

SPIRITUAL BOOK NEWS

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SPIRITUAL BOOK ASSOCIATES

SEPTEMBER 2007 SELECTION

NEW EDITION COMING SOON!



PRAY ALL WAYS

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Center for Action and Contemplation
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This new edition of Edward Hays's pioneering book on prayer (over 38,000 copies sold) stands apart in a crowded field of books on how to pray, with its unique interpretation of the biblical command to "pray always"—a call to pray creatively, at all times, and in every circumstance.

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FEATURED SELECTION



PRACTICING PEACE

*A Devotional Walk through the
Quaker Tradition*

Catherine Whitmire

Cathy Whitmire has drawn on her own experience and on the rich heritage of Quaker peacemaking to craft an absorbing book, one which will inspire and guide people of any faith and of none.

HARVEY COX

Hollis Professor of Divinity,
Harvard Divinity School

Quaker author Catherine Whitmire shares stories of successful nonviolent movements throughout history partnered with quotes mined from over 350 years of Quaker teachings on peace. Query questions lead readers on a journey to self-discovery and through the stages of practicing peace.

ISBN: 9781933495071 / 272 pages / \$16.95



PRACTICING PEACE

A Devotional Walk through the Quaker Tradition

Catherine Whitmire

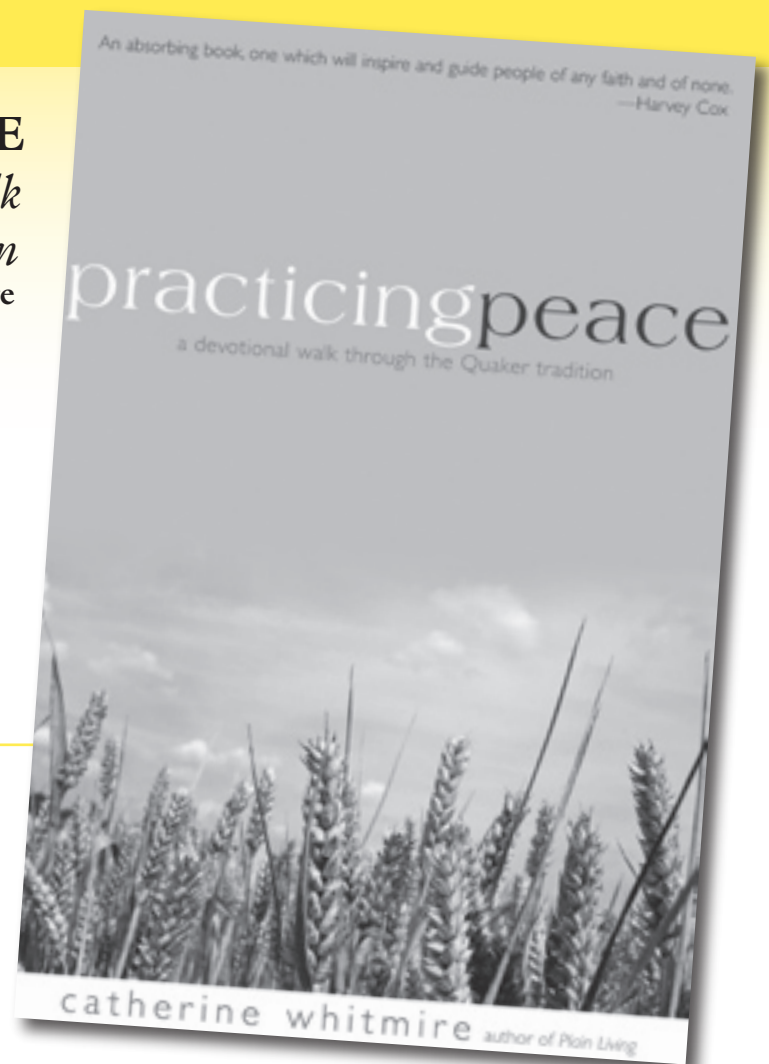
THE STRUGGLE

When we hear the word *peace*, what do we think of? Most often we think of calmness, serenity, lack of strife, violence or struggle. We may picture in our mind calm waters, a gentle breeze, smiling people relating to each other in a peaceful manner without a trouble in sight. Is this true peace? Can this kind of peace be achieved?

- What is the first image that comes to mind when you hear the word peace?
- Upon further reflection, what images and synonyms appear?

Catherine Whitmire openly relates her struggles to find and live a life of peace in this book. She tells us that “peace is not a steady state,” so it cannot be achieved once and for all. We cannot simply make a decision to live in peace and leave it at that. We must make countless decisions in life’s journey to practice peace.

