

## **Skits on Early Friends**

**(Note: All scenes take place in 17 century England except the first and last)**

### **for Session #1 - Comparing 21<sup>st</sup> c. US & 17 c. England**

#### **Scene 1: What people talk about today**

Two friends, Matthew (a mechanic) and Elizabeth (a software engineer) talk in a bar today. (2 roles)

#### **Scene 2: What people talked about in the 1650s**

Two friends, Isaac (a sheep farmer) and James (a cobbler) speak in a pub in England in 1651. (2 roles)

### **for Session #2 – A People to be Gathered**

George has been preaching to a large group of people taking part in a country fair in Sedbergh in June 1652. He is speaking with another preacher named Francis Howgill. (2 roles)

### **for Session #3 – May Women Preach?**

Father Phillip Whitstanley is just finishing his sermon in a parish church in 1658. In this church there is often an open discussion at the end of the sermon. Mary, a Quaker leader, stands to speak. (2 roles with contributions from others)

### **for Session #4 - Persecution: George & Margaret**

It is December of 1673, George Fox and Margaret Fell are traveling together towards their home, Swarthmoor Hall, in the north of England. (2 roles)

### **for Session #5 - The Testimony of Simplicity (or “Purity”)**

#### **Scene 1: A Quaker Family in 1691**

2 Quaker parents in 1691 are upset about some things their ten year old son, William, has done. They are having a discussion about this at the dinner table. (3 roles)

#### **Scene 2: A Quaker Family in 2019**

2 Quaker parents in 2011 are upset about some things their ten year old daughter, Elizabeth, has done. They are having a discussion about this at the dinner table. (3 roles)

**Session #1, Scene 1 - What people talk about today**

Two friends, Matt (a computer programmer) and Kristin (a mechanic) talk in a bar in Springfield in 2011.

Matt: Whassup Kristin? How's your old man?

Kristin: Same old, same old. What about those Patriots huh?

Matt: Yeah. What losers. I can't believe they lost to the Jets in the first round!

Kristin: What do you think of Obama?

Matt: I don't like my prices going up at the pump. It cost me 80 bucks to fill up my truck the other day.

Kristin: Yeah, but those other guys are idiots too.

Matt: Obama's wife seems nice. Maybe we should have elected her. You know I heard on the radio that Obama was really a radical Muslim Socialist in disguise born and raised by Mau Mau terrorists in Kenya.

Kristin: Well, you can't believe everything you hear on the radio.

Matt: How about them Celtics, huh?

**Session #1 / Scene 2 - What people talked about in the 1650s**

Two friends, Isaac (a sheep farmer) and James (a cobbler) speak in a pub in England in 1651.

Isaac: Greetings, James. How does thy good woman?

James: Much better, thank thee, James. Although her joints still cause her much pain with the gout.

Isaac: What thinks thou, of our Great Protector?

James: I did not like our old king. Methinks he thought to bring the papist priests back to our shores. I would not see England ruled from Rome.

Isaac: It is very strange though not to have a king.

James: Verily. I never heard of a time when it was so.

Isaac: Methink perhaps our Oliver would be king.

James (whispering loudly): Close thy lips! There are soldiers over there! Wouldst thou have us hauled before the judge?

Isaac: No, thou art right.

James: I will tell thee a strange thing. I was in the market in Nottingham Saturday last and I saw a woman preaching to many good folk.

Isaac: How can this be? A woman preaching?! Did not Paul write that a woman must keep silent in church?

James: This was not in the church. But listen: she said many strange things. She said the Bible is not the Word of God. But rather the Word of God is Christ!

Isaac: The holy book is not God's word? Well, 'tis true that in the first chapter of John's gospel it is written that the "Word was with God in the beginning and was only then coming into the world", so perhaps she spoke truth?

James: And she said that Christ lives today amongst us here in England. That Christ is within each of us, even the poor and uneducated and women. And that this living Seed will teach us and lead us and tell us what is right and wrong.

Isaac: In each of us? Does Christ speak even in poor Jack my hired man who cannot read? And even in women? Verily we live in very strange times!

## Session #2 - A People to be Gathered

George has been preaching to a large group of people taking part in a country fair in Sedbergh in June 1652. He is speaking with another preacher named Francis Howgill.

Francis: Thou spoke with great authority to the people today. Thy words struck me to the core. What is thy name?

George: My name is George Fox. I thank thee for thy words of rebuke to those priests and others who would have me thrown out of yon steeplehouse yard. But if there was any authority in my words, it came from the Lord, not from myself.

