

READING AND DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR

The Dance of the Dissident Daughter

A Woman's Journey from Christian
Tradition to the Sacred Feminine

by
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PART ONE: AWAKENING

1. It frequently takes a series of wake-up calls or collisions with the truth to jolt a woman into a deep awakening to the Sacred Feminine. What experiences have served as wake-up calls for you?

2. What was your childhood church or culture of faith like? How did it become part of your internal geography? Did you identify with Kidd's memories of being a young girl in school and church, thinking God was male?
3. "The truth may set you free," Kidd writes, "but first it will shatter the safe, sweet way you live." Has your awakening been difficult and challenging? Was there internal and external resistance to it? Did you experience any part of it as shattering? Dangerous? Freeing?
4. If Jesus was a feminist in that he preached a gospel of liberation and mutuality and treated women as equal, why were women excluded for so long from leadership in most churches and forbidden from having authority over men? Where does your tradition stand on women's positions in organized religion? Are there ways in which we support the very structures that wound us?

PART TWO: INITIATION

1. Kidd writes about her need to find a "circle of trees," her metaphor for the container that would hold and nurture her as she began the process of reconnecting to her feminine soul. How and when has it been important for you to find a contained space where you could really face and tend what was happening, where "the green shoot of your feminine soul could have its hothouse"?
2. The author writes candidly of her husband's initial resistance to her process. Men's resistance to Sacred Feminine awakenings often grows out of their fear of change, fear

that women's gain may be their loss. Kidd suggests that men need to become aware, but that blaming them doesn't help, it only polarizes the two sides. How can we negotiate through the resistance that might arise in a marriage? How can men become aware? How can they be invited into the struggle and made part of the quest?

3. Do you remember the first time you encountered a Divine Feminine image? Do you recall the first time you heard prayers using "she," "her," and "mother"? How did these things affect you?
4. How do you feel about the importance of rituals? In what ways have they shifted things for you? Have you had moments in which you felt you had truly crossed a threshold into a new landscape of feminine spiritual consciousness?

PART THREE: GROUNDING

1. How do you respond to the word *Goddess*? Does it create anxiety in you? Why? Do you think it helps to break the lock that patriarchy has on divine imagery?
2. Kidd concludes that since images, symbols, and words for God are necessary, they should be balanced and equitable. Do you agree with her that imbalance in our pictures of God perpetuates imbalance in our societies? In what ways does our world suffer from this imbalance? What impact does it have on the psychological and spiritual unfolding of girls and boys, women and men?

3. The Divine Feminine symbol creates a feminist spiritual consciousness that includes a passionate struggle for women's dignity, value, and power. When Kidd looked at the horrors women have suffered through the ages, she embraced their struggles as her own. How has the church helped women in their struggles for safety and full personhood? How has it undermined these struggles?
4. Are there times when it may be necessary to leave one's religious tradition (e.g., in order to protect and "birth" one's feminine spiritual consciousness)? Have you ever been in a dilemma about whether to leave or to stay? How do you feel about women who believe they need a brand new model that exists outside their tradition, and women who attempt to create new models within their tradition?
5. As Kidd immersed herself in the feminine spiritual experience, she was initiated into her body in a deeper way. Women's experience of body has historically been immersed in shame. What messages did you receive about your body as a child? As an adult? Are we still affected both subtly and unsubtly by ancient taboos and attitudes that are associated with women's bodily functions such as menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, and lactation?
6. How do fear and silence cut off your journey? Did you identify with the image of a "lovely, quiet girl, no trouble at all"? Do you have a negative voice inside that cages or restricts the natural or spirited part of yourself?

7. The Russian Matryoshka doll became for Kidd a symbol of the “mother line”—the unbroken line of grandmothers, mothers, and daughters—and the feminine wisdom that can grow through this connection. The nesting doll reminded her of the ways we’ve nested within one another and birthed one another. How do you feel about your mother line? In what ways did your mother express the Sacred Feminine? In what ways did she uphold patriarchal values and caution you not to step outside conventional boundaries or rock the boat?

PART FOUR: EMPOWERMENT

1. What does the word *empowerment* mean to you?
2. In a dream, a wise old woman told Kidd: “Your heart is a seed. Go, plant it in the world.” How are you compelled to plant your heart in the world? What deep impulse in your feminine soul needs to be expressed? What holds you back?
3. “All journeys of soul lead us to the smallest moment of the most ordinary day.” What does it mean to embody Sacred Feminine experience in your daily life? How can it become a seamless part of how you relate, work, play, and go about your life?