

## **“Change versus Foolish Consistency”**

A Small Group Ministry session  
from Skinner House Books

### **Opening Ritual**

#### **Introduction:**

The focus of our session today is based on readings from the book Earth Bound: Daily Meditations For All Seasons, by Brian Nelson. Earth Bound contains 366 reflections on “nature in all its guises” for every season and day of the year.

#### **Opening Words:**

Our opening words are from the preface.

This planet is our home, our heritage, our future – a truth that can never be spoken enough. Whenever you dive into the ocean, wander in the woods, or lie on your back and stare at the stars, you are forging a connection to the truth. And if Frank Lloyd Wright was correct when he argued, “Nature is the only body of God that we shall ever see,” then both this book and life itself are filled with prayers.

### **Check-in/Sharing**

#### **Topic:**

Our opening words draw attention to the many ways in which we are able to connect with the truth and the world around us. When we connect, the understanding that results affords us the opportunity to do something amazing – to change. Brian Nelson speaks of change and our culture’s view of it in the following reflection from Earth Bound.

Harp seals are born with entirely white fur. Their fur turns spotted grey when they are old enough to care for themselves. This extraordinary evolutionary tactic helps the baby harp seal blend into the arctic environment and evade capture when it is most vulnerable.

We too should change as we grow older – and feel no shame about it. Our culture values staunchness and consistency. We berate politicians for changing their views. But shouldn’t we want them to accommodate their opinions to what they learn in life? Should we ask our friends to stay the same forever? As Emerson writes, “A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds.”

Change when you have to. If the harp seal can do it, so can you.

This reflection upholds the value of change. We must change in order to grow. This growth may be physical, mental, emotional or spiritual in nature. When we do

change, as Brian Nelson suggests, it is not uncommon for the world around us to offer resistance. This is one of the benefits of this group. Here we can work on forming new relationships, reflect on new understanding, and change both our minds and our lives.

### **Questions:**

1. What were you like as a child? What was your favorite activity, subject in school, game, hobby, or dream for the future?
2. In what ways have you changed as you have grown older?
3. Brian Nelson says that politicians are often berated for changing and that our culture values consistency. Have you ever wanted to change in some way and experienced resistance either from yourself or those around you? What were you trying to change?
4. It is a given that we will change over time. How we change is determined, in part, by our choices. We can choose who we spend our time with, where we go, what activities we undertake, what we read, what we do with our minds, and how we care for both ourselves and others. Given the necessity of change, how would you like to see yourself change over time? Which choices you will determine whether or not this happens?

### **Likes & Wishes**

### **Closing Words:**

Our closing words are from Questions for the Religious Journey: finding your own path by George Kimmich Beach.

What we believe is neither more nor less than that which enables us to make sense of life. I use the term "making sense" in the ordinary, colloquial way that we may say of an explanation, "That makes sense." We mean more than: This fits my prior understanding of the way things are. We mean: This enables me to make sense of other things, such that they fit together in ways that they did not before. What "makes sense" is the insight or the intuition that what was obscure, paradoxical, or even nonsensical before, becomes intelligible when seen "in this light."

### **Closing Ritual**

#### ***Further Exploration***

Earth Bound is available at inSpirit: The UU Book and Gift Shop at [www.uua.org/bookstore](http://www.uua.org/bookstore) or by phone at 1-800-215-9076. Please note that many congregations have their own shops or book tables and carry Skinner House Books.