

Advices

The principal purpose of a book of discipline is to promote discipleship by giving advice on a broad range of aspects of the life of the Society of Friends. In that sense the entire volume, save the quotations from the writings of Friends, is advices, addressed by the yearly meeting to its many individual members and its many constituent bodies.

With that in mind, we have chosen to abandon the practice of recasting to suit our times a set of highly compact advices received from the earlier generations. But rather than drop the compact version entirely, we have, in support of those who cherish them, reprinted the 1972 version. We trust that doing so will not encourage Friends to rely unduly on the compact advices to the neglect of the volume as a whole.

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These advices were paraphrased from materials contained in the Epistles of the Yearly Meeting of Pennsylvania and the Jerseys, 1694 and 1695.

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I

Friends are reminded that our Religious Society took form in times of disturbance, and that its continuing testimony has been the power of God to lead men and women out of the confusions of outward violence, inward sickness, and all other forms of self-will, however upheld by social convention. As death comes to our willfulness, a new life is formed in us, so that we are liberated from distractions and frustrations, from fears, angers, and guilts. Thus we are enabled to sense the Inward Light and to follow its leadings. Friends are advised to place God, not themselves, in the center of the universe and, in all aspects of inward life and outward activity, to keep themselves open to the healing power of the Spirit of Christ.

Take heed, dear Friends, to the promptings of love and truth in your hearts. Seek to live in affection as true Friends in your Meetings, in your families, in all your dealings with others, and in your relationship with outward society. The power of God is not used to compel us to Truth; therefore, let us renounce for ourselves the power of any person over any

other and, compelling no one, seek to lead others to Truth through love. Let us teach by being ourselves teachable.

Keep to the simplicity of Truth. Seek for its manifestations in prayer, in reading matter, in the arts, and in all experiences of daily life. Shun the use of mind-changing drugs and intoxicants, of gambling, and of other detrimental practices that interpose themselves against the Inward Light. It is the experience of Friends that these drugs, intoxicants, and practices lead to a personal willfulness and inability to listen for the will of God. Avoid in daily work those involvements and entanglements that separate us from each other and from God. Keep your recreations from becoming occasions for self-intoxication and avoid those conventional amusements which debase the emotions by playing upon them. These, too, lead to self-absorption and to forgetfulness that each person's humanity is shared by all persons. Live and work in the plainness and simplicity of a true follower of Christ.

II

Our Religious Society endures as a community of friends who take thought for outward society by first taking care of one another. Friends are advised to maintain love and unity, to avoid tale-bearing and detraction, and to settle differences promptly and in a manner free from resentment and all forms of inward violence. Live affectionately as friends, entering with sympathy into the joys and sorrows of one another's daily lives. Visit one another. Be alert to give help and ready to receive it. Bear the burdens of one another's failings; share the buoyancy of one another's strengths.

Remember that to everyone is given a share of responsibility for the meeting for worship, whether through silence or through the spoken word. Be diligent in attendance at meetings and in inward preparation for them. Be ready to speak under the leadings of the Light. Receive the ministry of others in a tender spirit and avoid hurtful criticism. In meetings for business, and in all duties connected with them, seek again the leadings of the Light, keeping from obstinacy and from harshness of tone or manner; admit the possibility of being in error. In all the affairs of the Meeting community, proceed in the peaceable spirit of Pure Wisdom, with forbearance and warm affection for each other.

Use your capabilities and your possessions not as ends in themselves but as God's gifts entrusted to you. Share them with others; use them with humility, courtesy and affection. Guard against contentiousness and love of power; be alert to the personalities and the needs of others. Show

loving consideration for all creatures, and cherish the beauty and wonder of God's creation. Attend to Pure Wisdom and be teachable.

III

Friends are reminded that it is the experience and testimony of our Society that there is one teacher, namely Christ; and that in that Spirit there are no distinctions between persons, nor any reason of age, sex, or race that elects some to domination. Live in love and learn from one another. Combativeness in family life, whereby one strives to assert a supremacy of will over another, is not compatible with the conviction that there is that of God in everyone. Amid the growing distempers of social existence, Friends are urged to maintain our witness of Truth, simplicity, and nonviolence, and to test our personal lives by them.

The union of two in marriage having a religious basis, any who contemplate it should seek divine guidance, and any who enter into marriage should seek this guidance without ceasing. Within the family, adults and youth, whether formally in membership or not, should instruct one another by example in the way of life which our Religious Society has professed, seeking in all things the Inward Light as the only certain alternative to an unfriendly struggle of wills. Friends are advised to maintain closeness in their family life and, avoiding distractions and contentions, to make their homes places of peace.

The Spirit of Christ can lead parents to wise counsel for their children in education, reading, recreation, and social relationships, while it can also lead children to wise counsel for their parents in these and other aspects of life. If counsel is unwelcome and if difficulties arise, persevere both in prayer and in a sense of humor. Friends are advised in all things to trust in the Light and to witness to it in daily living.

Accept with serenity the approach of each new stage of life. Welcome the approach of old age, both for oneself and for others, as an opportunity for wisdom, for detachment from turmoils, and for greater attachment to the Light. Make provisions for the settlement of all outward affairs while in health, so that others may not be burdened and so that one may be freed to live more fully in the Truth that shall stand against all the entanglements, distractions, and confusions of our times.

IV

Bring the whole of your life under the healing and ordering of the Holy Spirit, remembering that there is no time but this present. Friends are

reminded that we are called, as followers of Christ, to help establish the Kingdom of God on earth. In witnessing to the Inward Light, guard against religious intolerance. Strengthen a sense of kinship with everyone and make service, not self-promotion, the chief aim of our outward lives as Friends, as employees or as supervisors, and as citizens.

Let the sense of kinship inspire us to unceasing efforts toward a social order free of violence and oppression, in which no one's development is hindered by meager income, insufficient education, or too little freedom in directing his or her own affairs. Friends are advised not only to minister to those in need, but also to seek to know the facts of social and economic ills so as to work for the removal of those ills. Let the Friendly testimony that there is that of God in everyone lead us to cherish every human being regardless of race or class, and to encourage efforts to overcome prejudices and antagonisms. Friends are advised to cleanse themselves of all prejudice.

Be faithful in maintaining our testimony against all war as contrary to the spirit and teaching of Christ. Every human being is a child of God with a measure of God's Light. War and other instruments of violence and oppression ignore this reality and violate our relation with God. Keep primary our Friends' concern for the elimination of combat in the outward world as in our personal lives. Friends are advised to live in the virtue of that life and power that takes away the occasion of all wars. Friends are further advised to aid in all ways possible the development of international order and understanding.

Dear Friends, keep all your meetings in the authority, wisdom and power of Truth and the unity of the blessed Spirit. Let your conduct and conversation be such as become the Gospel of Christ. Exercise yourselves to have a conscience void of offense toward God and toward all people. Be steadfast and faithful in your allegiance and service to your Lord, and the God of peace be with you.

Elders of Balby, Yorkshire, 1656