

## “Between Words” Activity

by Rick Seifert

### Background

Words are stepping-stones that, when linked together, can lead to meaning or poetry, or truth. Of course, we also know they can deceive and divide.

Considered separately, each word ignites unique individual responses. “Joy” invokes myriad celebrations, large or small. “Love” is shaped by what is loved: pizza, the beach, the Blues, God — even guns and harmful addictions.

To victims of abuse and pain, certain words are “triggers” to anxiety. And while many dread silence, others, certainly Quakers, find silence is a centering, calming refuge. Of course, “silence” itself is a word.

Another way to consider words is to contemplate their “auras” — the energy that surrounds them and leads to epiphanies “beyond” words.

What, for instance, is “love” beyond Love? Or grace beyond Grace?

Recently, a group of Friends in Multnomah Meeting in Portland organized a religious education session to **explore the “space” between pairs of words**. These were pairs of common “Quaker” words chosen at random.

Friends often use such words while giving them little thought. Rarely, if ever, do we explore the auras of words. So, by exploring the “space” between “Quaker” word pairs and the merging of their auras, a surprising number of “openings” can emerge.

Consider these pairs and the space between them:

- Community and Integrity
- Peace and Simplicity
- Joys and Concerns
- Faith and Practice

Holding such pairs in silent worship, sharing with one another often inspires “inner” and “outer” light.

### A Bit about Organization

Before the session, think of a list of about forty “Quaker” words and write each word on a separate index card.

We have found these “explorations” are best for groups of up to 16 people.

Ask participants form into “worship pairs.” (Add a “worship trio,” too, if needed.)

Spread out the word cards face down. Each pair chooses two cards, and does not look at them. They hold their words in mystery while a facilitator describes what to do after they turn their cards over, revealing the pairs of words.

The randomness of the selection and the anticipation adds a nice sense of mystery as we prepare to explore the unknown.

The facilitator tells participants that when they look at their words, they should direct their attentions to the energy BETWEEN the pair of words that they have chosen. They should attend to the field of energy where the word auras merge.

When they turn their cards over, the couples might seem understandably focused on the words before them. The facilitator will soon urge them to shift their attentions to the energy BETWEEN the words, the field where the auras merge. What do Friends find there?

After about 20 minutes of sharing in couples, the whole group reconvenes. Each Friend is invited to share their words and concisely report on one or two “between words” discoveries that they found spiritually deepening.

A surprising gift from this activity has been that paired Friends have reported discovering a deepening relationship with each other and with other participants as well.

I encourage your meeting embark on your own exploration of the mysteries and revelations “Between Words.” If you have questions, observations, comments or lessons to share, please feel free to contact me at: wfseifert[AT]gmail[DOT]com

*by Rick Seifert, Multnomah Monthly Meeting (3/22/2024)*