

Possible Discussion Questions: Life of the Beloved

From <https://henrinouwen.org/> (sc = soft cover edition)

1. Henri says: "Over the years, I have come to realize that the greatest trap in our life is not success, popularity, or power, but self-rejection." (p 27/sc p. 31). When have you fallen into this trap? Why do you think it plays such a large role in our world?
2. Henri says he heard a soft, gentle voice calling him "beloved," from parents, friends, teachers, students and even strangers. Consider who in your life has been that voice, calling you worthy of love, the beloved. What are your relationships to these people? How is that message expressed?
3. Identify a specific person "who speaks your truth": that you are worthy of love and in fact are the beloved. Identify a specific place where that truth is spoken. How do you feel when you think about these people and places? If you cannot name anyone or any place now, can you name someone or some place from the past? Can you go back there?
4. How do you practice gratitude in your life? Why is it so important to be grateful?
5. How does awareness of our chosenness affect how we relate to others?
6. If it is so powerful to give a blessing to another and to feel the blessing from another, why don't we do it more often?
7. According to Henri "the real 'work' of prayer is to become silent and listen to the voice that says good things about me" (p. 62/sc p. 76). Why is silence so difficult for Henri and for us?
8. Why do prayer and "cultivating presence" seem so difficult to implement in our daily lives? What can you do to overcome this difficulty?
9. Think of a time of great suffering in your life. Without telling the whole story, what helped you get through this experience? How were you changed by it?

10. Henri states: "The great spiritual call of the Beloved Children of God is to pull their brokenness away from the shadow of the curse and put it under the light of the blessing (p. 79/sc p. 97). How does putting our brokenness under the blessing differ from putting it under the curse? Why do we find it so difficult to do this?
11. What is it about giving of yourself that is especially satisfying?
12. How does the concept of *being given* help us integrate the other concepts of being *chosen*, *blessed* and *broken* into our lives?
13. Why is it not enough to rely on our talents when we give to others?
14. Our secular world is one of divisions and opposites. How can the spiritual life that Henri describes overcome these divisions and create "one unified reality" (p. 107/sc p. 134)?
15. How does Henri envision eternal life? In light of his understanding, why is death no longer a defeat? How do Henri's views fit into your beliefs concerning life after death