

Study Guide

for *Our Life is Love: The Quaker Spiritual Journey*

by Marcelle Martin, published by Inner Light Books, 2016

Our Life is Love describes ten essential elements of the Quaker spiritual journey, as experienced by the first Quakers and by Friends in our time. This book is for spiritual seekers who want to better understand how God and the Light, or Christ, are at work within our own lives. For Quakers in the past, and for us in our time, what does it look like to be called into a life of faithfulness?

Our Life is Love is designed to be helpful both to individuals and to study groups.

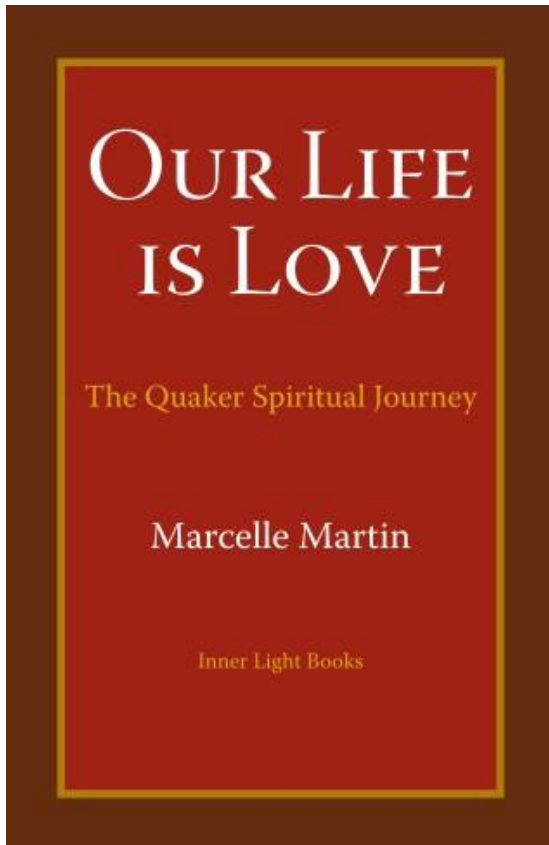


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Suggestions for all Study Groups

Have books available in advance, when possible, so that participants can read a section before the group meets. Begin each session with a period of silent centering or an invitation to sense the movement of the Spirit in one's life and heart. Then invite people to consider questions about their own experience of the element(s) of the spiritual journey being considered. Allow time for participants to share with a partner and listen to each other speak. Give five minutes for one partner to speak, then switch and allow the listener to become the speaker for another five minutes. Listeners are encouraged to listen without comment but with an open, loving, non-judgmental presence. During each session, two or three sets of partners can share answers, in turn, to two or three of the suggested questions (see next pages). Afterwards, the group can have an open discussion with space given for each person to speak if they so desire. Between sessions, encourage journal writing about one's experiences of the spiritual journey.

Our Life is Love is available from [Inner Light Books](#) in hardback, paperback, and ebook.

[QuakerBooks](#) provides discounts for books ordered in quantity.

For more information call 1-800-966-4556 or email bookstore@fgcquaker.org.

This study guide is available online at awholeheart.com on the page for *Our Life is Love*.

Organize a study group at your meeting, church, or book group!

Suggestions for a Three-Week Study Group

Have books available in advance so that participants can read pages 1-38 before the first session. Invite participants to share with a partner in response to the following questions, one question at a time. Then discuss the overall topic in the whole group.

Session 1 Share about the following questions with a partner (one question at a time):

- a) What has been my experience of awakening to the spiritual journey?
- b) How do I turn within?
- c) What light does early Friends' experience shed on my own spiritual journey?

Discuss how early Friends experienced Awakening to the spiritual journey (Longing, Seeking, and Turning Within), and how Friends in our time have done so.

Session 2 Read in advance: pp. 39-119. Partners share about the following questions:

- a) What openings have I had, or what spiritual truths have become clear to me?
- b) How do I experience seeing things that need to change in me/my way of life ?
- c) How has being part of a community played a role in my spiritual growth?

Discuss how early and contemporary Friends have experienced the elements of Convincement (Openings, the Refiner's Fire and Community).

Session 3 Read in advance: pp. 120-192. Partners share about the following questions:

- a) What leadings (or nudges from the Spirit) have I been given ?
- b) Have I experienced sacrifice or suffered in any way in following a leading ?
- c) How have I been sustained or strengthened to be faithful to how I am led?

Discuss how Friends today are collectively called to Faithfulness.

