just improved or adjusted, but fundamentally *changed*. What made the transformation possible? Was it sudden or gradual?

Reading Aloud (5 min)

This session covers three chapters. Have three different readers take one key passage each:

- **Reader 1:** John 2:1–11 (the wedding at Cana)
- **Reader 2:** John 3:1–8 (Nicodemus and the new birth)
- **Reader 3:** John 4:10–14, 23–24 (the woman at the well, worship in spirit and truth)

Leader note: These three passages form a unified arc — water becomes wine, flesh becomes spirit, outward worship becomes inward worship. Christ transforms everything he touches from outward form to inward reality.

Discussion (20–30 min)


Observation — What Does the Text Say?

1. At Cana, six stone waterpots — used for Jewish ceremonial purification — are filled with water and transformed into wine. The stone vessels of the old covenant are filled with something new and living. What might this transformation symbolize about the relationship between the old and new covenants?
2. In chapter 3, Nicodemus comes to Jesus “by night.” In chapter 4, the woman at the well comes at the sixth hour — noon, broad daylight. What might these time markers suggest about these two seekers? One is a respected religious leader; the other is a Samaritan woman with a complicated history. Who understands Jesus more quickly?


Interpretation — What Does It Mean?

3. 💡 Mary’s instruction to the servants — “Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it” (2:5) — could stand as the motto for Quaker worship. The governor’s verdict, “thou hast kept the good wine until now,” the first Friends took as the very order of the spiritual life: God reserves his best for last, drawn from an inward well. Isaac Pennington wrote of that taste: *“Whosoever drinketh of the water which he giveth, shall never thirst more after water from without, but shall for ever thenceforward be satisfied with the springings up of the well of life from within... when the river of life is found, when the well of life is received, and the water springs up, the soul draws it*

from the spring, and drinks it with unspeakable joy” (Penington, *Letters*, chunk 109). Have you ever tasted the “best wine” — a spiritual sweetness that came after sorrow, not before it?

4.  On the new birth, Penington insisted that no one can accomplish it by effort or by ritual: “A man can never change his own heart, by any of the truths of God; but it must be the spirit that must do it... It is not all the changes a man can make by the light of natural truths, nay by the light of spiritual truths... that will amount to a new birth; but it must be the spirit of Christ breathing this seed into him” (Penington, *Letters*, chunk 275). This cuts to the heart of a major Christian debate. Can an outward rite — baptism, communion, church membership — produce what only the Spirit can give? If “that which is born of the flesh is flesh,” what does that say about religion that never goes deeper than the flesh?

5. On the condemnation of those who “loved darkness rather than light” (3:19–21), Fox heard the very pivot between belief and unbelief: “If you believe in the light, as Christ commands, and saith, ‘believe in the light, that you may be children of light,’ you believe in Christ, and come to learn of him who is the way to the Father. This is the light which shows the evil actions you have [done]” (Fox, *Journal* Vol. 1, chunk 280). Why might a person “love darkness” — actively prefer it — when the Light is freely shining? What does it cost to “come to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest”?

6.  On worship in spirit and truth (4:23–24), Penington left no room for half-measures: “The true worship of God in the gospel is in the Spirit... he that worships aright, must have his nature changed, and must worship in that thing wherein he is changed, in that faith, in that life, in that nature, in that Spirit whereby and whereto he is changed” (Penington, *Works* Vol. 1, chunk 30). Worship “in spirit” is not sincerity added to outward forms — it flows from a changed nature. Is your own worship more “in spirit and truth,” or more in habit and tradition? What would need to change?

Application — How Does This Change How We Live?

7. Robert Barclay called John 4:23–24 the “first, chiefest, and most ample testimony, which Christ gives us of his Christian worship” — and noted its hallmark: “The nature of this worship which is performed by the operation of the Spirit, the natural man being silent... so then it is no more a worship consisting in outward observations, to be performed by man at set times or opportunities” (Barclay, *Apology*, chunk 273). Quakers worshipped in pris-

ons, fields, and the holds of ships, because their worship depended on nothing outward. What does your worship depend on? If you lost your building, your music, your pastor, your liturgy — would you still be able to worship? What would be left?

8. → Edward Burrough held the Light out as the one thing that actually moves a soul from one nature into another: *“Christ Jesus is the Light of the World... which Light, if it you love, and be guided by, it will lead you out of the Worlds way and nature, and unrighteousness, and will give you an entrance into Eternal Life and Peace... and in this World it will teach you how to serve God in Righteousness in your Generation”* (Burrough, *Memorable Works*, chunk 122). The promise is conditional: *if you love it and are guided by it*. Name one specific way the Light has been guiding you “out of the world’s nature” — and one way you have been resisting it.

9. The Samaritan villagers ultimately said: *“Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world”* (4:42). They moved from secondhand faith to firsthand knowledge. The woman’s testimony brought them to Christ — but then they experienced him for themselves. Where are you on that journey? Do you believe because of what others have told you, or because you have heard him yourself?

Key Insight (2 min)

The living water Christ offers the woman at the well is not a one-time draught but a perpetual spring. Penington asked:

“Is not this a universal promise, to be made good to every one that drinks of the water of life, of the water that Christ gives? Did not Christ promise it should be a well? a springing well?... Oh, the water which Christ giveth! doth it not become a well in the true disciple, in the living disciple, out of which well the water is still springing and flowing to nourish up with life and unto life, even with life of an everlasting nature, and unto life everlasting?” (Penington, *Works Vol. 3, chunk 268*)

Every true drinker becomes a spring. This is the whole arc of John 2–4 in a single image: the stone waterpots of the old religion are not enough; the cistern of human tradition is not enough; you were made to carry a well of living water *within you*. Water becomes wine, flesh becomes spirit, the

outward place of worship becomes the inward temple of the heart — and the water Christ gives never runs dry.

Closing (3–5 min)

Prayer Prompt: Jesus said to the Samaritan woman, “If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water” (4:10). In a moment of silence, consider: *What if you don’t fully know the gift of God? What if there is living water available that you haven’t yet asked for?* Ask for it now. Simply. Quietly. Without eloquence.

After a minute of silence, close with prayer together.

Next Session Preview: Read John 5–7 and the corresponding commentary. The focus will be on Jesus’ relationship with the Father (“the Son can do nothing of himself”), the distinction between scripture and the living Word (“Search the scriptures... ye will not come to me”), and the rivers of living water. Come ready to wrestle with the most important Quaker text on the relationship between the Bible and the living Christ.

Personal Study


Journal Prompt: Jesus told Nicodemus, “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit” (3:8). This week, pay attention to the “wind” — moments when the Spirit seems to be moving in ways you can’t control or predict. Write about what you notice. Where is the wind blowing in your life right now?

Optional Deeper Reading: Read the section on John 4:23–24 in Robert Barclay’s *Apology*, Proposition XI (“Concerning Worship”), where Barclay builds the entire Quaker understanding of worship on Christ’s words to the Samaritan woman. Available free online.

Session 3: The Son Does What the Father Does

John 5–7 — The Living Word, the Bread of Life, and Rivers of Living Water

 **Assigned Reading:** Commentary Chapters 5–7

 **Scripture:** John 5–7 (key passages: 5:19–30, 39–40; 6:35–63; 7:14–18, 37–39)

Opening (5 min)

Icebreaker: Have you ever been really hungry — not just “I skipped lunch” hungry, but genuinely hungry, with nothing available? What did that feel like? And what was it like when you finally ate? Now think about spiritual hunger: have you ever felt *that* kind of hunger for God — a hunger that no sermon, no book, no song could satisfy?

