**The Bitterroot Collegium**

Spring 2019

Practical Theology: Henri Nouwen’s,

*Aging: The Fulfillment of Life*

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The purpose of “The Bitterroot Collegium” is to provide a comprehensive program of Christian education that furthers the vision, values & mission of Mosaic Church, by equipping both the hearts and minds of Christian men and women to be more faithful and fruitful followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Program Details**

Classes will meet for 1 hour per week and will continue from 4-8 weeks depending upon the topic. Topics/themes will draw from the 4 theological “food groups” including:

1. Biblical Theology
2. Historical Theology
3. Systematic Theology
4. Practical Theology

Classes will alternate between the “food groups,” while topics will be chosen based on the needs, interests and vision of Mosaic Church

**Aging: The Fulfillment of Life**

“We are all aging. Aging is not a reason for despair, but a basis of hope, not a slow decaying, but a gradual maturing, not a fate to be undergone, but a chance to be embraced. The elderly remind us of our responsibility to incorporate the aged into the fabric of our lives; helping them become our teachers again, so they may help us repair the fragmented connections between generations.”

This spring, we are pleased to offer a 6 week course entitled, *Aging: The Fulfillment of Life* by Henri Nouwen, which will “share both moving and inspirational thoughts and stories on what aging means (and can mean) to all of us, whether we’re in our youth, middle age or later years. It is a warm, beautiful and caring book; a simple reaffirmation of the promise of Him, who by His aging and death, brought new life into the world.”

Students may engage in different ways. The first is simply to come to each class and engage. The second is to read the corresponding pages in Nouwen’s book, *Aging: The Fulfillment of Life.* The third is to read the corresponding pages and to complete the focus questions that will fuel class discussions.

***Class Outline***

28 Apr – **Intro to Aging & Jim Thomas on Strokes**

Reading: Handout in Class

5 May – **Aging as a Way to the Darkness**

Reading: Nouwen, *Aging, pp. 13-49*

Focus Questions: 1) According to Nouwen, what does the wagon wheel represent regarding aging?

2) What does the old Balinese tale teach us about how society treats the elderly and

we are poorer because of it?

3) In what ways and why is old age as the “last segregation?”

4) How is segregation different from isolation? And why is the loss of self even more

destructive?

5)Why does Nouwen say that old men and women can metaphorically become

“warlocks & witches?”

12 May – **Sam Namalabe: Life, Ministry & Aging in Uganda**

19 May – **Aging as a Way to the Light**

Reading: Nouwen, *Aging, pp. 51-87*

Focus Questions: 1) How has stereotyping the elderly created an unnecessary fear and hostility toward

aging?

2) Why do we find more differentiation among the elderly than the young? In what

ways could this be positive or negative?

3) Why are Aldous Huxley’s comments on aging so important for aging well?

4) Discuss the importance of *hope, human and vision* in the process of aging.

5) What does Nouwen mean when he talks about the “last illusion.”

26 May –  **Caring as a Way to the Self**

Reading: Nouwen, *Aging, pp. 91-115*

Focus Questions: 1) How did Rembrandt the artist discover that “what is most personal is most

universal?

2) Why is being in close contact with one’s own aging self so important in the care of

the aged?

3) What is *poverty* according to Nouwen and why is it an important characteristic of a

caring person?

4)What is *compassion* according to Nouwen and why is it an important characteristic

of a caring person?

5)What did Nouwen mean when he said, “You live as many lives and you speak

languages?”

2 June – **Caring as a Way to the Other**

Reading: Nouwen, *Aging, pp. 117-157*

Focus Questions: 1) Why are we warned not to think of aging in terms of a “subject of specialization?”

2) Why is *acceptance* so important in the process of aging?

3) Why is *confrontation* so important in the process of aging?

4) In what ways is it true that “people age the way they live?”

5) What did Nouwen mean when he said, “Only when we are able to receive the

elderly as our teachers will it be possible to offer the help they are looking for.”

***Notes:***