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What Do Quakers Believe?

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Quakers Meeting. Egbert van Heemskerk the Elder / Getty Images

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Quakers, or the Religious Society of Friends, hold beliefs that range from very liberal to conservative, depending on the branch of the religion. Some Quaker services consist of silent meditation only, while others resemble Protestant services. Christian qualities are far more important to Quakers than doctrines.

Originally called "Children of the Light," "Friends in the Truth," "Friends of the Truth," or "Friends," the Quakers chief belief is that there is in every man, as a supernatural gift from God, an inward illumination of the Gospel's truth.

FAST FACTS

Quaker Religion

Full Name: Religious Society of Friends

Also Known As: Quakers; Friends.

Founding: Founded in England by George Fox (1624–1691) in the mid-17th century.

Other Prominent Founders: William Edmondson, Richard Hubberthorn, James Nayler, William Penn.

Worldwide Membership: An estimated 300,000.

Prominent Quaker Beliefs: Quakers emphasize a belief in the “inner light,” a guiding illumination by the Holy Spirit. They don’t have clergy or observe sacraments. They reject taking of oaths, military service, and war.

Quaker Beliefs

Baptism: Most Quakers believe that how a person lives their life is a sacrament and that formal observances are not necessary. Quakers hold that baptism is an inward, not outward, act.

Bible: Quakers' beliefs stress individual revelation, but the Bible is truth. All personal light must be held up to the Bible for confirmation. The Holy Spirit, who inspired the Bible, does not contradict Himself.

Communion: Spiritual communion with God, experienced during silent meditation, is one of the common Quakers beliefs.

Creed: Quakers do not have a written creed. Instead, they hold to personal testimonies professing peace, integrity, humility, and community.

Equality: From its beginning, the Religious Society of Friends taught equality of all persons, including women. Some conservative meetings are divided

that the question of the afterlife is a matter of speculation.

Jesus Christ: While Quakers beliefs say that God is revealed in Jesus Christ, most Friends are more concerned with emulating Jesus' life and obeying his commands than with the theology of salvation.

Sin: Unlike other Christian denominations, Quakers believe that humans are inherently good. Sin exists, but even the fallen are children of God, Who works to kindle the Light within them.

Trinity: Friends believe in God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit, although belief in the roles each Person plays vary widely among Quakers.

Worship Practices

Sacraments: Quakers do not practice a ritual baptism but believe that life, when lived in the example of Jesus Christ, is a sacrament. Similarly, to the Quaker, silent meditation, seeking revelation directly from God, is their form of communion.

Quaker Services

Friends meetings may differ considerably, based on whether the individual group is liberal or conservative. Basically, two types of meetings exist. Unprogrammed meetings consist of silent meditation, with expectant waiting upon the Holy Spirit. Individuals may speak if they feel led. This type of meditation is one variety of mysticism. Programmed, or pastoral meetings can be much like an evangelical Protestant worship service, with prayer, readings from the Bible, hymns, music, and a sermon. Some branches of Quakerism have pastors; others do not.

Quaker meetings are kept simple to allow members to commune with God's Spirit. Worshippers often sit in a circle or square, so people can see and be aware of each other, but no single person is raised in status above the others. Early Quakers called their buildings steeple-houses or meeting

relies heavily on personal communion and revelation from God rather than adherence to a creed and doctrinal beliefs.

To learn more about Quakers beliefs, visit the official Religious Society of Friends Website.

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