



Campus Group Discussion Resource *Essentials – Thriving in a Christian Life*

Finding our Sacred Center

Today we will continue our reflection on essential practices for a thriving Christian. To get the ball rolling, everyone think of a few deep and reflective Christians that you admire. What is it that you admire and find compelling about them? What contributed to their spiritual depth? Share this with the group.

Right now, everyone write a few sentences answering this question: *What kind of Christian do I want to be?* Put some thought into this and describe the kind of walk with God you would love to have.

Break into pairs and share what you wrote with another person. Then pray quietly in your heart (not audibly) for that person that God would rejuvenate their spiritual center. Then join in with the rest of the group.

As we have done the last few weeks, we want to continue to expose you to some wonderful (and sometimes “different”) reflective Christians. Today’s person is Henri Nouwen, a former Catholic Priest. Henri was not part of our tradition. As a result, some of the things he says might sound a little different, and be expressed using different terms. Of course, as a church, we do not align with many Catholic doctrines. And some of those differences are major differences. But, there are also many similarities we have with sincere Catholic people (as well as those from other denominations). And I would like to think that we can hold on to our distinctives, yet learn from one another.

Typically, we as protestants, have not done well with spiritual disciplines and practices. Our emphasis is geared more toward the head than the heart. Yet God wants to impact both our minds and our hearts. And we can learn some important things from those who are not a part of our immediate tradition.

Please understand that when we refer to certain authors or speakers we do not endorse everything they say. At The Campus, our desire is not to “tell” people what to think, but rather to learn how to think and to be discerning together. Our pastors are always available to discuss Biblical truth with you.

So, who is Henri Nouwen? Henri ended his ministry in Richmond Hill Ontario, working at L’Arche Daybreak, a home for people with exceptionalities. He is buried at St. John Anglican church cemetery, in Richmond Hill. Henri exemplified the way of Jesus in terms of “downward mobility”. He was at the pinnacle of academia, but preferred to live quietly with those often marginalized by society. Here is an excerpt from the Henri Nouwen Society Website <https://henrinouwen.org/about/>

Henri Nouwen was a Dutch-born Catholic priest, professor, psychologist and prolific writer. He taught psychology at the University of Notre Dame and pastoral theology at

the Divinity Schools of Yale and Harvard before leaving academia to become the pastor at L'Arche Daybreak, a community for people with intellectual disabilities. A master communicator, Nouwen wrote and spoke with great openness and vulnerability about faith, spiritual formation, prayer, social justice, and other themes related to the spiritual life. He wrote thirty-nine books that sold over one million copies in his lifetime and were translated into more than thirty-five languages. Today, book sales have surpassed 8.5 million copies. Books drawn from Nouwen's archives continue to be published. Nouwen died unexpectedly of a heart attack in 1996. He was 64 years old.

As we have done the last few weeks, today you will watch another video. This video is a talk Henri did quite some time ago, yet it is as relevant today as it was then. Again, please watch this actively, take notes, and be prepared to discuss a few concepts you found helpful.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mn-UOjzwcBs&t=1s>