

Introduction



Pregnancy can be a strange process. Having a baby can alter one's life like nothing else. It is a time when friends, relatives, magazines, doctors, and Babies 'R Us all vie for your attention, telling you what you must have, what you need to do, and what you should be feeling. Put five people in a room with a pregnant woman or a new baby and you'll hear five different points of view, if not six! Popular pregnancy and child care manuals can be a confusing medley of helpful information, scary information, wonderful pictures, medical details, lists of things you must eat, things you must not eat, advice to get your baby in a routine, advice to do the opposite, lists of safety measures, dire warnings, superstitions and, at worst, a good deal of scaremongering.

How do we decide what to do? How do we decide which advice is good? In the middle of this outer whirlwind, it is important to find a sense of inner calm. You can transcend the medley and find something spiritual, something of God, in all of this. Many books and magazines shy away from women's inner experiences at this time, afraid perhaps to open Pandora's box. But it is possible to pay positive attention to your feelings, to enjoy exploring your inner experiences, and to discern clearly what is right for you, your baby, and your new family.

This book can help. It is a handbook of reflective exercises and inspiring thoughts for women who wish to explore the spiritual and emotional dimensions of pregnancy and new motherhood. It will help you to ask the questions that don't often get asked. You can dip in and out.

You are beginning a new phase in life—a small new person will depend on you for imaginative support and inspiration, and you need to find that for yourself, too.

Many of the exercises suggested in this book are suitable for use in reflective spiritual life more generally, so while I have related

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them specifically to pregnancy and motherhood, I hope that you will continue to find them helpful long after you cease to be pregnant and your family grows up.

Theologically, the material I have used and exercises I suggest come from the broad Christian tradition, particularly its contemplative aspects. I have included wisdom from other world faiths and from secular sources, and have tried to be spiritually inclusive. While this book has been written primarily for Christians, it may also appeal to those of all faiths and of none—to anyone interested in exploring the spiritual and emotional side of their experience in such a special phase of life.

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