

Learning to Walk in the Dark
Chapter Nine
Our Lady of the Underground

This study guide is formatted for a small group gathering. If you choose to use it as a small group leader or as an individual, feel free to adapt it in whatever way seems meaningful to you. Enjoy!

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Quotes and ideas worth repeating:

Humans do not easily relinquish our control over how dark or how bright it is, either in our houses or in our souls. (page 172)

Black Madonna: *All must come through me in order to live in the light. (page 176)*

Meister Eckhart: *The soul does not grow by addition, but by subtraction. (page 179)*

Related Scripture:

Psalm 8:3-4 *When I consider the heavens, the moon and the stars, what are human beings...?*

Genesis 1: *There was evening and there was morning, the 7th day.*

Psalm 74:16 *Yours is the day. Yours is also the night. You established the luminaries and the sun.*

Centering Song: “Where is the Light?” by Peter Mayer (Midwinter CD)

Introductions/Gathering Activity:

Tell of a memorable full moon you remember or share a favorite picture of the moon.

OR

BBT compares full moonrise to bride’s entry at a wedding. Any other metaphors to share?

Reflection/discussion:

BBT points out that in Genesis 1: *nowhere does it say that light is good and darkness is bad. But Darkness came first. Any further thoughts?*

When does Easter happen? (page 171)

When does God speak to Jesus in NT? (page 180)

Do we look to the moon for wisdom about our relationship to God? (page 171)

What does BBT discover when she goes to labyrinth at Chartes?

What does the Black Madonna say to BBT? (read pages 178-179)

Share readings about Black Madonna in *Secret Life of Bees* by Sue Monk Kidd. (see pages 106-113, pages 162-164, pages 226-228, pages 267-271 pages 287-289 of paperback edition)

From Epilogue: Discuss these comments:

Endarkenment, like enlightenment, is a work in progress. (page 186)

Loss is the way of life. (page 186)

Closing option 1: Thomas Merton's prayer on page 181

Closing Option 2: A Blessing for Christmas by Jan Richardson

Perhaps it does not begin.
Perhaps it is always.

Perhaps it takes
a lifetime
to open our eyes,
to learn to see
what has forever
shimmered in front of us --

the luminous line
of the map
in the dark

the vigil flame
in the house
of the heart

the love
so searing
we cannot keep
from singing,
from crying out
in testimony
and praise.

Perhaps this day
will be the mountain
over which
the dawn breaks.

Perhaps we
will turn our face
toward it,
toward what has been
always.

Perhaps
our eyes
will finally open
in ancient recognition,
willingly dazzled,
illuminated at last.

Perhaps this day
the light begins
in us.

Materials need to lead:

Music and player for “Where is the Light?”

Sue Monk Kidd’s *Secret Life of Bees* (see pages 106-113, pages 162-164, pages 226-228, pages 267-271 pages 287-289 of paperback edition)

Homework after last session:

BBT says this is not an instruction book, but if it were, the only instruction would be to become more curious about your own darkness. Try to answer questions on page 185:

What can you learn about your fear of it by staying with it for a moment before turning on the lights?

Where can you feel the fear in your body?

When have you felt that way before?

What are you afraid is going to happen to you and what is your mind telling you to do about it?

What stories do you tell yourself to keep your fear in place?

What helps you stay conscious even when you are afraid?

What have you learned in the dark that you could never have learned in the light?