

Come Alive: Reflection/Discussion Questions for “Let Your Life Speak” by Parker Palmer

Let Your Life Speak Chapter 1

- Construct a version of your life (present or future) that represents someone else’s vision of what you ought to be doing. Reflect on these questions: Is this your life? How is it not your life? What can you change? What do you want “your life” to look like instead?

Let Your Life Speak Chapter 2

- Ask some significant family members about your “birthright gifts” (pg 12), those gifts that were evident in you from an early age. Reflect on how those have been important in your life and/or how you have been neglecting them.
- Have you ever “lost track of yourself” (pg 13)? How did you know? What did you do?
- What were your earliest career aspirations? Can you “mine” them for clues about what was attractive or enticing about those fields? What does this say about you? How does this relate to your current vocational goals?
- Have you ever experienced the sort of “life in community” Palmer describes in this chapter? Describe this experience and reflect on the impact it has had on you and your vocation.
- Have you struggled with “authentic selfhood” in the way Palmer describes (for example, on pages 32-34)? Reflect on that struggle, how you have managed and/or overcome it, and how this has shaped you.

Let Your Life Speak Chapter 3

- Do you resonate with the council Ruth gives to Palmer on page 38 when she says: “Way has never opened in front of me, but a lot of way has closed behind me, and that’s had the same effect.”? Reflect on how this has functioned in your own life
- Do you agree or disagree with the following quote from pages 41-42: “Each of us arrives here with a nature, which means both limits and potentials. We can learn as much about our nature by running into our limits as by experiencing our potentials.” Reflect on this in light of your life story.
- On page 49 Palmer describes gift giving and burnout. Is there a gift you have that you feel compelled to share—something you get as much out of giving as it costs you? Reflect on a time in your life when you experienced this (or its opposite—burnout from giving away what you did not possess).

Let Your Life Speak Chapter 4

- Reflect on a “way” that has closed for you in your life and how it has affected where you are today (or where you are heading).
- What does Palmer’s story about struggling with depression stir up in you? Reflect on this and the connections between his story and your story.
- In Palmer’s story, it is in the depth of his own pain that he finds some profound truths—about God and about himself. Have you experienced something powerful and or transformative in the midst of pain or suffering? Reflect on the impact that has had on your life’s journey.

Let Your Life Speak Chapter 5

- Do you consider yourself a leader? What story from your life has lifted that possibility up for you?
- How do you relate to this quote on leadership from page 74: “I lead by word and deed simply because I am here doing what I do.” ? Share a story from your life that illustrates this.
- On pages 80-81 Palmer writes: “Good leadership comes from people who have penetrated their own inner darkness and arrived at the place where we are at one with one another, people who can lead the rest of us to a place of “hidden wholeness” because they have been there and know the way.” Do you know someone like this? How does their weakness and/or darkness impact their leadership in positive ways? How has this person impacted you?
- On pages 82-84 Palmer describes an experience he had with Outward Bound. Have you had a similar opportunity to confront your limitations and/or weaknesses? What was it like? How has it shaped you?
- Choose one of the “shadows” Palmer explores on pages 87-90 and relate it to your own experience.

Let Your Life Speak Chapter 6

- What metaphor describes your life this far? Explore and reflect on this metaphor and what it means for your future. Do you need a new metaphor?
- Describe a period of your life as Palmer does—using imagery from a particular season.
- Reflect on the overall impact this book has had on your understanding of your own story and how it relates to your vocation and/or spiritual formation.