Suggestions for a Four-Week Study Group

If books are available, have participants read pp. 1-38 in advance. If not, ask people to read the blog post [Ten Elements of the Quaker Spiritual Journey](#) for an overview.

Session 1 Share about the following questions with a partner (one question at a time):

- a) Has my spiritual journey been a transformative experience?
- b) What am I spiritually longing for and seeking now?
- c) What light does early Friends' experience shed on my own spiritual journey?

Discuss how early and contemporary Friends have experienced Longing and Seeking. (If people have not read the book in advance, the opening paragraphs of the sections on Longing and Seeking can be read aloud before the general discussion.)

Session 2 Read in advance: pp. 27-79. Partners share about the following questions:

- a) What has been my experience of turning within?
- b) What openings have I had, or what spiritual truths have become clear to me?
- c) How do I experience seeing things that need to change in me/my way of life ?

Discuss how early and contemporary Friends have experienced Turning Within and the elements of Convincement (Openings and the Refiner's Fire).

Session 3 Read in advance: pp. 80-140. Partners share about the following questions:

- a) How has being part of a community played a role in my spiritual growth?
- b) What leadings (or nudges from the Spirit) have I been given ?
- c) Have I experienced sacrifice or suffered in any way in following a leading?

Discuss how Friends today are collectively called to Faithfulness.

Session 4 Read in advance: pp. 141-192. Partners share about the following questions:

- a) How have I been sustained or strengthened to be faithful to how I am led?
- b) How am I learning to put God/Spirit at the center of my heart and life?
- c) What have I learned about the spiritual journey from this book/study group?

Discuss how we can better support one another in the spiritual journey.

Suggestions for an Eleven- or Twelve-Week Study Group

Each week participants will discuss one of the ten elements of the Quaker spiritual journey, as experienced by early Quakers and by Friends in our time. Begin each session with a period of silent centering or focusing on one's inward experience of the Spirit. Then the first pairs share (five minutes each) their thoughts and feelings about how early Friends experienced and thought about that week's element of the Quaker spiritual journey. Next allow five minutes or more for people to write about one of the queries in the about that week's element. Then the next set of partners takes turns sharing their responses to that query. Finally, have the whole group discuss how Friends today experience that element. If helpful, use queries from the book.

Session 1 Longing. Have participants read pp. 1-17 before the first session. (Available online.)

Session 2 Seeking. In advance read pp. 18-26.

Session 3 Turning Within. In advance read pp. 27-38.

Session 4 Openings. In advance read pp.39-58.

Session 5 Refiner's Fire. In advance read pp. 59-79.

Session 6 Community. In advance read pp. 80-97.

Session 7 Leadings. In advance read pp. 98-119.

Session 8 The Cross. In advance read pp. 120-140.

Session 9 Abiding. In advance read pp. 141-160.

Session 10 Perfection. In advance read pp. 161-177.

Session 11 Our Spiritual Journeys. In advance read pp. 178-192. Partners share about the question a) What have I learned about my own spiritual journey from this book and study group? A second set of partners shares about question b) What is God calling forth from faithful people in our time? Discuss this question b) in the whole group, and also the question, c) How can we support one another in lives of faithfulness?

Session 22 Sharing Our Spiritual Journeys. A final session could involve getting together to share a meal at somebody's house. Afterwards, each member tells about some important moments in their own spiritual journey. Some may prefer to read aloud something they wrote, others will prefer to tell the story without reading. Depending on the size of the group, allow 7-10 minutes per person, and decide this in advance. Suggest that people practice at home in advance to see how much they can tell in that amount of time. Give some time of silent appreciation after each person speaks before the next person shares.

Suggestions for a Twenty-One or Twenty-Two Week Study Group

Sessions 1-20 The twenty-one week study group follows the format of an eleven-week study group, except that the group spends two weeks on each element, one week to discuss how it was experienced by early Friends and one week to discuss how it has been experienced by Friends in our time.

Session 21 Our Spiritual Journeys. In advance read pp. 178-192. Partners share about the question a) What have I learned about my own spiritual journey from this book and study group? A second set of partners shares about question b) What is God calling forth from faithful people in our time? Discuss this question b) in the whole group, and also the question, c) How can we support one another in lives of faithfulness?

Session 22 Sharing Our Spiritual Journeys. See guidelines for week 12, above.

Marcelle Martin is available to lead workshops, retreats, and conversations about the Quaker spiritual journey and many aspects of the spiritual life. She is following a leading of the Spirit to nurture the vitality of Friends meetings and other communities by teaching practices that open people to the direct experience of God active within and among them. **Visit her website, [A Whole Heart](#).**