

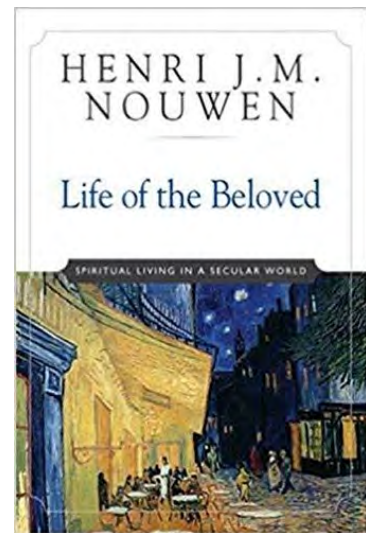
Life of the Beloved

Evan Gough, 2019-20 NBA XPLOR Resident in Dallas, TX

We are all Taken. We are all Blessed. We are all Broken. We are all Given. We are Beloved.

There are about three months left in my XPLOR journey. Where has the time gone? I've been in Dallas for nearly seven months, and I have a lot I wish to share.

I wanted to focus my blog on a book titled, *Life of the Beloved* by Henri Nouwen. With our spiritual companion, Deb Jones, we decided we wanted to read a book to discuss and to reflect on our relationship with God, and to unpack the meaning of beloved-ness and what that actually looks like. Personally, I have had a disconnection with God the past 4-5 years of my life. Maybe that's due to going away to college and the lack of spiritual growth and church. Maybe it's the brokenness I felt during a time in my collegiate career that made me question my deserving of God's love. I don't have a straight answer. All I know, is that I felt distant.



This book was brought into our lives and it highlights main stages in one's spiritual journey to understanding God's unconditional love for all. Taken, Blessed, Broken and Given. I decided that instead of talking about all of them, I wanted to focus on one specific component: Broken.

I am broken, you are broken, we are all broken. We all have our own dustiness. That is something I and many others struggle with when going on their journey through life. How to deal with your brokenness, do you accept it, push it aside and ignore it, I don't know! Nouwen tells us that because we are beloved by God, we ought to not run away from our brokenness, but to go towards it.

To realize that our brokenness makes you...well, you! God doesn't pick and choose who He loves, but rather loves everyone in their own *special* way. We are selected. We are beloved.



Relating this message to my experience so far in XPLOR, I realize that this is not something you work on in one day. This is what life is all about! We have our struggles, our hardships, and those instances that makes us want to run and hide, but to realize that we are chosen by God, I took another look. I joined this program for many reasons, but one specifically was to find what was missing in my life, and to answer some questions for the future. I won't exaggerate and say that I've figured *all* of it out, but I am on the right track. The work at my service site, and the love

of my congregation makes me feel accepted, beloved. That is God's work. I believe we all have a reason for living, that certain events in our lives happen for a reason. I came on this 10-month journey for a reason, and it was to bring more clarity to my present life, and future one.

So, I say breath. Know that God loves you, way more than you can ever know. You are the life of the beloved.

NBA XPLOR is a 10-month service residency opportunity for young adults ages 21-30, with the purpose of empowering young adults to discern and develop a "heart for care" as they live together in simple community, engage in direct service and justice work, engage in leadership development, and discern their vocational calls to honor the various communities they are called to serve. Learn more and apply at nbacares.org/xplor.