

# Q & A with Spiritual Guide Joyce Rupp

Written by Michael Wilt

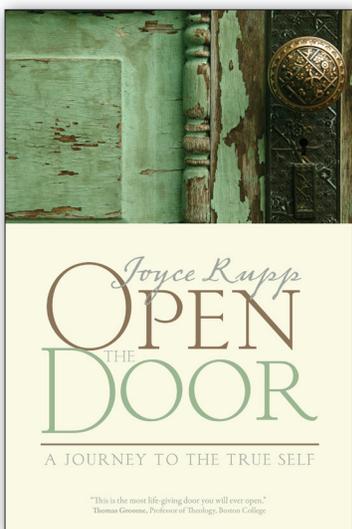
**Q:** In *Open the Door* you quote a remarkable number of writers, past and present, from ancient poets to contemporary novelists, and even an expert on Constitutional law. Readers who are familiar with you probably think of you as a “spiritual writer.” What can you tell us about yourself as a “spiritual reader”?

**A:** Ever since my early twenties, I’ve been dedicated to daily reading. This is a significant source of food for my inner life. I watch little television and limit my time on the Internet. This allows space in my day to read an average of a book a week. The content and genre of my reading varies greatly from theology, poetry, novel, spirituality (from many religious traditions), psychology, sociology, to science. I consider aspects of each of these areas as “spiritual” because they serve to remind me that I am a global citizen, intricately connected to the human condition with its joys and sorrows. Spiritual reading greatly influences my relationship with God and how I live in the context of this human condition.

Many a book with depth and quality has called me to inner conversion, to grow in ways I had not imagined. I keep learning and developing my awareness and ability to enter into spiritual transformation because of the reading I do. I’m deeply grateful for authors, publishers, and all involved in the process of creating superb resources that feed my spiritual growth.

**Q:** What advice would you give spiritual seekers about the reading, or *lectio*, aspect of the spiritual life? What direction might you give them for their next trip to the library or bookstore?

**A:** I continually encourage those in spiritual direction with me to not let a day go by without doing some spiri-



tual reading. *Lectio* is to the spiritual life as nutritious food is to the physical life. One’s faith grows weak and weary without growthful spiritual reading. I am saddened whenever I think that pastors in the pulpit rarely encourage their parishioners to do spiritual reading. What a difference it could make for the faith of the congregation if pastors would do this.

My advice regarding *lectio* to anyone seeking to grow spiritually is this: Choose carefully what you read. Select books that stretch your mind, widen your heart, and exercise your will. Read books that draw you toward a keener, more meaningful relationship with God and the world in which you live. Try to read at least one spiritual classic a year, such as those by Thomas Merton, Julian of Norwich, Brother Lawrence, or Evelyn Underhill.

**Q:** It’s impossible to resist, so let’s ask the desert island question: You, a desert island, and a stack of five books. What are they, and, briefly, why?

**A:** What a fun question to think about! Here they are:

*The Gitanjali*, Rabindranath Tagore. There’s nary a page of this Indian poet’s work that does not move my soul.

*New Seeds of Contemplation*, Thomas Merton. This spiritual mentor continually nourishes my growth.

*St. Teresa of Avila*, one volume of the collected works. I’d definitely need a woman mystic with me on a desert island.

*The Bible*, NRSV translation. There’s always more to glean for inspiration and deepening of one’s relationship with God.

*Webster’s New Universal Unabridged Dictionary*. I’m fascinated with words, and I’d keep writing, even on a desert island!



Published by SORIN BOOKS  
Notre Dame, Indiana  
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