The path to peace does have a beginning for each of us. Somewhere along the line in our unique journeys something happens that calls us to peace. For some this is a single revelatory moment in which God breaks through to us in a unique and powerful way. This breakthrough moment is likely preceded by experiences that laid the groundwork to prepare us. For others, the decision to seek a life of peace develops more gradually over time, with God working through people and experiences to call us to a life of peace. As you read, reflect on your journey and struggles. Share them with your group or those close to you, for in doing so we encourage each other in this difficult struggle.



Reflect on your personal path to peace.

- What experiences led you down this path?
- Who were the instrumental people on this path?

Internal struggle flares up within us at times and recedes at others as we continue to seek a life of peace. It is important to cherish the times of struggle as well as the times of peace. For God is always present in the struggle, and it is in the struggle that we grow in peace and love. How we view the struggle can determine how we grow.

Struggle is a neutral word, but many of us bring negative connotations to it. Some of us were brought up to avoid conflict, thinking that this is peace. But peace based on conflict avoidance is not true peace. Rather it leads to resentments, unhealthy relationships, and anger, among other unhealthy results. As we see in the reflections of this devotional, peace involves loving confrontation. It means valuing relationships so much that we are willing to take a risk and push ourselves and others to grow. This struggle takes energy, patience, and love. Let this devotional be a well to drink from when you are thirsty in this struggle.

READER'S GROUP GUIDE

NON-VIOLENCE AND LOVE IN SOCIETY AND THE HOME

Whitmire says, “Non-violence is love in action.” Non-violence and love are so closely related that a leader of the civil rights movement prefers a more positive term for the non-violent actions undertaken in the 1960’s.

Diane Nash, an unsung hero of the Civil Rights movement, was a leader in the Southern Christian Leadership Conference during the Nashville sit-ins. By her own account, she questioned non-violence until she became convinced that non-violence was not only the right way, but also the only effective way to achieve social change and peace. She called non-violent actions “agapic energy campaigns.” Conflict, a necessary condition of life, takes energy, so we can use violent energy or love energy. Negative power is draining while positive power is fulfilling. According to Nash, by focusing on agapic energy instead of non-violence, we are placing the emphasis on the positive, active power of brotherly love instead of placing the emphasis on negating something.

Whitmire herself experienced this drain when working hard against the current war in Iraq. Perhaps you have experienced this as well.

- Reflect on the times you were drained by fighting negative actions, whether they are fights against national injustice or struggles against negative behaviors in your children.
- What have you learned about yourself and practicing peace from those experiences?

This difference in emphasis applies on all levels, not just national or societal. Many well-meaning parenting books have been written on curbing misbehaviors in children. Most of

them focus on what the child is doing wrong and how to stop it, usually with some type of coercion, reward for stopping or changing, or punishment, although the punishment may be called a consequence to make it sound less strict. Parents use these books to decide how authoritarian or permissive they should be, with most books advocating some position in the middle.

However, a different approach to parenting advocated by a few begins not with misbehaviors but with the parent envisioning the child as an adult with all the positive attributes (such as responsible, independent, emotionally stable, curious, caring) hoped for by the parents. Such an approach gives the parent something to work for when dealing with the inevitable misbehaviors of children. The emphasis changes to working toward a goal instead of working against negative behaviors. Parenting takes a lot of work and energy, but with the change in emphasis parents report feeling less drained than before, as they are able to spend more energy focusing on developing the positive relationship with their children and less on dealing with misbehaviors.

As Christians we are called to be in the world but not of it, to live as if the Kingdom/ Commonwealth of God is here but not yet fully realized. We are to live the law of love in a world of laws. Living a life of non-violent love—of *agape*—in the many roles we play, as parents, children, neighbors, and citizens of the world requires community, prayer, and support. Look for these themes and examples in this inspiring, thought-provoking devotional.

Agape – Christian love; brotherly and sisterly love.

WHEREVER TWO OR THREE ARE GATHERED...

SUGGESTIONS FOR GROUP USE

This book is well suited to use by a group. Use the questions in this guide and especially the Queries at the end of each section to connect the reflections to your own experience and faith journey. They work well in a faith-sharing group, a personal journal, or with a spouse or friend. Groups should not neglect their use in journaling; a journal can be a useful tool for those in groups as well as for those reading on their own. Group leaders should have these questions or others ready for group discussion and sharing. All are encouraged to pose their

own questions of themselves and others to make the discussion more meaningful. Deeper faith is always a goal of faith sharing groups—let it be your guide for discussion.

- Mark or jot down quotes from the book that speak to you in a special way. Share them with your group.
- Look for recurring themes that run through the reflections and ways to connect them with your own life and your own faith tradition.



THE HISTORICAL PEACE CHURCHES

Practically every Christian denomination contains a minor tradition of non-violence within it, but a few denominations put non-violence front and center. These historic peace churches include *The Church of the Brethren*, the *Mennonites*, and the *Quakers*. These denominations arose in different centuries but share the common belief that non-violence is at the heart of the Gospel message. This common belief has not

lead to uniformity among the denominations but it has been a belief around which they have come together to oppose war, engage in service and mission, and work for justice.

