



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

By Henri J.M. Nouwen

Pages 3 to 12

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 *Work Around Your Abyss* (p. 3), Nouwen says we often deal with problems in one of two ways: by being completely absorbed in our pain or by distracting ourselves with countless things. Which approach do you tend to default to? Has that served you well?
2. In the chapter *Cling to the Promise* (p. 4), Nouwen suggests that faith is the key to navigating difficulties. Can you recall a time when God nurtured your faith during a period of struggle? What did that guidance feel like?
3. In the chapter *Stop Being a Pleaser* (p. 5), Nouwen speaks about discovering your “free self.” What does living as your *free self* look like to you? Have you caught glimpses of that freedom in your own life?
4. In the chapter *Trust the Inner Voice* (p. 6), Nouwen encourages us to trust the voice of God within, even though we often turn to others for validation. How can you better tune your ears to hear that inner voice? What helps you trust it more fully?
5. In the chapter *Cry Inward* (p. 7), Nouwen suggests that healing from anguish often happens through community. Have you ever been part of such a healing community—either as someone who received support or who offered it to others?
6. In the chapter *Always Come Back to the Solid Place* (p. 8), Nouwen describes this solid place as the choice to believe in God’s unconditional love. How might you more intentionally nurture that truth in your daily life—that you are deeply loved and that God’s love is enough?

7. In the chapter *Set Boundaries to Your Love* (p. 9), Setting boundaries can seem unchristian, yet Nouwen argues that boundaries are necessary. Do you agree with his perspective? How do boundaries help—or hinder—your ability to love others?
8. In the chapter *Give Graciously* (p. 11), Nouwen presents a paradox: when you claim your identity as the beloved and set healthy boundaries, you're actually freer to give more. Has this been true in your own experience? What has changed in the way you give love once you've claimed your worth?
9. In the chapter *Coming Home* (p. 12), Nouwen writes that God will give you what you need. Do you believe this? In what ways have you seen God's love show up in your life—perhaps in unexpected or quiet ways?

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