

# Essential books on spiritual direction

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The print version of the *Century's* [recent feature on spiritual direction](#) included an annotated book list, which I compiled based on recommendations from three professors in the discipline: Marlene Kropf (Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary), Marcus Smucker (Eastern Mennonite University) and Angela Reed (Baylor University). Here are those selections:

*The Art of Spiritual Direction*, by W. Paul Jones (2002). Jones, formerly a Methodist theologian, now a Trappist monk and Catholic priest, draws on both the Wesleyan and Catholic traditions. He offers a broad history of spiritual direction, outlines what happens in the practice and suggests how to choose a spiritual director. Included are helpful appendices on spirituality and the Myers Briggs Type Inventory, the enneagram and family systems theory, and other topics.

*Holy Listening*, by Margaret Guenther (1992). Beautifully and simply written, *Holy Listening* uses the theme of hospitality and the images of a teacher and midwife to the soul to describe the role of spiritual directors. She concludes with a chapter on women and spiritual direction.

*The Practice of Spiritual Direction*, by William A. Barry and William J. Connolly (2009). Two priests draw on insights from modern psychotherapy, focusing on religious experience, not knowledge, as the locus of spiritual direction. They include chapters on what can go wrong in the director-directee relationship and on the importance of supervision for directors.

*Sacred Companions*, by David G. Benner (2004). The author covers spiritual friendship, spiritual direction and group spiritual direction, discussing the characteristics, challenges and possibilities of each activity.

Spiritual direction is a journey that leads toward making humans whole and holy. An extensive, annotated bibliography is included.

*Seeking God Together: An*

*Introduction to Group Spiritual Direction*, by Alice Fryling (2008). Group spiritual direction is increasingly seen as an important approach, one that lends itself to the formation of congregation-based groups. Fryling provides practical help on how to start, lead and participate in spiritual direction groups and how to be sensitive to different personalities within them.

And here are some additional recommendations of mine:

*Absolute*

*Truths: A Novel*, by Susan Howatch

(1996). This novel, part of Howatch's Church of England series, is an illuminating fictional entrée in spiritual direction.

*Candlelight:*

*Illuminating the Art of Spiritual Direction*, by Susan S. Philips (2008). This book uses the narratives of actual spiritual direction narratives, along with theological and theoretical analysis.

*Care of*

*Mind/Care of Spirit: A Psychiatrist Explores Spiritual Direction*, by Gerald G. May (1992). May relates spiritual direction to psychology and counseling, showing how they are both similar and different.

*The Dark*

*Night: A Gift of God*, by Daniel

Schrock (2008). Schrock helps distinguish the common Christian experience of the dark night from depression. He shows how a dark-night experience can actually strengthen our faith, discipleship and sense of Christian mission.

*Listening*

*for the Soul: Pastoral Care and Spiritual Direction*, by Jean Stairs (2000). This

book shows how the resources and techniques of spiritual direction can be incorporated into pastoral care, thereby renewing the concept and practice of "soul care."

*The*

*Pastor as Spiritual Guide*, by

Howard Rice (1999). Among the plethora of images (shepherd, theologian, administrator) that shape the pastoral role, Rice sees the pastor as spiritual guide. He challenges pastors to be willing to share their own spiritual journey with their parishioners.

*Spiritual*

*Director, Spiritual Companion: Guide to Tending the Soul*, by Tilden Edwards (2001). Edwards's two-part

book provides both historical perspective on the resources of spiritual direction and more practical advice about how to find a spiritual friend and to form spiritual direction groups.

For questions to think about in seeking a spiritual director, see this resource from [Anam Cara](#).