- Further background information on the historic peace churches can be found online at www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/who/dictionary-article8.html

WEBSITES OF INTEREST



- **Catholic Peace Fellowship: www.catholicpeacefellowship.org**

The Catholic Peace Fellowship was originally founded in the 1960's and has been revived in the last ten years. Committed to following the non-violent example of Jesus, *The Catholic Peace Fellowship* offers annual retreats, and recognizes prophetic voices in the Church who preach non-violence with words and deeds. They devote much of their time to counseling conscientious objectors, providing information on GI rights in general to those in the military, and waging counter-recruitment campaigns in high schools. At their website you can sign up for a brief newsletter via email; paid subscriptions to their thought provoking *Peace Journal*, mailed six times a year, are also available.



- **Every Church a Peace Church: www.ecapc.org**

Arising out of a group formed in the 1970's by the historic peace churches, *Every Church a Peace Church* is a grass roots movement of congregations, small groups, and individuals who share a vision. The Peace Church affirmation expresses this vision of following Jesus' non-violent way of love of enemies in the struggle for peace and justice. Extensive materials can be found on their website, including history, detailed vision, online courses and resources, and discussion boards.



- **The Quakers: www.quaker.org**

Here you will find links to all kinds of Quaker related topics. This website contains a representative sampling of the variety of the Quaker tradition and includes links to history, meetings, writings, and more.



- **The Center for Christian Non-Violence: www.centerforchristiannonviolence.org**

Based on the absolute centrality of non-violent love of friends and enemies to the Gospel, *The Center for Christian Non-Violence* provides free downloads of writings supporting that belief. Founded by Fr. Emmanuel Charles McCarthy, a Byzantine Catholic priest, the Center offers pamphlets and retreats designed to give repeated exposure to the way of non-violence lived by Jesus and to bring that teaching to bear on our current times.

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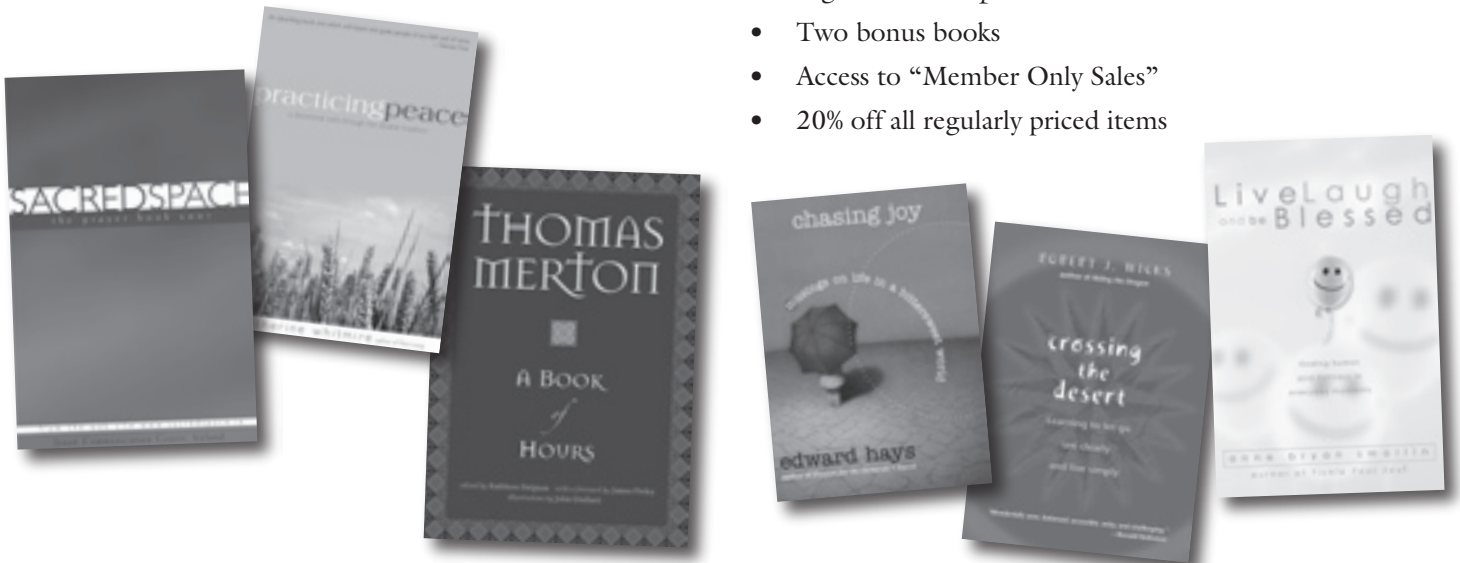
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