



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

By Henri J.M. Nouwen

Pages 65-83

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. Allow Yourself to Be Fully Received (p. 65)

Can you give generously and without condition? Do you give because you know you are fully loved by God?

2. Claim Your Unique Presence in the Community (p. 67)

Nouwen speaks of four key dimensions: absence, prayer, writing, and solitude. Which of these do you embrace? How do you believe your community needs you—your voice, your presence, your gifts?

3. Accept Your Identity as a Child of God (p. 70)

Do you truly believe that you are a beloved child of God? How do you live out and demonstrate that truth in your daily life?

4. Own Your Pain (p. 72)

Do you acknowledge and take responsibility for your pain? In what ways do you show or share your struggle, rather than hiding it?

5. Know Yourself as Truly Loved (p. 74)

How do you remind yourself that you are deeply loved by God? What practices help you stay rooted in that identity?

6. Protect Your Innocence (p. 76)

What are your vulnerabilities? Remember, the same passions that draw you closer

to God can also lead you away. How do you guard your heart and mind against thoughts and feelings that distance you from your identity as God's child?

7. Let Your Lion Lie Down with Your Lamb (p. 78)

We all carry both strength and vulnerability. A Native American teaching says we each have two inner wolves—one light, one dark—and the stronger one is the one we feed. Do you nurture your “lion” or your “lamb”? What are the consequences of which part you choose to care for?

8. Be a Real Friend (p. 80)

Nouwen writes that genuine friendship grows when we accept ourselves as deeply loved. How have you experienced being deeply loved? Have you known a friendship that endured beyond death? Consider how the death of Jesus deepens our understanding of lasting love.

9. Trust Your Friends (p. 82)

According to Nouwen, your ability to trust others often reflects your belief in your own goodness. How would you describe your inner goodness? How does that belief—or struggle with it—impact your relationships?

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