Francis: I have heard thy name before. Others have heard stories of thee and thy teaching. How came you to Sedbergh this day?

George: I have been traveling from the south with two friends. Let me tell you of a strange thing that happened just 3 days past. As we passed near a great hill called Pendle, I was moved of the Lord to go up on top of it. This I did with difficulty, it was so very steep and high. When I was come to the top, I could see the sea beyond Lancashire and the mountains further to the north in the lake country. From the top of this hill the Lord revealed to me a vision of what places he had a great people waiting to be gathered. I could see in my mind's eye gatherings of many tender people in villages and towns in these very parts.

Francis: I wonder if perhaps thou hast seen a vision of the people who are called "Seekers". I am one of those so called. There are many of our kind in this area who have been meeting these past few years. We have often spoken of some of the same principles which thou preached this very day in Sedbergh.

George: I have also heard of these Seekers. I sensed a quickening in many hearts as I spoke today among many who listened to the words I spoke.

Francis: Indeed there are many more that would thirst, I believe, to hear thy words.

George: They are not my words but of Christ, who is my only teacher.

Francis: Tomorrow we Seekers have planned a great meeting on Firbank, a place only three miles west of here. We will meet in the morning. Perhaps if thou comest there, thou might speak to those gathered. It is a wild, open hilltop, yet there may be a thousand of our Seekers in this place, even families with children. Many hunger to hear the kinds of words as were spoken today at Sedbergh fair.

George: I will pray on this. It may be that your Seekers **were** some of those the Lord opened to me on top of Pendle. But if I come, I do not preach from any plan or text. I will only preach if the Lord asks and gives me the words to speak.

Francis: Then on the morrow we shall see whether the Lord **does** have thee speak to the many gathered on Firbank on that day.

### Session #3 - Should Women Preach?

Father Phillip Whitstanley is just finishing his sermon in a parish church in 1658. In this church there is often an open discussion at the end of the sermon.

Phillip: And so as we can see, the Bible says that we must respect our priests and obey them in all matters that relate to Christian beliefs and teachings.

(Mary Biddle stands to speak)

Mary: And yet John wrote that the Light enlightens **every one** that comes into this world. He does not say that the Light enlightens only those called “priests”.

Phillip: A woman must not speak in this church!

Mary: Dost thou refer to this steeplehouse as a church or to this mixed multitude? Paul tells us that the church is the people of God, united together as one in Christ. I do not see that those in this building are so united...

Phillip: Thou must sit down Mary. It is said that women do not even have souls!

(audience shouts out: “Sit down, Mary! Sit down!”)

Mary: Who has the authority to tell me thusly?

Phillip: The same Apostle Paul wrote that thou must not speak or preach or quote scripture.

Mary: In the Bible it is written that Miriam and Deborah were prophets in ancient times. Paul says that Priscilla and other women were his coworkers in spreading the gospel. And the Lord chose to reveal himself first to two women after he rose from the dead. Even today Christ chooses many women across England and in the American colonies to be His prophets and carry forth His gospel. He uses men and women, rich and poor, educated and uneducated to deliver His truth.

Phillip: (angrily) Thou speaketh blasphemy and this will not be allowed in my church!

Mary: Why becomest thou angry Friend Phillip?

Phillip: I am not a friend to thee and thou must address me as Father Whitstanley!

Mary: My father is named Matthew not Phillip and thee may see that he sits across this room in yon pew. And it is true that I do not find thee a friend to the Truth. But the same Paul that thou quotest badly to deny me the right to speak also wrote that all are equal who have been baptized in the Holy Spirit, even Gentile and Jew, free and slave, men and women. I have seen this same Spirit at work in many who are of the so called weaker sex.

(Audience: “She makes some strong points, Father Whitstanley!”)

#### Session #4 - George & Margaret (and Suffering for Truth)

It is December of 1673, George Fox and Margaret Fell are traveling together towards their home, Swarthmoor Hall, in the north of England.

Margaret: I long greatly for our return home. It has been so long since we could dwell together there in peace.

George: I too wish for that kind of peaceful time with thee.

Margaret: That was a very blessed meeting we had today in John Halford's barn.

George: Yes, it is a wonderful thing to be able to meet with so many precious Friends. (sighs)

Margaret: I sense a kind of sadness in thee, dear heart. Art thou ill at ease?