Reading Aloud (5 min)

This session covers three dense chapters. Have readers take these key passages:

- **Reader 1:** John 5:24–25, 30, 39–40 (the dead hear his voice; search the scriptures)
- **Reader 2:** John 6:35, 47–51, 63 (I am the bread of life; the spirit quickeneth)
- **Reader 3:** John 7:16–17, 37–39 (obedience and knowledge; rivers of living water)

Leader note: These three chapters form a progression — from the voice that raises the dead, to the bread that feeds the soul, to the rivers that overflow from within. The common thread: Christ offers himself directly, without intermediaries.

Discussion (20–30 min)

Observation — What Does the Text Say?

1. In 5:19, Jesus says, “The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do.” This is astonishing — the Son of God claims to have *no independent will*. How does this compare to your image of Jesus? And what does it mean for those who claim to follow him?

2. In 5:39–40, Jesus distinguishes between *searching the scriptures* and *coming to him*. The scriptures “testify of me,” he says — but they are not the destination. How do you hold together reverence for the Bible with the recognition that the Bible is a witness to something beyond itself?

Interpretation — What Does It Mean?

3. 💡 Thomas Story drew the sharpest possible line between the written word and the living Word: “*The Spirit of Christ is not the Scriptures, though they testify of him. The Scriptures never ascended into heaven, neither did they descend into the deep and rise again; neither are the Scriptures the word of faith; neither were they in the beginning; nor are they God; nor was any thing at all made by them*” (Story, *Life and Journal*, chunk 282). The signpost is not the destination; the menu is not the meal. Have you ever caught yourself loving the Bible *about* Christ more than coming to Christ himself?

4. ? Samuel Fisher read “Search the scriptures” (5:39) not as a command but as a *complaint*: “*Nor do we any more dehort from searching the Scriptures then Christ, John 5:39... it is most evident that he speaks there by way of complaint of the Scribes; for looking for life in the Scriptures, without coming to him who is the Light, ver. 40. and not by way of command to search them*” (Fisher, *Rusticus ad Academicos*, chunk 1259). The men who boasted most of the Bible were the very men its Author was reproofing. Is this reading liberating? Is it dangerous? Can it be both? Have you ever seen the Bible used to *resist* the Spirit — to shut down a conversation, avoid a conviction, defend the status quo?

5. On the Bread of Life (6:35–58), Barclay refused to let “bread” mean the loaf on the table: “*it is that heavenly Seed, that divine, spiritual, celestial Substance... This is that vehiculum Dei, or spiritual body of Christ, whereby and wherethrough he communicateth life to man, and salvation to as many as believe in him*” (Barclay, *Apology*, chunk 321). Christ himself gives the interpretation: “*It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing*” (6:63). If the flesh profits nothing, what does it mean that so many churches center their worship on a physical ritual? Are they eating the bread — or mistaking the menu for the meal?

6. 💡 On “they shall be all taught of God” (6:45), Richard Hubberthorne pressed the boldest Quaker claim: “*we are taught of God, and need no man to teach us, but as the anointing of God which abides in us; and the promise of God is fulfilled upon us: we are all taught of God, from the least of us to*

the greatest, with whom the covenant of God is established” (Hubberthorne, *A Collection of the Several Books and Writings*, chunk 231). This is not contempt for all instruction — Friends sat under faithful ministry. But the office of every minister is to bring the hearer to the Teacher within. Does that change how you think about who, or what, your real teacher is?

Application — How Does This Change How We Live?

7. Jesus says, “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine” (7:17). Obedience comes *before* understanding. Penington explained the way to certainty: “*not by entering into reasonings and disputes about these things whereof thou doubttest, but by coming into that wherein and whereby they are made manifest; and that is by coming into obedience to the Father in that which he hath already made manifest; for in that light... and in obedience thereto (be it ever so little, or the manifestation ever so small), the Father will reveal more*” (Penington, *Works* Vol. 3, chunk 147). Where have you been waiting to understand before you obey? What if the order is reversed?

8. ➡ Christ promised that out of the believer’s belly “shall flow rivers of living water” (7:38). Penington testified that this water does not stay still — it overflows: “*It hath pleased the Lord, to unseal and open the Fountain of life, in the midst of his heritage... so that he that believeth, out of his belly do flow rivers of living water... Oh, the streams of life, the streams of love, the streams of grace, the streams of mercy, the streams of peace, the streams of joy and consolation, which flow from him into the bosoms of his children!*” (Penington, *Works* Vol. 3, chunk 247). Living water received always becomes living water given. This week, name one person into whose life the stream could flow through you — and do one concrete thing to let it.

9. “If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink” (7:37). John Gratton heard in this the abolition of every restriction: “*None are excluded here... And whosoever will, may come, for the gift is given to all, not only offered, but freely given... None need fear any want in this Fountain; for it is a Fountain that can never be drawn dry: it is now unsealed, and the thirsty are invited to come and drink freely*” (Gratton, *Life*, chunk 132). Are you thirsty? What are you thirsty for? And have you actually come to Christ to drink — or have you been trying to satisfy your thirst with something else?

Key Insight (2 min)

Jesus said, “The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live” (5:25). Fox turned this into a trumpet-call:

“Sound, sound abroad, ye faithful servants of the Lord... to the awakening and raising of the dead, that they may be awakened, and raised up out of the grave, to hear the voice that is living. For the dead have long heard the dead, the blind have long wandered among the blind, and the deaf amongst the deaf. Therefore sound, ye servants, prophets, and angels of the Lord, ye trumpets of the Lord, that you may awaken the dead, and them that are asleep in their graves of sin, death and hell.” (Fox, Journal Vol. 2, chunk 106)

“The hour is coming, and *now is*.” The resurrection John 5 promises is not only future — it begins the moment a spiritually dead soul hears the living voice and answers. The early Friends testified that they had been dead in sin and dead in formal religion, and had heard the voice of the Son of God within them, and it had raised them. The same voice still sounds, and the same dead can still rise.

Closing (3–5 min)

Prayer Prompt: Peter said, when many disciples were walking away, “Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life” (6:68). In a moment of silence, consider: *Have you ever been tempted to walk away — from faith, from the church, from the pursuit of God?* Where would you go? Who else has the words of eternal life? Bring your honest answer before Christ.

After a minute of silence, close with prayer together.

Next Session Preview: Read John 8–10 and the corresponding commentary. Next session explores Christ’s most provocative claims — “I am the light of the world,” “the truth shall make you free,” “I am the good shepherd” — and the Quaker confrontation with hireling ministry. Come ready to discuss what true freedom looks like, and what it costs.



Personal Study


Journal Prompt: Jesus said, “Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life” (6:27). This week, honestly inventory what you are “laboring” for. How much of your energy goes toward things that perish — money, reputation, comfort, entertainment — and how much toward the bread that endures? Write about one change you could make.

Optional Deeper Reading: Read Robert Barclay’s *Apology*, Proposition III (“Concerning the Scriptures”), where he systematically argues from John 5:39 and John 16:13 that the Spirit has priority over the written word. Also consider Propositions XII–XIII, where Barclay applies John 6 to the question of outward sacraments. Available free online.

Session 4: I Am the Light of the World

John 8–10 — Truth and Freedom, Sight to the Blind, and the Good Shepherd

 **Assigned Reading:** Commentary Chapters 8–10

 **Scripture:** John 8–10 (key passages: 8:12, 31–36, 58; 9:1–7, 25; 10:1–16, 27)



Opening (5 min)

Icebreaker: Think of a time you followed a voice you trusted — a parent, a mentor, a guide — through something difficult or uncertain. What made you trust that voice over others? Could you tell it apart from voices that didn’t have your good at heart?



