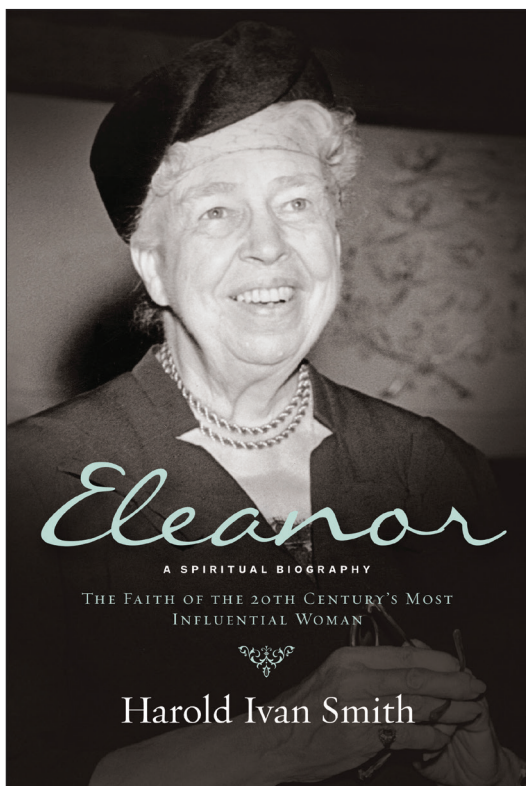


# Book Club Questions for Harold Ivan Smith's *Eleanor: A Spiritual Biography*



Before reading this book, did you know anything about Eleanor's faith? What might you have assumed? Were those assumptions correct?

In reading about "what religion meant to her," does Eleanor's understanding of faith and the way it should affect one's life seem different from how you would describe it, or how others in her time would have described it?

The difficulty of Eleanor's childhood, particularly relationships with certain family members, is given much attention in the book. How do you think these Adverse Childhood Experiences shaped her understanding of God and overall spirituality?

The author says of Eleanor's time at Allenswood with Marie Souvestre, "One could argue that this unlikely mentor—a French atheist, lesbian, thinker—gave Eleanor a spiritual footing" (p. 55). Do you find Souvestre's influence as improbable as the author seems to? Why or why not?

What person or people do you think had the greatest impact on Eleanor's life, for better or worse, and why?

Eleanor's beliefs and attitudes were considered rather progressive in her time. Do the responses of her critics seem similar to certain religious and political perspectives today, or do they seem distinct in some way? How do you think she would be received among progressive Christians and social activists today?

Do you think it is fair to say Eleanor—a child of such privilege and opportunity—was well-acquainted with suffering? Do you think her personal experiences of pain and loss or those she observed among poverty-stricken and oppressed people did more to shape Eleanor's ultimate influence on the world?

Did anything surprise you about Eleanor's life story or faith commitments? Has your view of her changed since reading this book?

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