



# Out of Solitude: Three Meditations on the Christian Life

*Henri J.M. Nouwen*

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## **Out of Solitude: Three Meditations on the Christian Life** Henri J.M. Nouwen

Invites readers to reflect on the tension between the desire for solitude, and the demands of contemporary life. This work reminds, that it was in solitude that Jesus found the courage to follow God's will, and shows that fruitful love and service must spring from a living relationship with God.

## **Out of Solitude: Three Meditations on the Christian Life Details**

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# **From Reader Review Out of Solitude: Three Meditations on the Christian Life for online ebook**

## **Emily says**

Like most Nouwen I've read, this was really rich. I wrote down a lot of quotes from a small book.

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## **An Te says**

These are some reflections from Father Nouwen on solitude, care and expectation.

The need for solitude in this age is much needed. Where we are easily propelled by a need to do, we have, at times, lost our way from simply being. Nouwen says solitude is the cornerstone for meaningful action. We seek solitude, with God, and are thus better equipped to help an ailing world. He only expresses much more beautifully than I can.

Contrary to the world's desire to cure (most) ills, simple and gracious care is critical to helping the world. In fact, Nouwen goes as far as saying that providing a cure without the requisite care can be more dangerous than leaving a person 'untreated' as it were. God is concerned for all and so we must thus be concerned for others regardless of whether or not we feel 'ready' or 'equipped' to help. Simply standing and grieving with another, with no wilful action to change the situation, is enough. I'd say it is more than enough. And that to care, we must be emptied of ourselves. We must do it each time to make room for the 'other.' This is the essential nature of care. And this way it must happen each time. This has been insightful as my current research concerns the concept of 'quality of care.' What is it really? And why is it so difficult to grasp and distil? It is thus so as it a relationship and is 'carried away with the wind' upon critical inspection.

Thirdly, the need to be expectant. What keeps caring people sane is that they have a hope that all shall be righted. I cry out for why we are not quite where we ought to be. But that it will be well, is what keeps me going. It will all be well. And Nouwen reflects that sadness and joy are necessarily conjoint. We are sad, but only for a time, but our joy is fulfilled in the future. I can think of an example. When you may have lost a child young in childbirth, your grief is appears unending and excruciating. Yet, your joy is perfected when you can confide in others and most of all console those who have been similar experiences. We are all called to blessings in this way. A further example is when a child leaves the nest for greener pastures but returns many years later for a glorious celebration and reunion. The examples are inexhaustible. Our joy is perfected in the patience (the root of which means 'to suffer and bear') in the trials and pains we now face. This does seem to be the way for us. Patience pays its dividend, not that we are to know it as mere facts and 'head' knowledge.

I am in awe of the simplicity yet sheer depth of his reflections. A man inspired and touched by God. His words show as much.

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## **Porter Sprigg says**

Jesus sought solitude. If we are to pursue his example, so should we. It will inform us and fill us with his

love and security.

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### **Stephanie says**

This is one of my favorite books to give as a gift. Great comfort and direction about how to understand your work--and its place in your life. He works through the need for and joys of solitude. Then he explains the richness that a heart shaped by solitude brings to the community. He always ends with community.

If you've read Nouwen, you'll find that his style in *Out of Solitude* is different from other works. I don't know the reason for this. But he uses words a small child would understand--I think intentionally. It's very simply written, but no less powerful.

I read this book for the first time when I joined a weekend silent retreat at a little Catholic camp along the beach in Oregon. This was on their shelf. The book used to be hard to find. I used to pick up a copy every time I made it out to Powell's Books. It's short--a great book to pack for a quiet day away.

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### **7jane says**

This is such a slim, small book, yet it has depths of the deepest ocean within. First appearing as sermons given at an university, its filled with sentences that strike you, in a good way.

The main point is about seeking solitude daily to get closer to God and becoming a better person. The writing is in three chapters, each with a theme: solitude + action (solitude is needed for our soul not to get lost in pursuits of life); care (being there), not just cure; and on hopeful expectation for things beyond limits of life, of waiting with patience and strong joy.