Reading Aloud (5 min)

This session covers three rich chapters. Have readers take these key passages:

- **Reader 1:** John 8:12, 31–36 (I am the light of the world; the truth shall make you free)

- **Reader 2:** John 9:1–7, 24–25 (the man born blind; “one thing I know”)
- **Reader 3:** John 10:1–16, 27–30 (the good shepherd and the hireling; my sheep hear my voice)



Leader note: These chapters move from light, to sight, to following — Christ is the Light of the world (8), he opens blind eyes (9), and those he heals learn to follow his voice as sheep follow the shepherd (10).

Discussion (20–30 min)

Observation — What Does the Text Say?

1. Chapter 8 opens with the woman taken in adultery: Christ neither stones her nor excuses her — “Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.” Then immediately he declares, “I am the light of the world” (8:12). How do these two moments fit together? What does the Light do in the story of the accusers? What does it do for the woman?
2. In 10:11–13, Jesus contrasts the *good shepherd*, who “giveth his life for the sheep,” with the *hireling*, who “fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep.” What’s the essential difference between them? It isn’t competence or eloquence — what is it?

Interpretation — What Does It Mean?

3.  On “the truth shall make you free” (8:32), Penington described the bondage and the liberty with precision: “*The will of man is bound; but there is liberty, power, and freedom in the light which visits man, and comes to unbind and save him. And man feels this power, tastes of this liberty, feels somewhat disengaging him from the evil, and drawing him from it: but he being in love with the evil, draws back from the drawing*” (Penington, *Works* Vol. 1, chunk 68). The freedom is real and present — but it can be refused, because we are “in love with the evil.” Where do you feel the Light “drawing you from” something — and where are you drawing back?
4.  Edward Burrough turned the hireling text (10:11–13) on the paid clergy of England with scorching force: “*Not one day of faithful service and true watching over the Flock can you give testimony of; but idle Shepherds have you been, and slumbring Watch-men have you proved, and the whole Flock have been devoured, and scattered... What will you plead for your*

selves? Oh, ye deceitfull Hirelings, who have run, and were not sent” (Burrough, *Memorable Works*, chunk 135). The early Friends refused to pay tithes and supported no salaried ministry. Is that critique fair? Where is the line between fairly supporting those who labor in ministry and creating “hirelings who care not for the sheep”?

5. Christ said the sheep “know not the voice of strangers” (10:5). William Penn explained what makes a voice “strange”: “*those that speak, if their voices and conversations are not with the life, the power, and with the spirit of Christ, they are strange voices... and Christ’s sheep will not sit under such voices... who do but steal the words of the prophets and apostles, but do not experience them*” (Penn, *Life and Writings*, chunk 211). A man can be eloquent, learned, and perfectly orthodox and still be a “strange voice.” How do you tell the difference between words that come from real experience of God and words that are merely borrowed?

6. 💡 In the healing of the man born blind (chapter 9), Penington pressed a distinction the schools had blurred — there is a *light*, and there is an *eye*, and one is useless without the other: “*the light that shines abroad, or from without, can alone be known and received by the light that shines within... So neither can I see the light of any dispensation of life, if I have not an eye within me open, wherewith to see it*” (Penington, *Works* Vol. 1, chunk 195). You can stand at noon with the sun blazing and see nothing if your eyes are shut. What might it mean that your inward eye is shut to something the Light is plainly showing?

Application — How Does This Change How We Live?

7. Jesus said, “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (8:12). Penn drew the sober corollary: “*they that abide not in him, the Light, dwell in darkness, in sin... see not their own states... For in Jesus Christ, the Light of the world, are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, redemption and glory*” (Penn, *Life and Writings*, Vol. 5, chunk 172). Christ also warned: “the night cometh, when no man can work” (9:4). The Light is shining *now*. What is one treasure — one piece of wisdom, one freedom, one healing — that you sense is hidden in Christ and waiting for you to come and abide?

8. ➡ The man born blind could not be argued out of his experience: “One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see” (9:25). John Crook, who left a judge’s bench to follow the despised Friends, testified the same way: “*my eyes were opened, and my strength was renewed, and I obtained*

victory, through that grace of the gospel, over those lusts and corrupt desires which rose against those little stirrings and movings after the living God” (Crook, *Memoir, Epistles &c. of John Crook*, chunk 18). What is your “one thing I know”? Write it in one plain sentence — no theology, just experience — and share it with one person this week.

9. Jesus said, “Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold... and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd” (10:16). The early Friends rejoiced that Christ was gathering his scattered people from everywhere: “*to gather them from off the barren mountains, and from the mouths of the wolves, and all false shepherds... and to bring them back into the fold of the good shepherd, — and that there shall be one sheepfold and one shepherd*” (*Letters of Early Friends*, chunk 200). Christ has sheep who “hear his voice” though they may never have heard his outward name. How does that change the way you regard people outside your own tradition, faith, or fold?

Key Insight (2 min)

When Christ said, “Before Abraham was, I am” (8:58), he claimed an eternity the Light shares. Pennington asked the question that decides everything:

“Christ saith, ‘I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life,’ chap. 8:12. How is Christ the light of the world? Or how was Christ the light of the world? Was he only so, as he appeared in that body of flesh? Is he not so in his inward and spiritual appearance? Is he not the universal light, the Sun of righteousness, which enlighteneth the whole dark world?” (*Pennington, Works Vol. 3, chunk 204*)

This is the hinge of the whole Quaker reading. If Christ is the Light of the world *only* as he walked in Galilee, then he is a figure of the past, accessible now only through records and rituals. But if he is the Light “in his inward and spiritual appearance” — the universal Light, the Sun of righteousness — then the same Christ who said “I am the light of the world” is shining in your heart right now. “Before Abraham was, I am.” Not *was*. *Am*. The Light is not a memory. It is a presence.

Closing (3–5 min)

Prayer Prompt: The man born blind ended not in argument but in worship: “Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him” (9:38). And Christ found him *after* the synagogue cast him out. In a moment of silence, consider: *Where has following the Light cost you something — a relationship, a comfort, a standing?* And consider this promise: when the world casts you out, Christ comes to seek you, and gives you a fuller knowledge of himself outside the walls than you ever had within.

After a minute of silence, close with prayer together.

Next Session Preview: Read John 11–13 and the corresponding commentary. Next session moves toward the cross: the raising of Lazarus (“I am the resurrection and the life”), Mary anointing Jesus, and the washing of the disciples’ feet — Christ’s stunning lesson in humble, serving love. Come ready to consider what it means to follow a Lord who kneels.

Personal Study


Journal Prompt: Jesus said, “My sheep hear my voice... and they follow me” (10:27). This week, practice listening for the Shepherd’s voice. Set aside ten minutes of silence daily. Don’t ask for anything; just listen. When a “strange voice” intrudes — anxiety, self-justification, the borrowed opinions of others — gently let it go and return to listening. At the end of the week, write about what you heard, however faint.

Optional Deeper Reading: Read William Penn’s *No Cross, No Crown* (1669), especially the early chapters, where Penn argues that following the Light of Christ inevitably brings a cross — the cost of refusing the world’s voices to follow the Shepherd’s. Available free online.

Session 5: The Resurrection and the Life

John 11–12 — The Raising of Lazarus, the Corn of Wheat, and the Light Among You

 **Assigned Reading:** Commentary Chapters 11–12

 **Scripture:** John 11–12 (key passages: 11:17–44; 12:23–36, 46)

Opening (5 min)

Icebreaker: Have you ever been in a situation that seemed genuinely hopeless — where you had given up, where everyone around you had given up? And then something changed. Share briefly: *What happened? And what did it feel like to discover that what you thought was finished wasn't finished?*

Reading Aloud (5 min)

Have two readers take the key passages:

- **Reader 1:** John 11:21–27, 38–44 (Martha's confession and the raising of Lazarus)
- **Reader 2:** John 12:23–26, 31–36, 46 (the corn of wheat, the prince of this world, walk while ye have the light)

Leader note: The raising of Lazarus is the climactic sign of the Gospel — the seventh and greatest miracle. Everything after this moves toward the cross. Let the drama of the story land.


