



**NANCY:** For several years, I've expressed an intention of being a contemplative evangelist. I've found the practices outlined in this book so helpful to me and life-giving that I want to share them with others. This is my heartfelt expression of my learning and experience. Now that the book is out, readers have been expressing gratitude for the book and that makes me so happy. I hope it will be helpful to you on your contemplative path.



**KATHARINE:** I think this would be a good companion book for my religion students when we are studying the mystics. This would give them an opportunity to explore the spiritual practices that the mystics experienced and wrote about. Maybe I'll use it in my class next year. Thanks, Nancy!



**PRISCILLA:** I think you need to be careful with all this silence. You need the Holy Spirit for discernment to make sure the still small voice you hear is really God and not the Devil. Bad spirits hang out in the silence, you know!



**JANE:** I like her chapter on the labyrinth that was featured in the MAMs second novel, *Revelation at the Labyrinth* (2017). That's the Living Vine Labyrinth, you know? I created that with my friends and now it's becoming popular in Nancy's books. I'm so proud. Let's drink to my labyrinth!



**MOLLY:** I appreciated that she interviewed Therese Taylor-Stinson, an African-American who shared how contemplation sometimes takes a different form in the African-American church and among oppressed people. I want to read that book *Joy Unspeakable* by Barbara Holmes.



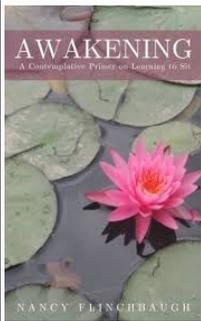
**ABIGAIL:** Yes! I love this book. As a Quaker, we are often misunderstood. This book helps teach you to savor the silence. Maybe you can understand why when we go to worship, silence is enough. She didn't mention the Quakers though. I think she should have talked about us, don't you?



**SALLIE:** I liked her honesty about not wanting to do this as a young mother. That's hard to meditate with young children around. But as we get older and slow down, meditation is easier. It's helped me with my attention deficit disorder. My doctor actually recommended it. And you know meditation has actually helped kids focus on schools, too.



# Discussion Guide



## About the Book

Title: Awakening: A Contemplative Primer on Learning to Sit

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## Questions for Discussion

1. What were your general impressions of this book?
2. Read the author's statement on this study guide. Why did the author write this book? Do you think she accomplished her goal? Why or why not?
3. What is your own experience with contemplative practices, if any? Have any been helpful to you? Explain.
4. Meditation is practiced in many religious traditions and also found to have many health benefits. What is it about meditation that is good? If you practice, talk about your experiences. If you don't practice, talk about what keeps you from doing it. If you'd like to start, what goal can you make to do it regularly?
5. One section talks about the sacred conversations with spiritual directors, spiritual friendships and small groups. Have you ever participated in a sacred conversation? Explain. If not, is this something you'd like to explore?
6. Within an oppressed culture, silence may be dangerous. How does the book characterize contemplation with the African-American churches and civil rights movement?
7. One chapter is devoted to Lectio Divina with Nature, listening for God in nature. Do you find that elements of nature speak to you or assist you with your life? Explain.
8. The author believes that contemplation is linked to action, which springs out of the contemplative experience. Have you ever experienced this? Explain.
9. The author interviewed several friends from various religious traditions who have a contemplative practice. What surprised you in this section?
10. Read over the MAMs comments on the book. Which of them do you most agree with and why?
10. In what ways, if any, will this book change your life or perspective?