
Book Review: In The Name Of Jesus By Henri J. M. Nouwen

Book Review “In the Name of Jesus”

'In the Name of Jesus' addresses three powerful temptations of today's world - to be relevant, to be spectacular, and to be powerful; then offers three disciplines - prayer, forgiveness, and reflection as antidotes.

Nouwen begins by informing the reader that God is first at work in us, and through this internal work, we are able to actively participate in the overall work God is doing in the world. He shapes this book around two stories: Jesus' wilderness temptation (Matthew 4:1-11) and Peter's call to shepherd God's people (John 21:15-19). Through these two stories the reader is challenged to put off the promised things of this world, and to put on the things of God. The leader is able to do this by reflecting on three focus areas:

From Relevance to Prayer: We are all tempted to be relevant, yet Nouwen is convinced that this temptation robs us of the vulnerability which makes us open to give and receive love regardless of our accomplishments. We must all ponder, “Do we really love Jesus?” To know Him is to love him, seek his heart and to obey him (1 John 2:3).

To be deeply rooted in God's love, we are called to commune with God through prayer. The discipline of contemplative prayer beckons us to dwell in the presence of Jesus who loves us unconditionally.

From Popularity to Ministry: We are all tempted to become secular people, spectacular all on our own. Once we rest in the assurance of God's love for us, we are then able to fulfill our assigned ministry work in community and mutual submission to others.

Cultivating community and mutually requires the disciplines of confession and forgiveness. Leaders must “be persons always willing to confess their own brokenness and ask for forgiveness from those to whom they minister.” Community helps us “live the truth of the Incarnation,” within the body of Christ, through their own brokenness and in the presence of the Holy Spirit.

From Leading to Being Led: We are all tempted to become powerful and maintain control. Leading well includes being led first by God and secondly in intimate relationship with others. At the conclusion of his “feed my sheep” encounter with Peter, Jesus' vision of maturity includes a willingness to be led into the unknown where we would rather not go. “The way of the Christian leader is not the way of upward mobility in which our world has invested so much, but the way of downward mobility ending on the cross.”

The willingness to be led and the attitude of spiritual poverty is cultivated through the discipline of theological reflection. Theological reflection allows “us to discern critically where we are being led.” Theologians engage God heart “through prayer, study, and careful analysis to manifest the divine event of God's saving work in the midst of the many seemingly random events of their time.” Christian leadership is theological leadership.

I appreciate this book because it confronts the temptation that every leader faces, and brings us back to the feet of Jesus. The quotes help me reflect and center me on the truth that it is God who has called me to lead, and I can trust him to lead me where he wants me to go. I found this book on leadership to be a great encouragement to just walk closely with God and that's what it's all about!

“The great message that we have to carry, as ministers of God’s Word and followers of Jesus, is that God loves us not because of what we do or accomplish, but because God has created and redeemed us in love and has chosen us to proclaim that love as the true source of all human life.”

“Laying down your life means making your own faith and doubt, hope and despair, joy and sadness, courage and fear available to others as ways of getting in touch with the Lord of life.”

“The task of future Christian leaders is not to make a little contribution to the solution of the pains and tribulations of their time, but to identify and announce the ways in which Jesus is leading God’s people out of slavery, through the desert to a new land of freedom.”

I found it a refreshing look into real Christian leadership seemingly free from methods and techniques encouraged by the world. I say refreshing because so many leadership books send out a drill sergeant message that you need to toughen up for leadership. It isn't a cake-walk, You do a lot alone and so on. That may be true, but it can almost be discouraging or disheartening for those interested in learning about leadership. I love his extraordinary ability to write about deep theological issues in relatively simple and relatable terms.

Very short but insightful read on Leadership. I liked how he used his context at the Disability Home to share what leadership should look like in the 21st century.

This book shows us, even though it is very brief, that heaven appears in unexpected places and that some of the ways we define power and success need massive redefinition. A beautiful book from a very human writer who paints faith as an everyday, reachable reality. Short, truthful and inspiring. A truly fascinating read. I love how the author took something so complex and made it so simple. He was innovative in his approach and really thoroughly sought to bring his main points to life. Makes me consider why I do what I do for ministry. Overall I wish the book explained more into details.