Discussion (20–30 min)

Observation — What Does the Text Say?


1. When Jesus arrives, Lazarus has been dead four days. Both Martha and Mary say the same thing: “Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died” (11:21, 32). There is grief and faith and a hint of accusation in those words. Have you ever felt that way — *Lord, where were you?* What is it like to bring that honest complaint before God?

2. Jesus says to Martha, “I am the resurrection, and the life” (11:25). Notice: he doesn't say “I *will bring* the resurrection” or “I *have* the resurrection.” He says “I *am* the resurrection.” What's the difference?

Interpretation — What Does It Mean?


3.  The v2 commentary opens this chapter cornerstone-first on “I am the resurrection, and the life,” reading it not only as a future bodily rising but as a *present* raising of the dead soul. Thomas Story weighed Christ's very grammar and found the present tense inescapable: “*the word life is explan-*

atory of the word resurrection... must intend a resurrection from the same death here intended, which could not be of the body, but of the soul, or mind of man” (Thomas Story, *Life and Journal of Thomas Story*, chunk490). A dead body cannot believe; so the death Christ heals by faith is a death of the soul, healed while the body yet lives. Have you experienced anything that felt like resurrection — being brought back to life from a place of spiritual deadness?

4.  Fox heard the loud voice that called Lazarus out still sounding in his own day, and called his fellow-labourers to take up the cry: “*Sound, sound abroad, ye faithful servants of the Lord... to the awakening and raising of the dead, that they may be awakened, and raised up out of the grave, to hear the voice that is living. For the dead have long heard the dead, the blind have long wandered among the blind*” (George Fox, *The Journal of George Fox, Volume 2*, chunk106). The raising of Lazarus provoked rage from the religious establishment, which saw its authority threatened by the direct action of Christ. Why does the evidence of spiritual transformation provoke hostility?

5. Notice the detail that Lazarus came forth “bound hand and foot with graveclothes,” and had to be loosed. To be raised from spiritual death is not the end of the work — the graveclothes of old habits, fears, and patterns still cling and must be stripped away. And Christ gives the command “Loose him, and let him go” not to himself but to those who stand by. What part does the gathered fellowship play in unbinding those whom Christ has called out of the tomb? Where might *you* be a graveclothes-looser for someone?

6. Penington gave the corn of wheat (12:24) its most searching exposition under the figure of the daily cross — the grain that must fall and die before it can multiply: “*Know and take up thy cross, the cross of Christ, the daily cross of Christ. The cross of Christ is that which crosseth the natural... this is direct death to that nature and spirit that hath lived in any form of religion... yet through this death, the true life springs up, in those who receive the strokes of it. Therefore be willing, and learn to die daily*” (Penington, *Works Vol. 1*, chunk 76). Not physical death, but the death of the natural self — even the self that has lived in “any form of religion.” What in your life needs to die in order for something new to grow?

7.  John 12:35–36 was one of the most heavily worn passages in all Quaker literature, rivaling John 1:9. Samuel Fisher set it beside John 8:12 to prove from Christ’s own words that the Light is given to be believed in and

walked by: “Walk while ye have the Light; while ye have the Light, believe in the Light, that ye may be the children of the Light” (Fisher, *Rusticus ad Academicos*, chunk 1077). Fisher’s sharpest insight is that men may “have the Light in them, who yet neither believe in it, nor are the children of it, but yet abiding in darkness.” What does it mean to “believe in the light” — not just believe *about* the Light but place your trust in it?

Application — How Does This Change How We Live?

8. Stephen Crisp pressed the way out from under “the prince of this world” (12:31): the way out is to believe in the Light that exposes the bondage: “All those that feel themselves in bondage under this prince of darkness, in what manner soever it be, and are not willing to remain so always; believe but in him that showeth you your bondage, and wait in his pure light in your own consciences, which discovers darkness and the prince of it; and then you will feel a hope to spring up in you” (Crisp, *Life*, chunk 158). The prince of this world has a throne, and the commentary says that throne is the unregenerate heart. Is there an area of your life where the “prince of this world” still sits on the throne — where worldly values, fears, or ambitions still rule?

9. ➡ Jesus said, “I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness” (12:46). William Penn read this verse as the very heart of the gospel he was pressed to preach to a forgetful Christendom: “God hath so loved the world, that he hath sent his only begotten Son into the world, that those who believe in him, should have eternal life. And this Son is Christ Jesus, ‘the true [light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.]’” (Penn, *Life and Writings*, Vol. 5, chunk 172). The promise is clear: *you do not have to stay in darkness*. What would it look like to stop abiding in darkness — in a specific area of your life — this week?

10. Penington named the fruit of obeying that command — not improved behavior merely, but a change of nature: those who receive and obey the Light are “brought... out of darkness, and change their nature; so that they become children of light, and no more darkness, as they were before, but light in the Lord” (Penington, *Works* Vol. 3, chunk 533). Not just *in* the light — *light in the Lord*. Is this your aspiration? Is this your experience? And if there’s a gap between the two, what might close it?

Key Insight (2 min)

The raising of Lazarus is the hinge of John’s Gospel. After this miracle, the religious leaders decide Jesus must die (11:53). The very act that demonstrates Christ’s power over death is what triggers the plot to kill him. The v2 commentary names the calculation exactly: “If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him” — the threat was not doctrinal but institutional. A transformed life is the most unanswerable testimony there is: “a soul raised from spiritual death by the inward power of Christ becomes a living witness that no disputation can refute and no magistrate can silence.” But the Light shines on regardless:

“I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness.” (John 12:46)

The darkness reacted to Lazarus’s resurrection by plotting murder. But Christ kept walking toward Jerusalem. The Light does not retreat.

Closing (3–5 min)

Reflection: “Jesus wept” (11:35) — the shortest verse in the Bible, and one of the most profound. Before he raised Lazarus, Christ wept. He enters our grief before he overcomes it. In silence, bring your grief — whatever it is, however old or fresh — before the one who weeps with you and who is himself the resurrection.

After a minute of silence, close with prayer together.

Next Session Preview: Read John 13–15 and the corresponding commentary. Next session covers the foot washing, the new commandment of love, and the vine and branches. Christ moves from public ministry to the intimacy of the upper room. Come ready to discuss what it means to love one another — not in tongue, but in deed and truth.

Personal Study

Journal Prompt: Jesus told Martha, “Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?” (11:40). Martha had to believe *before* she saw the stone rolled away. This week, identify one area where you are waiting to see before you believe. What if you believed


first? Write about what believing before seeing would look like in that area of your life.

Optional Deeper Reading: Read William Penn’s *No Cross, No Crown* (1682), on self-denial and the cost of following Christ. Penn connects John 12:24 — the corn of wheat that must die — with the daily practice of dying to self, the same “daily cross” Penington expounds in the commentary. Available free online.

Session 6: Love One Another

John 13–15 — Washing Feet, the Way, and the True Vine

 **Assigned Reading:** Commentary Chapters 13–15

 **Scripture:** John 13–15 (key passages: 13:1–17, 34–35; 14:6, 15–20, 26–27; 15:1–17)

Opening (5 min)

Icebreaker: When was the last time someone served you in a way that felt genuinely humbling — not a transaction, not a duty, but an act of love that made you uncomfortable in the best way? What did it feel like to receive that kind of service?

Reading Aloud (5 min)

Have three readers take these key passages:

- **Reader 1:** John 13:3–17 (the foot washing)
- **Reader 2:** John 14:6, 15–20, 26–27 (the way, truth, and life; the Comforter)
- **Reader 3:** John 15:1–12 (the vine and branches; love one another)

Leader note: We have now entered the upper room. Everything shifts — from public confrontation to private intimacy. Christ is preparing his disciples for his departure. These are his final instructions. Treat them with the weight they deserve.