George: I fear, my Margaret, that more travail is upon me. I forsee another great suffering that I must undergo. I have a vision of those who would persecute me again drawing near, perhaps this very night.

Margaret: This fills me with great sadness. We have had so very little time together my love in all these years.

George: The Lord has required much of us.

Margaret: Yes, but thou hast not been well of late. Thou art no longer the young man thou wast. We have lost so many dear Friends already in their foul jails. I fear thou mayest perhaps be lost to us as well. And thou hast much more work to do. Is there no way this suffering might be avoided while remaining true to the Lord?

George: I can see that thou art much grieved as I speak of being sent back into their jails. Yet thou knowest well I can never flee from those who would do us harm. Be content with the will of the Lord God.

Margaret: I am content and yet I grieve if this be true.

George: The Lord's power is over all: blessed be His holy name forever!

## Session #5 - Scene 1: A Quaker Family in 1691

2 Quaker parents in 1691 are upset about some things their ten year old son, William, has done. They are having a discussion about this at the dinner table.

Father: How was thy day, William?

Matthew: It was well, Father.

Mother: Hast thou read the book that was assigned to thee in school?

Matthew: Thou knowest I am a good student and read what is assigned, Mother.

Mother: 'Tis truth. Matthew, thy father & I have a concern we wish to raise with thee.

Matthew: I have done all my chores, Mother.

Mother: This does not concern thy chores. We learned that thou hast been spending time at the Cornwallis home in the village. Thou knowest well that they are not Friends and do not share our beliefs.

Matthew: But thou hast always told me that I should love all people and not be unfriendly to others just because of their beliefs. Jacob is my friend!

Father: Thou art right about that. Our concern is not that thou art a friend to Jacob Cornwallis. I ran into Jacob's father in the market. He told me thou playest Jacob's lute with great skill. He said this to give me joy because he does not know our beliefs about musical instruments. He also told me that you and Jacob went to see a play.

Mother: You know, Matthew, that we have strong beliefs as Friends about doing things that turn us away from God and...

Matthew: (interrupts) But Mother...

Father: Please listen to all thy mother has to say.

Mother: Lutes and plays are things that the "world's people" use to amuse themselves. We believe that it is important to lead a serious, quiet life. Your Father and I find pleasure in simple things like working in the garden and taking a walk beyond the village and reading the Bible.

Matthew: But the lute is very beautiful. It makes sounds like a bird or the wind.

Father: We are very afraid of where these things will lead you, Matthew. There are many things that the world's people do that make it hard for them to hear Christ's voice in their hearts. It is easy to quench that voice if one runs after worldly things. Wouldst thou even celebrate Christmas or do country dancing one day?

Matthew: Certainly not! But I am not even certain I wish to be a Friend when I grow up!

Mother: That is something thou wilt have to decide in thy heart. For now, though, thou mayest not play instruments or go to plays.

## Session #5 - Scene 2: A Quaker Family in 2011

2 Quaker parents in 2011 are upset about some things their ten year old daughter, Elizabeth, has done. They are having a discussion about this at the dinner table.

Mom: Hi Megan. How was your day at school?

Elizabeth: Same old, same old.

Dad: Have you finished all your homework?

Elizabeth: Dad! You know I always finish it. Don't go there.

Dad: Megan, there's something your mom & I want to talk to you about.

Elizabeth: I emptied the kitty litter already, Dad!

Dad: Thank you for doing that without us reminding you. It's not about chores.

Mom: Honey, you know how we agreed as a family to try having Sundays be family days when we don't watch any TV or DVDs or play video games or anything? We were upset that you were playing World of Warcraft yesterday when you said you were going to be practicing your violin.

Elizabeth: Mom! First of all I didn't agree to that idea. It was your idea & I think it's **dumb**.

Dad: We feel that all those electronic things just take over our lives. Mine too. We wanted to just try making things and taking walks and talking to each other, even if only one day a week.

Mom: Also we had asked you not to use those things after ten o'clock at night so we can have peaceful energy in the house in the evening. Last night I heard you using your I-pod under the covers around 11pm when you should have been asleep.

Dad: We want everyone in our family to be able to slow down and feel the way the Spirit works in us. It's hard to do that if we're constantly being bombarded by the media and internet and games and everything.

Elizabeth: Don't try to run my life! And please stop imposing your beliefs on me! I'm not even sure I'm a Quaker....

Mom: Well, that may or may not be true but we still want you to try these things that we have asked you to so we can all see what happens.