

Directions:

- (1) *Imagine that you are students in a course on religion. Woolman was a Quaker; when he says "Friends" or "the Society" he means other Quakers.*
- (2) Find a partner to work with. One group may have to have three people in it.
- (3) Read the following passage from John Woolman's *Journal* individually.
- (4) Write brief answers to the following questions.
- (5) Then share your answers with each other.
 - a. Do you agree with Woolman's view of gifts (boldfaced sentence)? Why or why not?
 - b. Do you think the quotation from *Exodus* is relevant? Would the argument be weaker without the quotation? Why?
 - c. At the end he says "few if any manifested any resentment at the offer." What does this tell you about the friends with whom he was staying?

Thence we crossed the river Susquehanna and lodged at William Cox's in Maryland; and soon after I entered this province a deep and painful exercise came upon me, which I often had some feeling of since my mind was drawn towards these parts, and with which I had acquainted my brother before we agreed to join as companions.

As the people in this and the southern provinces live much on the labour of slaves, many of whom are used hardly, my concern was that I might attend with singleness of heart to the voice of the True Shepherd and be so supported as to remain unmoved at the faces of men.

As it is common for Friends on a visit to have entertainment free of cost, a difficulty arose in my mind with respect to saving my own money by kindness received which to me appeared to be the gain of oppression. **Receiving a gift, considered as a gift, brings the receiver under obligations to the benefactor and has a natural tendency to draw the obliged into a party with the giver.** To prevent difficulties of this kind and to preserve the minds of judges from any bias was that divine prohibition, "Thou shalt not receive any gift, for a gift blindeth the eyes of the wise, and perverteth the words of the righteous" – Law of Moses [*Exodus* 23:8] . . .

Being thus helped to sink down into resignation, I felt a deliverance from that tempest in which I had been sorely exercised, and in calmness of mind went forward, trusting that the Lord, as I faithfully attended to him, would be a counsellor to me in all difficulties, and that by his strength I should be enabled even to leave money with members of [the] Society where I had entertainment when I found that omitting of it would obstruct that work to which I believed he had called me. And as I copy this after my return, I may here add that oftentimes I did so under a sense of duty.

The way in which I did it was thus: When I expected soon to leave a Friend's house where I had entertainment, if I believed that I should not keep clear from the gain of oppression without leaving money, I spoke to one of the heads of the family privately and desired them to accept of them pieces of silver and give them to such of their Negroes as they believed would make the best use of them; and at other times I gave them to the Negroes myself, as the way looked clearest to me. As I expected this before I came out, I had provided a large number of small pieces, and thus offering them to some who appeared to be wealthy people was a trial both to me and them. But the fear of the Lord so covered me at times that way was made easier than I expected, and few if any manifested any resentment at the offer, and most of them after some talk accepted of them.

The Journal of John Woolman, for the year 1757