This book is easy to read again and again, and always find something in there. I can easily see this as a good support and guide on one's journey of life, and it leaves you with strength and peace. Nouwen can really write good stuff, and this is one of the greatest of them :)

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### **Lauren says**

Not finished yet, so can't say 5 stars, but it's on its way! A couple favorite passages:

(From Thomas Merton's forward)

"The compulsion to cure is like action without a deep and silent center. We want to overcome problems and adversities and want to change at all costs. An alternative is to care for ourselves, each other, and our world. We wouldn't need change and cure if we were in a constant caring mode."

From the first section

"Somewhere we know that without a lonely place our lives are in danger. Somewhere we know that without silence words lose their meaning, that without listening speaking no longer heals, that without distance closeness cannot cure. Somewhere we know that without a lonely place our actions quickly become empty

gestures."

Both relate to each other more than I initially noticed (until typing this). Yay for more enlightenment!

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### **Robert Clay says**

Nouwen packs a lot of simple, yet no less profound, wisdom into these three short meditations. Each is drawn from a Gospel lesson, with the interconnected focus of solitude, care, and expectation.

An excerpt:

'This is the great conversion in our life: to recognize and believe that the many unexpected events are not just disturbing interruptions of our projects, but the way in which God molds our hearts and prepares us for His return.'

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### **Ian says**

Nouwen reflects on the importance of solitude in achieving balance in our daily walk. Time spent alone with God allows us to become more aware of His purposes and equips us to let go of the world's.

This short but weighty set of three messages require time to percolate as there is much to contemplate.

Highly recommended.

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### **Karen L. says**

I found this short book very refreshing. I want to read more Henri Nouwen. His style is very personal. He writes humbly and honestly out of his own struggles. I like how each section opens with a gospel passage emphasizing Christ's quiet times of solitude with his Father.

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### **CJ Pine says**

In 63 pages, Nouwen presents solitude as the basis of intimate community, mutual vulnerability, real care that witnesses: "joy and sadness are as close to each other as the splendid colored leaves of a New England fall to the soberness of the barren trees."

The story of the gnarled tree is brilliant: "Why is this tree so tall, so huge, so gnarled, so old and beautiful? Because it is useless. If it had been useful it would have been cut long ago and made into tables and chairs, but because it is useless it could grow so tall and so beautiful that you can sit in its shade and relax."

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### **Sue says**

A short book, but thought-provoking. It's three meditations that were originally given as sermons. They are short and simple, but at the same time profound. I re-read two of them as soon as I had finished, so as to take them in better.

The first one talks about the need for withdrawing to be alone with God; the second about the need for care - for empathy, and suffering alongside people - in a society that's more concerned with cure. The third is about living in expectation of better things, and is the one I found least powerful.

I read one meditation per day for three days, and will no doubt return to this book again in the future. Definitely recommended. Four and a half stars really.

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### **Joseph says**

Out of Solitude reads like a manual in advanced prayer - prompting more questions about one's self than it answers. The book contains three meditations on solitude, caring, and expectation. Each are scripturally-based and supported, giving the reader a firm foundation on which to assess their lives and discern the direction they wish to follow in light of these revelations.

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### **Kyna says**

A wonderful tool for the contemplative practice. I read it before bed and spend time in silence with God. Not a lot of words in this book, mostly a thought provoking ushering into moments of solitude.

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### **Liz says**

This was the first book I read by Henri Nouwen. Love this author. He is one of those teachers that teaches from the heart of one who has "been there".

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### **Leah says**

I have had an exceptional year when it comes to reading some really great books. This is another one to add to that list. Henry Nouwen is quickly becoming one of my favorite spiritual authors. He was a professor of Divinity at Yale, and yet somehow manages to say the most profound things using simple phrases that pull on the heart-strings and make you go, "Yes, I've felt that way too!" This book talks about the importance of solitude, care, and expectation. He talks about how Jesus often withdrew to the lonely places and prayed, and how we as Christians can only maintain an active spirituality by finding out own lonely places where we meet with God and reconnect with our soul. He talks about the importance of care in life, and how people would rather not accept the kindness of charity if they know it is not bestowed with care. And expectation, that life is more than what we can see at hand.

Truly moving and inspiring.

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