

God's Cure For Loneliness

Introduction. America has a loneliness problem. In an article in ChristianHeadlines.com, Leah Hickman reports that “the health insurer Cigna recently conducted a survey on loneliness in the United States. In the final report, about half of the 20,000 respondents said that they struggle with loneliness — specifically, 'sometimes or always' feeling alone or left out. The study also found that two out of every five respondents felt isolation, a lack of companionship, or a lack of meaning in their relationships.”

Isolation is the objective measure of how large your social network is, whereas loneliness is a subjective perception of how one feels. In other words, you can have many friends and be lonely, or no friends and not be lonely. Isolation, whether from becoming homebound, loss of mobility, absence of transportation, or losing a spouse or partner, is a risk factor for loneliness.

Loneliness is almost as prevalent as obesity. Notwithstanding the impact on quality of life and life satisfaction, loneliness has an equivalent risk factor to health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day, shortening one's lifespan by eight years. So the pain of loss can be as profound as not breathing. And sometimes the symptom comes not from the body, but is a cry from the soul.

There is a huge stigma in admitting loneliness, yet it is such a profound human condition that we all recognize. Why do we turn our faces away? We will focus on three ways God helps us with loneliness. So think about someone you know who recently lost a loved one, who might be going through a divorce or messy breakup, an empty nester, or someone who might be lonely even though surrounded by friends and family.

I. God Created Us For Community

- A. He meant for life to be experienced together.
 1. In the beginning, He said, “It is not good for man to be alone” (Genesis 2:18). Thus, he made woman for the man and ordained marriage and the ordered the arrangement of the home.
 2. When husbands and wives truly love one another and children are born into this union and cared for as the Bible teaches, the problem of loneliness is greatly diminished.
- B. Back to the article in the introduction, the one group interestingly most prone to loneliness is the so-called Generation Z, those born between the mid-1990s and early 2000s.
 1. Many young people have hundreds and even thousands of friends on Facebook and followers on Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat.
 2. But connections on social media are not a substitute for real relationships. In fact, research has demonstrated that people who spend less time looking at screens and more time having face-to-face social interactions are less likely to be depressive or suicidal.
- C. True social connection helps us thrive and gives us resilience. The support of family, friends, colleagues, and caregivers allows us to honor our experiences,

weather our pains, and face each day as we try to move forward (Ecclesiastes 4:9; Luke 10:1; Mark 14:33).

II. God Created Us For Fellowship

- A. The Bible calls it the church. When the congregation of Christians functions as God directed, no one should ever be alone (Colossians 2:1-3, 18-19).
 - 1. We enjoy a kinship that transcends common and carnal relationships. We are not knit together because we attended the same university, belong to the same club, espouse the same politics, or share the same racial or ethnic background. In fact, the truth is quite the opposite. We have a companionship bonded by the blood of Jesus (Galatians 3:26-27)!
 - 2. We share a commonality of faith, hope, and love — all based on Jesus. This commonality is founded on eternal aspirations, and it seeks a higher aim and deeper motives. It is a far greater goal than can be obtained through worldly, physical, or material means.
- B. The various “one another” commands in the Bible speak to the importance of being an integral part of a congregation:
 - 1. “Care for one another” (1 Corinthians 12:25).
 - 2. “Forgive one another” (Ephesians 4:32).
 - 3. “Love one another” (1 Thessalonians 4:9).
 - 4. “Comfort one another” (1 Thessalonians 4:18).
 - 5. “Edify one another” (1 Thessalonians 5:11).
 - 6. “Exhort one another” (Hebrews 3:13).
- C. If there is any place where the opposite of loneliness ought to be experienced, it should be among Christians (Philippians 2:17-18). If it is only found in a fraternity or society, a university, or a civic club, then shame on us!
- D. We belong to a called and consecrated spiritual family that really cares; that really feels their sister’s sigh and understands their brother’s hurt (2 Corinthians 1:3-4; Hebrews 13:3). This family really realizes one another’s longings, really bears one another’s burdens, and really rejoices in one another’s successes.
- E. When we have achieved that level of intimacy and that feeling of connectedness in the local church, we will have experienced the opposite of loneliness. Then together we can accomplish so much, and bring a smile to God’s face.

III. God Created Us For Service

- A. Loneliness is a product of the mind (Proverbs 23:7). It is easy to feel sorry for ourselves and slump into boredom and inactivity. Instead, we should focus on people who need us (Numbers 32:6; Joshua 1:15). Those who are connected and emotionally healthy bear a responsibility to those who are struggling.
- B. Some people through the circumstances of life find themselves alone through no fault of their own — transferred by their employer to a new location, the death of a loved one, the divorced, the single, and the aged in a nursing home.
- C. God calls us to minister to those who are weak, hurting, suffering, sick, aged, and alone (Psalm 41:1; Proverbs 25:21; 1 Corinthians 12:26). There are three life principles we need to cultivate:
 - 1. We love our neighbors as ourselves (Matthew 22:39)

2. We then decide to do good to all men (Galatians 6:10),
 3. We finally are a “Good Samaritan” and specifically assist those who are helpless (Luke 10:25-37).
- D. Reach out through various ways and help them feel connected. This is a great remedy for loneliness: “always abounding in the work of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58).

Conclusion. Loneliness is not a sin; it is a by-product of being human. Loneliness will cripple you if you let it. The English poet John Oxenham said, “Art thou lonely, O my brother? Share thy little with another! Stretch a hand to one unfriended, And the loneliness is ended.” When we feel isolated and lonely, like King David, turn to the Lord for comfort, consolation, and strength (Psalm 25:16-21; cp. 147:3; Deuteronomy 31:6). When we have the Lord in our lives, we are never truly alone.

It seems that a good deal of the loneliness problem is a failure to follow God’s plan. Dealing with and solving the problem of loneliness is a dual duty. In the first place, individuals have a responsibility to belong. When we isolate ourselves from our families, are not connected to a congregation, and become a recluse, we are going to be lonely. Each person has to seek to give, share, and be a part of the community. In the second place, those who do not suffer from loneliness hold a giant power in their hands — the power of connection, friendship, and being human. Hold a friend’s hand today and every day. You will have just contributed to life itself.

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