

# Nifty Ideas for First Day Schools

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Children's Religious Education

## Simplicity & Money

A life centered in God will be characterized by integrity, sincerity and simplicity. It need not be cloistered and may even be a busy life, but its activities and expressions should be correlated and directed toward the simple, direct purpose of keeping one's communication with God open and unencumbered by that which is unessential. Simplicity is best approached through a right ordering of priorities.

Simplicity consists not in the use of particular forms but in avoiding self-indulgence, in maintaining humility of spirit and in keeping the material surroundings of our lives directly serviceable to necessary ends. This does not mean that life need be poor and bare or destitute of joy and beauty. All forms of art may aid in the attainment of the spiritual life, and often the most simple lines, themes or moments, when characterized by grace and directness, are the most beautiful.

Faith and Practice, 1972.

### Objective:

To explore how the choices we make about our money affect our relationships with each other and with God.

### Introduction

👉 Ask the children what is the point of having money. Leave a lot of space for the children to explore and listen to each other's responses.

👉 Tell the children that today we are going to explore money while thinking about the Quaker testimony of Simplicity. Share your own definition of simplicity, ask for the children's definition and/or use this one (excerpted and paraphrased from the F&P quote at the left): *Simplicity is living in a way that keeps our communication with God open, not cluttered up with other thoughts, needs and things that get in the way of seeking Love in every step.*

### Meeting for Teaching

👉 Draw a large dollar sign (\$) on a large piece of paper. Write down the children's ideas about what kinds of things they use money for. Help them think about what they spend money on and what their parents spend money on. Younger kids may need more prompts. Write everything they say. Then, with a different color marker, circle the items that the children say they *need*. Talk with them about their choices. What would happen if they did not have the things that they circle? Are there people who live without those things? Does having the things that are not circled affect their relationship with God? How about the things that are circled?

On another piece of paper, draw a large heart. Write down the children's ideas about the things that they need that can't be bought with money. What would happen if they did not have these things? Are there people who live without these things? Does having or not having these things affect their relationship with God?

**OR**

👉 Read [The Table Where Rich People Sit](#) by Byrd Baylor.

### Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

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# Nifty Idea: Simplicity & Money

## Meeting for Learning

- ✎ Give each child a pretend check for \$1,000.00. Ask them to make a shopping list of the things they would buy. Help them remember the principle of simplicity and relationship with God. Help them remember that there are many many people with nothing and no money. (Don't expect them to realistically spend \$1,000, they won't know how much money that is).

**or**

- ✎ Gandhi has been said to have only owned 5 things. Ask each child to draw a picture of the 5 things they feel they need the most.

**or**

- ✎ Before class, draw a simple picture of a desert island on individual pieces of paper—one for each child.



Using the Desert Island coloring sheets, ask the children to draw the things they would need if they lived on a desert island. Is this different from the things they have now? How would their lives be different on a desert island? What would change about their relationship with God? What does that have to say about the way we live now?

## Pull it all together

- ✎ Ask the children to tell you what this week's subject was, you're looking for something about money and relationship to God and/or simplicity. This helps them get the underlying message, rather than just remembering the check for a LOT of money!
- ✎ Ask each child to try to list one thing that they can do to be closer to God. The youngest children may end up saying the same thing every week, if you cover this topic for more than one week. That's okay. Try to say something new and related to the subject each week when it's your turn to share, but it's more important that you share genuinely.
- ✎ If you have a clever way to help the children grasp the abstract idea of money, simplicity and relationship with God, this is the place to pull it all together for them.