

Seeking the Inner Light

By Greg Seastrom -- February 2005 Pastor's Column

Most of us want to live a good life so turn to religious faith for direction, but knowing and following God's Will is not easy.

First, we must truly want to find what's right. If we are insincere, nothing else matters. It's important that we make the effort to be one with God, which to a Christian means to try to live as Christ would if he were in our place.

The Bible is a sacred text that contains the progressive revelation of God's wisdom and love for woman and man and provides inspiration, law, and guidance. The prophet Micah said the Lord required three things: "to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God." In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul states that of all lasting things, love is the greatest. As reported by both Matthew and Mark, when Jesus was asked which commandment was the most important, he replied that we must love the Lord first and also our neighbors. We learn that when conflicted, we should rely on these fundamental values to provide direction.

The God who speaks through the Bible continues to speak to us today. God is living, and it is possible for each of us to have a personal relationship with him. We can find truths that lie deep in our souls, that measure of Light which God gives each of us. We need to feel the presence of the Holy Spirit. As most religions, Christianity has a long tradition of solitude, silence, and meditation. Quakers sit together in silence, quieting their minds and reaching deeply into themselves to find the Light. Many churches practice silent prayer, but anyone can find a time of solitude to search in stillness for the Light.

Silent worship involves using all our faculties to move beyond the rational and verbal to a sense of "rightness." Rationality, emotion, and intuition work in a dynamic of checks and balances until they finally disappear from our consciousness. All that we know and all we've experienced are in operation, but we are not aware of it. In a deep silence we wait for a moment of clarity; we listen for the "still, small voice" of God.

By listening, we hear a call to act; however, to say and do something may be uncomfortable. Our first option, the easiest, is to give money or goods to those less fortunate. We might also serve by volunteering for various charitable organizations and projects. More difficult is to witness by making ourselves visible to inform and educate our neighbors. This risks being ostracized because the truth may be awkward and uncomfortable and conflict with the interests of others. Perhaps the most difficult is to live rightly, practicing what we believe to be right.

If we choose not to act, we can find reasons, but we'll feel uneasy. On the other hand, if we are strengthened by the Light, we can find the courage and power within to speak

and act rightly, striving for a wholeness in which we live consistently with the values we profess. We each have certain talents and limitations that we can recognize as we push as far as our measure of Light allows. The important thing is that we keep at it, that we go out each day with a desire to do our best. If we fail, we can try again.