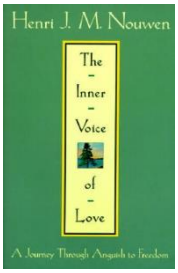

The Inner Voice of Love: A Journey Through Anguish to Freedom

By Henri J.M. Nouwen

Pages 13 to 29

Opening Prayer:

Loving God,
In the midst of our struggles, you speak a quiet word of hope.
Help us to listen to your voice — the voice that calls us beloved.
In our brokenness and in our strength, may we hear the truth that sets us free.
We open our hearts to you in this time together.
Amen.

Sharing prompts:

1. In the chapter *"Understand the Limitations of Others"* (p. 13), the book says that home is where you find your belovedness. Is that true for you—do you find your belovedness at home? Which approach to others' limitations do you tend to default to? Has that approach served you well?
2. In the chapter *"Trust in the Place of Unity"* (p. 14), when have you felt loneliness, jealousy, anger, resentment, or rage? When have you experienced that *other* place—of peace, unity, or presence? Where does God meet you—in your rage, or in your peace? When have you felt both of these held together in unity?
3. In the chapter *"Remain Attentive to Your Best Intentions"* (p. 17), do you find prayer easy or difficult? Do you trust Jesus with your next step? What do you think that next step might be?
4. In the chapter *"Bring Your Body Home"* (p. 19), have you ever befriended your body? Do you want to take your body with you into heaven?
5. In the chapter *"Enter the New Country"* (p. 21), Nouwen suggests we are often comfortable with influence, success, affection, and praise. Yet he invites us to become vulnerable in a "new country." Are you willing to leave behind the old country for this new way of living?
6. In the chapter *"Keep Living Where God Is"* (p. 23), Nouwen suggests that wherever you're going to be, you need to ask: is this truly God-given? Is God with you where you are right now? What helps you discern whether you are where God wants you to be?

7. In the chapter *"Rely on Your Spiritual Guides"* (p. 25), what is your deepest desire? Who are your spiritual guides?
8. In the chapter *"Go Into the Place of Your Pain"* (p. 26), how do you avoid or numb your pain? Do you believe that emptiness is not the final experience? What pain are you being called to name, face, or even bury?
9. In the chapter *"Open Yourself to the First Love"* (p. 28), Nouwen says that the love that comes through human beings is true, God-given love—and it must be celebrated. When have you celebrated such love? Do you believe that God dwells within you?

Farwell and Closing Prayer:

- Invite everyone to share the one word or phrase they would like to take into the next week/month (depending how often you are meeting).
- Close with the Serenity Prayer ... *God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference. Amen*