Discussion (20–30 min)

Observation — What Does the Text Say?

1. Jesus, “knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God” (13:3), rises and begins to wash feet. *Knowing* his power and authority, he takes the position of a slave. Why does John emphasize that Jesus did this *knowing* who he was? What does that tell us about the relationship between power and service?
2. “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (14:6). The commentary notes this verse was cited “more than two hundred times across the collected works of the first Friends.” Why was this verse so important to the early Friends? What did they hear in it that others might miss?

Interpretation — What Does It Mean?

3. 💡 Barclay turned the foot washing into one of the most disarming arguments in the whole *Apology*. He set it beside the bread and wine of the same night and showed that, measured by every test the churches use to defend their sacraments, the basin has the stronger claim: it is “*an outward element of a cleansing nature, applied to the outward man, by the command and the example of Christ, to signify an inward purifying*” (Barclay, *Apology*, chunk 336). Yet no church keeps it as a standing ordinance. If foot washing has equal scriptural warrant and is *not* kept as a sacrament, what does that tell us about the outward form of any ritual? Does the argument convince you?
4. “If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me” (13:8). Penington insisted the cleansing Christ speaks of is inward, not outward — washed not with outward water but with the water of life God opens in the heart: “*It is the inward Jew that is to be washed in the gospel state, and it is inward water, spiritual water, that he is to be washed with... Can sin be washed away from any heart and conscience, but by the water of this fountain?*” (Penington, *Works* Vol. 4, chunk 293). Peter first refuses the washing, then tries to manage it (“not my feet only, but also my hands”). Christ allows neither. Where in your own life have you either refused Christ’s cleansing or tried to take it on your own terms?
5. ? Edward Burrough preached Christ the Way with his trumpet-cadence and shut out every rival — but located him *within*: “*who is the Way, the*

Truth, and the Life, the Foundation of God, which cannot be moved... witness God within you, the Emanuel, the Saviour, God with us, and this is the whole Salvation, and there is no other to be expected, or witnessed" (Burrough, *Memorable Works*, chunk 296). The commentary on chapter 13 hangs Christ's blessing not on knowing but on doing: "happy are ye if ye do them" (13:17). How many people profess Christ as the Way but don't actually walk in it? What's the difference between admiring the example and doing it?

6. 💡 The vine and branches make abiding, not effort, the secret of fruitfulness — "without me ye can do nothing" (15:5). Job Scott pressed into the inward logic: prayer that rises from the branch abiding in the vine is Christ asking in his own name, "*I live, yet not I, it is Christ that liveth in me'... This is true prayer, and no other is so; all other is but the noise, the voice and breath of man, and is not answered*" (Scott, *Salvation by Christ*, chunk 18). Have you been trying to produce spiritual fruit — or even to pray — by effort, from the natural self? Or by abiding? What's the difference in practice?

Application — How Does This Change How We Live?

7. The promise of the Comforter (14:16–17, 26) was central to Quaker theology. Barclay reasoned that the indwelling Spirit is no idle thing but an active teacher: "*He in whom the Spirit of God dwelleth, it is not in him a lazy, dumb, useless thing; but it moveth, actuateth, governeth, instructeth, and teacheth him all things... yea, bringeth all things to his remembrance... It is not said, 'it shall teach you how to understand those things that are written'; but, 'It shall teach you all things'*" (Barclay, *Apology*, chunk 40). The Comforter is not a distant theological concept — it is a present teacher. Has the Comforter taught you anything? Brought anything to your remembrance? Convicted you of anything?

8. ➡ Jesus said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (13:35). Fox pressed love to its root — the evidence of having passed from death to life: "*Therefore, love one another; for love is of God, and hatred is of the devil; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knows God... strive to excel one another in love, in virtue, in good life and conversation*" (Fox, *Journal* Vol. 2, chunk 479). Not your doctrine, not your worship style — your love. The early Friends built communities of radical mutual care: visiting the imprisoned, supporting families whose goods were seized for tithes, providing for widows. If a

stranger evaluated your community by the standard of John 13:35, what would they conclude?

9. Burrough warned of the soul that has the name and wants the life — the branch that is green in profession and withered in fact, a vine gone wild: *“this Tree becomes blasted by an unwholesome Air, and becomes degenerate... and becomes a wild Vine... though you have the name of Christians, yet you want the Life”* (Burrough, *Memorable Works*, chunk 600). The vine and branches make this danger personal: a branch can wither inwardly while still appearing attached. Where in your life do you have the *name* but lack the *life* — the form of faith without the living sap?

Key Insight (2 min)

The foot washing teaches by example what the new commandment names as law, and the vine reveals how it is possible: a love that lays aside its garments and stoops to serve, borne not by effort but by abiding in the living vine. Penington named the means by which the branch is kept living — the inward anointing that both teaches and holds the soul in its place:

“to abide in the vine, in the life, in the Spirit, in the power, as this Spirit or anointing teacheth: oh, here is the sweet, the clear state, the blessed state!” (Penington, *Works Vol. 3, chunk 272*)

The vine does not need the branches to produce fruit. The branches need only to abide in the vine. Abide, and fruit comes naturally — the lower service of the basin follows of itself upon the love.

Closing (3–5 min)

Prayer Prompt: “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (14:27). Penington wrote of this peace from his prison cell at Aylesbury — proof that the world can take liberty and goods and yet not touch it: *“Hath the Lord spoken peace to you, peace which passeth man’s understanding, and only flows from him?... this little thing, this light of God in you, to which ye were at first directed and turned”* (Penington, *Letters*, chunk 27). In silence, receive this peace — not the world’s, which is fragile and conditional, but Christ’s, which holds even when everything around you is falling apart.

After a minute of silence, close with prayer together.

Next Session Preview: Read John 16–17 and the corresponding commentary. Next session covers the Spirit of truth who will guide into all truth — among the most-cited verses in all of Quaker literature — and Christ’s high priestly prayer for unity. Come ready to discuss what it means to be guided into *all* truth, and what Christ’s prayer for oneness demands of the church today.

Personal Study


Journal Prompt: Jesus said, “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me” (15:4). What does it mean, practically, to *abide* in Christ? This week, choose one daily practice of abiding — ten minutes of silence, a walk without earbuds, a meal eaten slowly and gratefully — and pay attention to what happens when you simply stay connected to the vine.

Optional Deeper Reading: Read William Penn’s *Primitive Christianity Revived* (1696), where Penn lays out the Quaker understanding of true Christianity using John 14–15 as his primary scriptural foundation. Available free online.

Session 7: The Spirit of Truth

John 16–17 — The Comforter, Guidance into All Truth, and Christ’s Prayer for Unity

 **Assigned Reading:** Commentary Chapters 16–17

 **Scripture:** John 16–17 (key passages: 16:7–15, 33; 17:3, 17, 20–23)

Opening (5 min)

Icebreaker: Have you ever had someone leave — a parent, a mentor, a friend — and discovered that their *absence* actually made you stronger or more independent? Maybe you had to figure things out on your own, and in doing so, found something you didn’t know you had. Share briefly: *What did you discover about yourself after someone you depended on went away?*

Reading Aloud (5 min)

Have two readers take these key passages:

- **Reader 1:** John 16:7–15, 33 (the Comforter will guide you into all truth; I have overcome the world)
- **Reader 2:** John 17:3, 17, 20–23 (this is life eternal; sanctify them; that they all may be one)

Leader note: John 16:13 is, beside John 1:9, the very bedrock of Quaker faith — among the most frequently cited texts in all their writings. The early Friends built their entire understanding of divine guidance on it. And chapter 17 is Christ's high-priestly prayer — the holiest words in the Gospel. Read both with reverence.

