

Devotional Resources Recommended by Our Senior Minister

Books

Buechner, Frederick (1993) *Whistling in the Dark: a doubter's dictionary*. New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers.

Buechner has created a kind of lexicon for the spiritual life, reflecting on and redefining such words as: adolescence, awe, beatitudes, Easter, enemy, loneliness, Lord's Prayer, vanity, and virtue.

"I think of faith as a kind of whistling in the dark, because in much the same way," writes Buechner, "it helps to give us courage and to hold the shadows at bay." I believe that no matter how tedious, unimaginative, banal, unconvincing, and seemingly irrelevant the Church's proclamation of the mystery of a loving God often is...that mystery is as much a part of reality as the air we breathe."

— From the Introduction to *Whistling in the Dark*

Nouwen, Henri J.M. (2009) *Making All Things New: an invitation to the spiritual life*. Harper Collins.

An introduction to the spiritual life that contains deep insights. Nouwen says of this work that he wrote it for all those who feel an urge to enter more deeply into the spiritual life, but who are confused about how to begin.

Nouwen, Henri J.M (2009) *Our Greatest Gift: a meditation on dying and caring*. Harper Collins Pub.

The author shares his own experiences with aging, loss, grief, and fear in this important and life-altering work.

Nouwen, Henri J.M. (2015) *Spiritual Formation: following the movements of the Spirit*. Harper Collins.

Though he counseled many people during his lifetime, his principles of spiritual direction and formation were never written down. Two of Nouwen's longtime students, Michael Christensen and Rebecca Laird, have taken his famous course in spiritual direction and supplemented it with his unpublished writings to create the definitive series on Nouwen's thoughts on the Christian life. This is part of a three-book series, which showcases

Nouwen's life-long effort to re-construct the five classical stages of spiritual development as movements in the journey of faith. The five classical stages are these: 1. Awakening (our desire) 2. Purgation (purifying our passions) 3. Illumination (of God) 4. Dark Night (of the Soul) 5. Unification (with God).

Palmer, Parker (2000) *Let Your Life Speak: listening for the voice of vocation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Pub.

The author shares wisdom about vocation and finding our life's purpose, which grew out of his encounter with an old Quaker saying, "Let your life speak." At the core of this book is this truth: Vocation does not come from willfulness. It comes from listening."

Remen, Rachel Naomi (2006) *Kitchen Table Wisdom: stories that heal*. New York: Penguin Group.

Remen, clinical professor of family and community medicine at the University of California at San Francisco School of Medicine, tells stories – her own and those of some of her patients – and skillfully illuminates some deep truths about living, suffering, healing, and growing.

Rohr, Richard (2011) *Falling Upward: a spirituality for the two halves of life*. San Francisco, Jossey-Bass Pub.

Rohr delves deeply into personal spirituality using as a framework what he describes as the two halves of life and the way our priorities change as we grow older in life, and experience both success and failure. Even our failures can be opportunities for growth.

ben Shea, Noah (1989) *Jacob the Baker: gentle wisdom for a complicated world*. New York: Random House Pub.

A gentle, thoughtful, baker who rises before dawn every day to make bread and contemplate important things, becomes the talk of the town as people discover his timeless wisdom. This book contains chapters of deep thoughts about topics like reason, religion, fear, prayer, and the nature of reality.

Taylor, Barbara Brown (2009) *An Altar in the World: a geography of faith*. New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers.

Taylor, an Episcopal priest, and college professor writes about finding faith and spirituality all around us in the world just as we live in it. There are chapters on paying attention, getting lost, encountering others, feeling pain, living with purpose, and being present to God, among others.

Thompson, Marjorie (2005) *Soul Feast: an invitation to the Christian spiritual life*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.

Thompson, who collaborated with Henri Nouwen on projects related to faith and spirituality, has created an immensely helpful book for those looking for a good primer in spiritual practices. She writes about some basic practices for deepening one's spiritual life, like reading, being quiet, fasting, and utilizing scripture. Although she says in the introduction that the book is for those who consider themselves a "beginner" in the spiritual life, she also says that the term beginner is deceptive. "The more we comprehend the spiritual life and the longer we try faithfully to live it out, the more we grasp how simple and primary its essential patterns are."

On-line Resources

Weekly Seeds

Weekly Seeds is a weekly email summary of the popular resource for lectionary-based Bible study provided by the United Church of Christ. It includes next Sunday's Bible reading, a brief meditation, and reflections from ancient or contemporary sources. Access at: https://www.ucc.org/weekly_seeds

Journey with Jesus

The Journey with Jesus Foundation was founded in 2004 as a 501(c)(3) (not for profit) corporation to serve the global church through scholarship, teaching in third-world seminaries, consulting, and the promotion of Christian philanthropy. Our weekly webzine *Journey with Jesus* is published every week free of charge to all readers. Our mission vision is characterized by six values—biblical fidelity,

cultural relevance, critical inquiry, pastoral sensitivity, global awareness, and ecumenical generosity. Access at: <https://www.journeywithjesus.net/index.php>

DisciplesNet

DisciplesNet Church exists to share God's love with people who are not able to be part of a physical, brick-and-mortar church. The Church is affiliated with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The Web site provides online worship opportunities and devotional material. Access at: <https://www.disciplesnet.org/>

Henri Nouwen Society

The Henri Nouwen Society exists so that others can experience the unconditional love of God that Henri Nouwen discovered in his life. We publish to deepen and expand Henri's impact, preserve, protect, and promote Henri's legacy. And most importantly, we provide resources like books, videos, podcasts, workshops, events, and free Daily Meditations for those looking to feed their spirit and grow in their faith. Access at: <https://henrinouwen.org/>