

From the Journal of John Woolman (1720 – 1772)

Simplicity

“Be careful that the love of gain draws us not into any business which may weaken our love of our Heavenly Father, or bring unnecessary trouble to any of His creatures. “

Until 1756 I continued to retail goods besides following my trade as a tailor, about which time I grew uneasy on account of my business growing too cumbersome. I had but a small family, and on serious consideration, believed truth did not require me to engage much in cumbering affairs. It had been my general practice to buy and sell things really useful. Things that served chiefly to the vain mind in people I was not easy to trade in, seldom did it, and whenever I did, I found it weakened me as a Christian... then I lessened my outward business, and as I had opportunity told my customers of my intentions that they might consider what shop to turn to, and in a while, I wholly laid down merchandise and followed my trade as a tailor by myself, having no apprentice.

In merchandise, it is the custom where I lived to sell chiefly on credit, and poor people often get in debt when payment is expected, not having where-with to pay, their creditors often sue for it at law. Having frequently observed occurrences of this kind I found it good for me to advise poor people to take such goods as were most useful, and not costly.

Five Questions

1. What is the author’s main point in this passage? **This question gets at what the author's point is, not what you would like it to be.** (Main Point)
2. What new light do I find in this particular reading of this passage of text? **New light may be great or small.** (New Light)
3. How is this passage true **or not true** to my experience? (Truth)
4. What are the implications of this passage for my life? (Implications)
5. What problems do I have with this passage? (Problems)