Discussion (20–30 min)

Observation — What Does the Text Say?


1. Jesus says, “It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you” (16:7). This is remarkable — Jesus says his *departure* is actually better for the disciples than his continued physical presence. The commentary puts it sharply: the inward Spirit would do “in every heart what the outward Christ could do only in one place at a time.” Why? What can the Comforter do that the physical presence of Jesus could not?

2. In chapter 17, Jesus prays — his longest recorded prayer. He prays for himself (vv. 1–5), for his disciples (vv. 6–19), and for all future believers (vv. 20–23). What is the single most repeated request in the prayer? (Hint: count how many times he prays for oneness/unity in vv. 11, 21–23.)


Interpretation — What Does It Mean?

3. 💡 “When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth” (16:13) was the foundation of the Quaker conviction that revelation is not sealed. But Christ also says, “I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now” — the Spirit leads *progressively*. Pennington unfolded this with great tenderness: “*The Spirit of God knoweth the things of God, and the states of persons, and what is proper or improper for them... there is a tempted state, a wandering state, a backsliding state, a shaken state, an established state... All truths are not proper to every state,*


nor all remedies to every disease” (Penington, *Works* Vol. 4, chunk 212). Do you believe the Spirit still reveals and guides — leading each soul what it can bear? Or has revelation stopped?

4.  The Comforter’s first work in the unconverted is not comfort but reproof: he comes “to reprove the world of sin” (16:8). Penington fixed on the truth that nothing else can actually convince a person of sin: “*whether any thing can convince of sin but the light of God’s Holy Spirit shining in the heart? There may be an outward declaration of sin by the law outward; but it never reacheth the heart and conscience but by the shining of the light inward*” (Penington, *Works* Vol. 3, chunk 210). Have you experienced this? A moment when the Spirit’s work felt less like comfort and more like exposure — painful, searching, but ultimately healing?

5. The Spirit guides “into all truth” not by setting itself against Scripture but by leading the soul to the eternal Word from which all Scripture came. Burrough pressed this against those who would set the letter above the inward Light: “*the Light which shines into the Conscience is the Light of Christ... and it leads out of sin... and it leads to the eternal Word, which was in the beginning before sin was*” (Burrough, *Memorable Works*, chunk 60). Is it possible to honor the Spirit *and* the Scriptures rightly? What happens when people claim Spirit-guidance against the plain witness of Scripture — or bury the Spirit under the letter?

6.  “This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent” (17:3). Penington drew an absolute line between two knowledges: “*There is a knowledge of God and Christ which is life eternal; and there is a knowledge of them (or at least that which men call so) which is not life eternal... The knowledge which is life eternal is that knowledge which God gives to his own birth; even the spiritual knowledge which God gives to those which are born of the Spirit*” (Penington, *Works* Vol. 3, chunk 266). A man may have every doctrine right and be a stranger to the life. Do you *know* God — or do you know *about* God? What would it take to cross from one to the other?

Application — How Does This Change How We Live?

7.  The reproving Light and the teaching Light are one and the same — the conscience that submits to be searched is then led “unto life eternal.” Burrough called his hearers to turn inward to the very thing that accuses them: “*turn your minds inward, to the Light of Christ Jesus... which light is it which convinceth you of sin, and lets you see your evil deeds... if you*

dwell in the light, it is your Teacher, and way unto life eternal... it will reprove every evil word and work, and give you discerning of things that differ” (Burrough, *Memorable Works*, chunk 119). The Spirit doesn’t just add truth — it leads you *out of* what is false and gives you discernment. What untruths might the Spirit be leading you out of right now?

8. Christ’s prayer “that they all may be one” (17:21–23) was not a prayer for organizational uniformity. Penington described this unity as the most natural thing in the world, and yet a thing only the Lord can bring forth: *“Unity in the spiritual body, which is gathered into and knit together in the pure life, is a most natural and comely thing... The Lord is to be waited upon for the bringing forth of this in the body”* (Penington, *Works Vol. 2*, chunk 277). Unity is *waited for*, not negotiated or enforced. Where have you seen this kind of organic oneness? Where have you seen its counterfeit — forced uniformity masquerading as unity?

9. Jesus prayed, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (17:17). The early Friends would not soften this. Against those who said holiness could never be perfected in this life, Burrough answered: *“Thou sayst, Sanctification is not perfect in this life... But we say, Christ is perfect, and therefore Sanctification is perfect; and the New Man is the Image of God, and is created in Righteousness and in true Holiness”* (Burrough, *Memorable Works*, chunk 664). Where in your life are you not yet sanctified — not yet set apart for God’s purposes? Do you believe Christ can sanctify you *really*, or have you quietly settled for being only slightly improved?

Key Insight (2 min)

The whole movement of John 17 is inward — the name declared, the love placed within, Christ himself in them. The knowledge that is life eternal is not assent to true propositions but an immediate, inward knowing of God. Penington testified that he knew it as certainly as he had ever known anything:

“I have heard his voice, as truly and certainly, inwardly in my heart, as ever I heard the voice of Satan there. He hath revealed his Son, his pure, holy, living child Jesus in me.” (Penington, *Works Vol. 3*, chunk 266)

As truly and certainly. Not metaphorically. Not approximately. The great prayer of John 17 is answered not in a doctrine received but in a Christ indwelling — the love wherewith the Father loved the Son made the living possession of every soul born of the Spirit. That is what the Comforter makes possible when he comes.

Closing (3–5 min)

Prayer Prompt: Jesus prayed, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (17:17). In silence, ask: *Where in my life am I not yet sanctified — not yet set apart for God’s purposes?* And then receive Christ’s prayer on your behalf. He is praying for your sanctification right now, with the same earnestness with which he prayed in the upper room.

After a minute of silence, close with prayer together.

Next Session Preview: Read John 18–21 and the corresponding commentary, through the Gospel’s close. Our final session covers the passion, the resurrection, and Christ’s commission to Peter — “Feed my sheep.” Come ready to reflect on what eight weeks with the Quaker reading of John has done to you, and what you will do with it.

Personal Study


Journal Prompt: Jesus said, “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (16:33). Fox set the peace of Christ over against the trouble of the world as two countries — “In me ye shall have peace; but in the world trouble” — and bade Friends dwell wholly in the one (Fox, *Journal* Vol. 2, chunk 399). The first Friends faced prison, beatings, and loss, and were genuinely cheerful — not in denial, but in the confidence that Christ had already overcome. Write about a tribulation you are facing. Then write what it would mean to be “of good cheer” in the middle of it — not because the tribulation has ended, but because Christ has overcome.

Optional Deeper Reading: Read Robert Barclay’s *Apology*, Propositions I–III, where he systematically argues from John 16:13 and John 17:3 that direct, inward knowledge of God through the Spirit is the foundation of all true theology. Available free online.

Session 8: The Kingdom Not of This World

John 18–21 — The Passion, the Resurrection, and “Feed My Sheep”

 **Assigned Reading:** Commentary Chapters 18–21

 **Scripture:** John 18–21 (key passages: 18:36–38; 19:30; 20:19–29; 21:15–19)

Opening (5 min)

Icebreaker: We’ve spent eight sessions together with John and the early Quakers. Before we dig into the passion and resurrection, share one thing from the previous seven sessions that has stayed with you — a quote, a question, an insight, a challenge. What has this study done to you?

