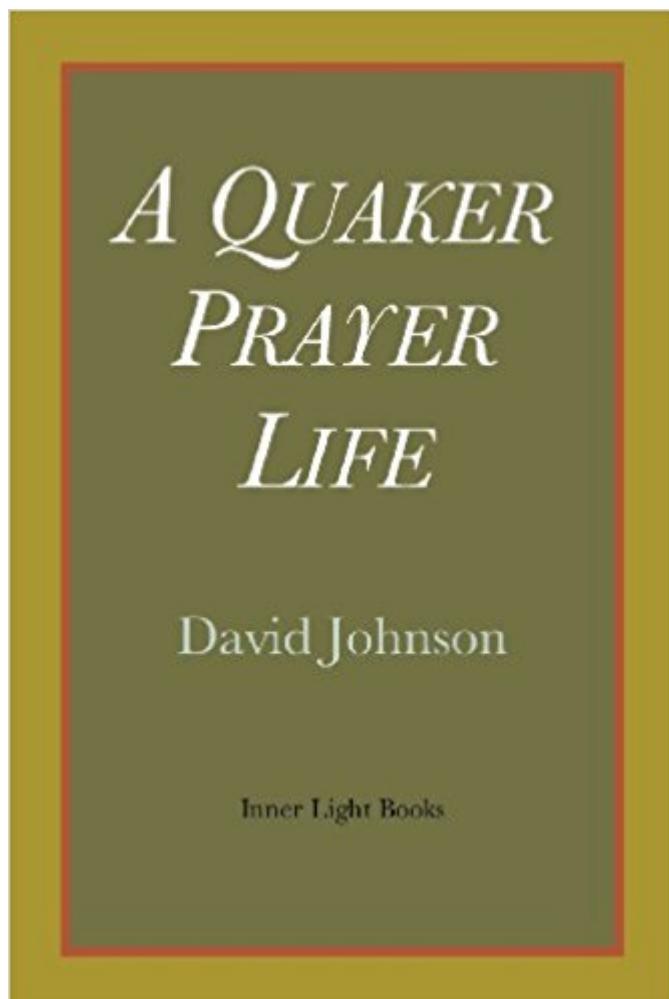


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A Quaker Prayer Life



Synopsis

A Quaker prayer life arises from a life of continuing daily attentiveness. The first generation of Quakers followed a covenant with God, based on assiduous obedience to the promptings of the Inward Light. This process did not require the established churches, priests or liturgies. Quaker prayer then became a practice of patient waiting in silence. Prayer is a conscious choice to seek God, in whatever form that Divine Presence speaks to each of us, moment to moment. The difficulties we experience in inward prayer are preparation for our outward lives. Each time we return to the centre in prayer we are modelling how to live our lives; each time we dismiss the internal intrusions we are strengthening that of God within us and denying the role of the Self; every time we turn to prayer and to God we are seeking an increase in the measure of Light in our lives. David Johnson is a Member of Queensland Regional Meeting of the Australia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends. David is a geologist with both industry and academic experience, and wrote *The Geology of Australia*, specifically for the general public. He has a long commitment to nonviolence and opposing war and the arms trade, and has worked with the International Campaign to Ban Landmines. David delivered the 2005 Backhouse Lecture to Australia Yearly Meeting on *Peace is a Struggle*. He was part of the work to establish the Silver Wattle Quaker Centre in Australia in 2010, and is Co-Director of the Centre for 2013-14.

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Customer Reviews

I must state before reviewing this book that I am a Quaker. There are many books written about

Quaker history, and even some very good books about applied Quaker practice, but not very many on how, exactly, to conduct prayer in the Quaker style. I would go so far to say that this sort of prayer existed long before Judaism, in fact, so perhaps it is a bit presumptuous to call it Quaker prayer. And arguably, one does not need any books at all to learn anything, if we take what the bible says about this to be true. "As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you." (1 John 2:27, NIV). Meaning, by surrendering to the guiding work of the Spirit of the Eternal Christ, the Holy Spirit, one can be taught all things without relying on other human beings, who are sometimes correct, and sometimes less than correct. And I must state that I learned prayer in this method, that is to say, from the Spirit. I couldn't really explain it to someone else since I learned prayer without the necessity of words. Upon reading Johnson's essay on prayer life, I must say that his experience of prayer is exactly like my experience of prayer, he just has been gifted with the ability to actually explain it. This is just further confirmation for me that our experiences arise from the same Eternal Source. I highly recommend this work to anyone, Quaker or not, who wishes to explore this peaceful, abiding, and centering method of prayer. O you gentle pilgrim of love, "ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls" (Jeremiah 6:16, NIV).

This short book, 67 pages of actual text, is an articulate, lyrical, and inspirational guide to the prayer of inward silence and stillness as practiced in the Quaker tradition. It is a practical book rather than theological or argumentative. That is to say it is an actual manual that individuals can use to put this type of prayer into practice. For Quakers, it is a great resource. For non-Quakers it is a valuable addition to the practice of contemplation which you may want to integrate into your own contemplative practice. The author, David Johnson, by using numerous quotations from early Quaker sources, places the prayer of inward silence at the heart of the Quaker tradition. Johnson has clearly spent much time with these early sources and is able to present the essence of the method of the prayer of inward silence in a way that is accessible. His writing is easy to follow, clear, and the instructions will benefit both newcomers and those who have engaged in this style of prayer for many years. I also appreciate how Johnson embeds this type of prayer in a Christian context. There are frequent scriptural citations, particularly from the Gospel of John, but other parts of the Bible are referenced as well. And the tradition of apophatic prayer in Christianity is brought in by referencing such works as 'The Cloud of Unknowing'. I think this is especially important today because among some Quakers there is a tendency to diminish the centrality of Christianity for this type of prayer practice and, among a few, for the Quaker tradition in general. At the same time,

Johnson judiciously notes certain commonalities the prayer of inward silence found in the Quaker tradition has with other types of practice, including passing references to non-Christian practices found in, for example, Buddhism. Yet the presentation is appropriately weighted towards the tradition out of which Quaker prayer practice emerged -- Christianity. 'A Quaker Prayer Life' in many ways reminds me of 'A Guide to True Peace'. Both of them are manuals, guides, for the prayer of inward silence in the Quaker tradition. For both of these works the primary focus is instruction in the prayer of inward silence. The 'Guide' was published in the early 1800's and, in a way, I think of Johnson's book as a kind of renewal of the message of the 'Guide' for the generation of the 21st century. The 'Guide' was very popular among Quakers for more than a century. One historian wrote that the 'Guide' was found in every Quaker household for several generations. I would wish that the same would happen for Johnson's book for a new generation. Johnson has done the Quaker community a great service. 'A Quaker Prayer Life' is a beautiful and meticulous guide to Quaker Prayer. It offers step-by-step instruction, touches on difficulties, and offers suggestions for daily practice of this type of prayer. It is a great blessing and a work that will reward frequent reading.

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