Reading Aloud (5 min)

Have four readers take one passage each:

- **Reader 1:** John 18:33–38 (Jesus before Pilate — “My kingdom is not of this world”)
- **Reader 2:** John 19:28–30 (“It is finished”)
- **Reader 3:** John 20:19–22, 26–29 (Jesus appears; “Peace be unto you”; Thomas)
- **Reader 4:** John 21:15–19 (“Feed my sheep”)

Leader note: This is the climax and resolution of the entire Gospel. The cross, the empty tomb, the risen Christ, and the commission. Let the readings breathe. Consider a longer silence between each one.

Discussion (20–30 min)

Observation — What Does the Text Say?

1. Pilate asks, “What is truth?” (18:38) — and does not stay for the answer. He is standing in front of the one who said “I am the truth” (14:6) and walks

away. The commentary calls his question “the very emblem of worldly wisdom: a mind that can frame the question but is not ‘of the truth,’ and so cannot hear the voice.” Why? What keeps people from recognizing truth when it stands directly in front of them?

2. The risen Christ appears to the disciples and says, “Peace be unto you” (20:19, 21). He shows them his hands and his side. Peace and wounds together. Why does Christ show his wounds in the same breath as offering peace?

Interpretation — What Does It Mean?

3. 💡 “My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight” (18:36) was the cornerstone of the Quaker peace testimony. Burrough’s exposition is the richest in the corpus — and he saw that the reason Christ’s servants do not fight is that the kingdom is set up *within*: “his Kingdom shall be set up within every particular of his Subjects; for none can know him reign without them unto their Salvation, till they know him to reign first within... strive not to obtain it with your carnal Weapons, but take the Weapons which are Spiritual, which only will overcome... for through suffering must the Kingdom of Christ be set up, and not by rebellion” (Burrough, *Memorable Works*, chunk 291). The peace testimony is not first a rule about warfare but a doctrine about *where the kingdom is*. Does this principle still hold? Where do you see people trying to advance the spiritual kingdom by worldly force?

4. ? “It is finished” (19:30). The Friends were charged with denying the cross — yet they honoured Christ’s death and witnessed forgiveness through his blood. What they refused was to let the work done *for us* stay separate from the work done *in us*. Barclay stated it carefully: “*The first is the redemption performed and accomplished by Christ for us in his crucified body without us. The other is the redemption wrought by Christ in us, which no less properly is called and accounted a redemption than the former*” (Barclay, *Apology*, chunk 148). The cross finished a work meant to be inwardly known. Have you been content with a Christ who died *for* you, while resisting the Christ who would also live and reign *in* you?

5. 💡 The risen Christ “breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost” (20:22) — the foundation of the whole Quaker doctrine of ministry. Job Scott joined the breathing directly to the sending and the power: “*in order that his ministers might be qualified for the like service... immediately, when he had said this, ‘he breathed on them, and saith unto*

them, Receive ye the holy ghost'... And thus qualified by the same anointing, and sent forth in the same service, they were enabled to work the same works" (Scott, *Baptism of Christ*, chunk 129). A man cannot make himself a minister of the Spirit by study or ordination alone — the breath of the risen Christ must qualify him. What does this say about who is fit to speak for God, and about the silence in which Friends wait for that breath to be renewed?

6. Mary clung to the risen body, and Christ said, "Touch me not" (20:17) — weaning his people off the outward presence and onto the spiritual presence that would be nearer than the outward ever was. Pennington, charged with denying the body of Christ, answered: "*Ye are now in pain, as a woman in travail, full of sorrow for the loss of my outward, bodily presence; but I will come to you again in spirit... there is no other bridegroom, who now appears in spirit... than He that once appeared in the prepared body*" (Pennington, *Letters*, chunk 161). The "Touch me not" is not a denial but a promise: the outward going is the condition of the inward coming. Where are you still clinging to an outward Christ — to feelings, signs, or proofs — rather than the Christ who comes in Spirit?

Application — How Does This Change How We Live?

7. When Peter drew his sword in the garden, Christ said, "Put up thy sword" (18:11). Fox, in the great 1660 Declaration to the king, set this saying against any thought that Friends might one day fight for Christ's kingdom: "*Christ said to Peter, 'Put up thy sword in his place'... but Christ commanded him to put it up: and said, 'He that taketh the sword shall perish with the sword.'* And further, *Christ said to Pilate, 'If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight'*" (Fox, *Journal* Vol. 1, chunk 475). The kingdom advances by suffering borne, not by suffering inflicted. Is there a place in your life where you have been "fighting" — in relationships, arguments, posturing — where you might be called instead to suffer, to absorb, to lay down the sword?

8. → "Feed my sheep" (21:15–17). Christ does not ask Peter whether he is learned or fit to govern — only "Lovest thou me?" The whole authority to feed the flock hangs on that single thread. The sheep remain *Christ's* — "my lambs, my sheep" — and the shepherd is a servant of a flock that is not his (see Pennington, *Works*, Vol. 3, chunk 53). Against this stands the hireling who feeds himself; William Edmundson set the contrast in fire: "*Wo be to the shepherds that feed themselves; should not the shepherds feed the*

flocks?... Have you kept one certain voice, as the good Shepherd doth... Or have not your voices been variable as the wind, giving an uncertain sound?" (Edmundson, *Journal*, chunk 150). Who has Christ placed in your life to care for? And is your care rooted in love for Christ — or in obligation, guilt, or ambition?

9. Thomas says, “My Lord and my God” (20:28) — the highest declaration in the Gospel. But Jesus blesses a different faith: “Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed” (20:29). Barclay argued that true faith never rests finally on the outward senses, which even the devil can deceive, but on “*the secret testimony of God’s Spirit in their hearts... This then must needs be acknowledged to be originally and principally the object of the saints’ faith, without which there is no true and certain faith*” (Barclay, *Apology*, chunk 30). The Quakers never saw the risen body, yet knew the risen Christ. Is your faith dependent on seeing — on emotional experiences, visible evidence, dramatic signs? Or can you believe without seeing, trusting the witness within?

Synthesis — What Have We Learned?

10. ➡ Looking back over all eight sessions, what has the Quaker reading of John’s Gospel revealed that you hadn’t seen before? The Light that shines in every person. Worship in spirit and truth. The Bible as witness, not destination. The Spirit that guides into all truth. The kingdom that is not of this world. The shepherd who needs no institution to feed his sheep. The Gospel closes not with a doctrine but with a call — *follow thou me* (21:22). Penington named what that following is: “*True obedience, gospel obedience, is natural to the birth which is born of God... The lamb is the leader... and so come to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes*” (Penington, *Works*, Vol. 3, chunk 256). Which of these has challenged you most? And what will you do with it?

Key Insight (2 min)

The Gospel that opened in the eternal Word closes on a shore at daybreak, with a fire of coals, a meal, and a question asked three times. John ends not with a doctrine but with a commission laid on a man who had three times denied his Lord — and then with the word that strips discipleship down to its one necessary thing: *follow thou me*. To follow is not a strange yoke laid upon the new birth; it is the new birth’s very nature:

“True obedience, gospel obedience, is natural to the birth which is born of God... The lamb is the leader: and can any be saved by him, but they that follow him?... the sheep daily learn to know his voice, and follow him; even till they come to be acquainted with every moving, drawing, and leading of his Spirit; and so come to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes.” (Penington, Works, Vol. 3, chunk 256)

That is the spirit of John’s Gospel lived out. That is the true Light, shining in the darkness. And the darkness has not — cannot — overcome it.

Closing (3–5 min)

Final Reflection: Take two minutes of silence together — Quaker-style. No agenda. No prayer list. Just sit in the Light. If the Spirit moves someone to share a word, a prayer, a testimony, let them. If the silence holds, let it hold.

After the silence, close with this prayer or one of your own:

Father of Light, you gave us your Son, the true Light that lighteth every man. For eight weeks we have walked with him — through the Prologue’s cosmic declaration, through water made wine and worship made spiritual, through bread broken inwardly and shepherds known by voice, through death overcome and sheep entrusted. We have heard the voices of the early Friends, and in their words we have heard something of your voice. Do not let this study end on a shelf. Let the Light that shone in the beginning shine now in us. Make us walkers, not merely talkers. Make us children of light, not merely students of it. And give us the spirit James Nayler found at the end of his sufferings — the spirit that delights to do no evil, that hopes to outlive all wrath, whose ground and spring is your mercy and forgiveness. In the name of Jesus Christ, the true Light, the living Word, the good Shepherd, the resurrection and the life. Amen.



Personal Study

Journal Prompt: Write a letter to yourself, dated six months from now. In it, describe what you want to be different in your spiritual life because of this study. Be specific: a practice of silence you want to maintain, a fear you want love to cast out, a relationship where you want to be a shepherd instead of a hireling, a way you want to walk in the Light instead of merely admiring it. Seal it. Open it in six months.

Continued Reading Suggestions:

- *The Journal of George Fox* (Nickalls edition) — the autobiography of the man who read John's Gospel by the Light it describes
- *The Works of Isaac Penington* — the most theologically rich and spiritually beautiful of all early Quaker writers
- Robert Barclay, *Apology for the True Christian Divinity* — the great Quaker systematic theology, built on Johannine foundations
- William Penn, *Primitive Christianity Revived* and *No Cross, No Crown* — John's Gospel applied to worship, ministry, and the daily cross
- John Woolman, *Journal and Major Works* — John's love ethic applied to slavery, economics, and justice
- The *Quaker Bible Index* at Earlham College (online) — a searchable catalogue of every biblical allusion in early Quaker writings

Appendix

Reading Schedule at a Glance

Week	Session	Scripture	Commentary Reading	Theme
1	The Word and Light	John 1	Introduction + Ch. 1	The true Light; receiving the Word
2	Water to Wine, Born Again, Living Water	John 2–4	Chs. 2–4	Transformation; the new birth; spiritual worship
3	The Son Does What the Father Does	John 5–7	Chs. 5–7	Scripture vs. the living Word;

Week	Session	Scripture	Commentary Reading	Theme
4	Light of the World, Truth Sets Free	John 8–10	Chs. 8–10	bread of life; rivers of living water Freedom through truth; the good shepherd vs. the hireling Lazarus raised;
5	The Resurrection and the Life	John 11–12	Chs. 11–12	walk while ye have the light Foot washing;
6	Love One Another	John 13–15	Chs. 13–15	the way, truth, and life; vine and branches Guided into all truth;
7	The Spirit of Truth	John 16–17	Chs. 16–17	Christ's prayer for unity The peace testimony;
8	The Kingdom Not of This World	John 18–21	Chs. 18–21	resurrection;

Week	Session	Scripture	Commentary Reading	Theme
				“Feed my sheep”

Sources and Citation Convention

Quotations from the early Friends are drawn directly from the source texts indexed for the companion commentary. Each citation names the author and work in full and points to the exact passage by its chunk number in that work — for example, (*Penington, Works Vol. 3, chunk 256*) or (*George Fox, The Journal of George Fox, Volume 2, chunk 431*). This lets any reader trace a quotation back to its precise location in the underlying text rather than to an abbreviation.

The principal sources cited throughout this study guide and the companion commentary are:

Author	Work(s) cited
George Fox	<i>The Journal of George Fox, Volumes 1–2</i>
Isaac Penington	<i>Works, Volumes 1–4; Letters</i>
Robert Barclay	<i>Apology for the True Christian Divinity</i>
Edward Burrough	<i>Memorable Works</i>
William Penn	<i>Life and Writings</i>
Job Scott	<i>Salvation by Christ; Baptism of Christ</i>
Samuel Fisher	<i>Rusticus ad Academicos</i>
Stephen Crisp	<i>Life</i>
Thomas Story	<i>Life and Journal of Thomas Story</i>
William Edmundson	<i>Journal</i>
James Nayler	<i>Works</i>

The Ten Most-Cited John Passages in Early Quaker Literature

Rank	Passage	Text	Theological Theme
1	John 1:9	“The true Light, which lighteth every man”	The Inward Light — universal
2	John 12:36	“Believe in the light, that ye may be children of light”	Becoming children of light
3	John 16:13	“The Spirit of truth will guide you into all truth”	Continuing revelation
4	John 14:6	“I am the way, the truth, and the life”	Christ the only way
5	John 12:46	“I am come a light into the world”	Christ as universal Light
6	John 4:23–24	“Worship in spirit and in truth”	Silent/waiting worship
7	John 8:12	“I am the light of the world”	Following the Light

Rank	Passage	Text	Theological Theme
8	John 14:26	“The Comforter shall teach you all things”	The Spirit as teacher
9	John 18:36	“My kingdom is not of this world”	The peace testimony
10	John 5:39–40	“Search the scriptures... ye will not come to me”	Scripture vs. the living Word

Recommended Further Reading

Primary Sources (Available Free Online)

- **George Fox, *Journal*** — The autobiography of the founder of Quakerism. The Nickalls edition is standard. Available at archive.org and the Quaker Heritage Press.
- **Robert Barclay, *Apology for the True Christian Divinity* (1678)** — The definitive Quaker systematic theology, built on Johannine foundations. The Freiday modern-English edition is most accessible. Available at archive.org.
- **William Penn, *Primitive Christianity Revived* (1696)** — Penn’s clearest summary of Quaker theology, with extensive engagement with John’s Gospel. Available at archive.org.
- **William Penn, *No Cross, No Crown* (1682)** — Penn’s masterwork on discipleship and the cost of following Christ. Available at archive.org.

- **Isaac Penington, *Works*** — The most theologically rich and spiritually beautiful of all early Quaker writers. Four volumes available at archive.org and Quaker Heritage Press.
- **John Woolman, *Journal and Major Essays*** — The great Quaker abolitionist’s spiritual autobiography. Available at archive.org and Project Gutenberg.
- **James Nayler, *Works*** — Fierce, brilliant, and deeply moving. Three volumes available at archive.org and Quaker Heritage Press.
- **Margaret Fell, *Works*** — Including her landmark *Women’s Speaking Justified* (1666). Available at archive.org.

Secondary Sources

- **Douglas Gwyn, *Apocalypse of the Word*** — The best scholarly treatment of early Quaker theology and its biblical foundations.
- **Rosemary Moore, *The Light in Their Consciences*** — An excellent introduction to the first generation of Quakers.
- **Pink Dandelion, *An Introduction to Quakerism*** — A clear, accessible overview of Quaker history and theology.

Online Resources

- **The Quaker Bible Index** (Earlham College) — A searchable catalogue of every biblical allusion in early Quaker writings. Available at esr.earlham.edu/qbi/
 - **Quaker Heritage Press** (qhpress.org) — Free digital editions of many early Quaker texts.
 - **Digital Quaker Collection** (Swarthmore College) — Digitized manuscripts, letters, and publications from the early Quaker movement.
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A Note of Thanks

This study guide was created as a companion to the *Friends Illuminated Commentary on the Gospel of John*. It is offered in the spirit of John 1:7 — that John “came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe” — in the hope that small groups of believers,

gathered in living rooms and meeting houses around the world, might read the Quaker Gospel with the eyes of those who first saw its Light, and might discover in it a Christ more present, more powerful, and more demanding than they imagined possible.

“There is a spirit which I feel that delights to do no evil, nor to revenge any wrong, but delights to endure all things, in hope to enjoy its own in the end. Its hope is to outlive all wrath and contention, and to weary out all exaltation and cruelty, or whatever is of a nature contrary to itself.” — James Nayler, 1660

Soli Deo Gloria

