

# Midweek Study

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HOW TO DEAL  
WITH  
HOW YOU FEEL



## God's Answer for Loneliness

*"Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there. If I make my bed in the depths, you are there." (Psalm 139:7-8)*

Mother Theresa once said, "The world's greatest tragedy is unwantedness; the world's greatest disease is loneliness."<sup>1</sup>

Philip Zimbardo, writing in *Psychology Today*, has said, "There is no more destructive influence on physical and mental health than the isolation of you from me and of us from them." He points to studies that show loneliness as a central agent of depression, paranoia, schizophrenia, rape, suicide, mass murder, and a wide variety of diseases. We've all seen the polls that point to shorter life spans for lonely people.<sup>1</sup>

### What is Loneliness?<sup>2</sup>

1. Loneliness is Not **SOLITUDE** (being alone).
2. You can be **LONESOME**, but not lonely.
3. You can be lonely **IN A CROWD**.

David Jeremiah writes, "What is loneliness? I don't know how to define it; all I can do is describe it. It's an underlying anxiety at having no one close, a sharp ache in a moment of grief, and an empty feeling in the pit of the stomach when we know we have no one to whom we can turn."<sup>3</sup>

**Loneliness is not isolation. It is insulation. It is the feeling cut off. It is feeling unnoticed, unloved, uncared, unneeded, and maybe even unnecessary.**

- The Old Testament Hebrew word for "lonely" is **shamem**, which means "to be desolate."
- The New Testament word **eremos** means "desert places."
- Loneliness is the state of sadness that comes from feeling alone, isolated or cut off from others.
- A person can feel a lack of connection with others even when in their presence.

Everyone has three basic psychological and spiritual needs.<sup>4</sup>

- 1) Everybody needs someone to love and to share intimately with.
- 2) Everybody needs someone who can understand, to know how they feel and says, "Yes, I understand, I care."
- 3) Everybody needs to be needed and wanted.

<sup>1</sup> As quoted in Tim Clinton, *The Quick-Reference Guide to Biblical Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2009), 151.

<sup>1</sup> Philip Zimbardo, "The Age of Indifference," *Psychology Today*, 30 August 1980.

<sup>2</sup> Based on Adrian Rogers, *Mastering Your Emotions* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1988), 99-100.

<sup>3</sup> David Jeremiah, *Overcoming Loneliness: Study Guide* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1997), 8.

<sup>4</sup> Rogers, 101.

## What Are The Causes?<sup>5</sup>

- 1) **REJECTION.** Some have tried to have friends and they've been rejected. They have been burned perhaps in a love relationship. Mark Twain said, "If a cat sits on a hot stove he'll never sit on a hot stove again. He'll never sit on any stove again." He may not get burned the second time but he's not going to take a chance.
- 2) **INSECURITY.** So many have a basic sense of insecurity and don't really see themselves as worthy of being accepted or worthy of having a friend. They don't accept themselves, so they don't believe others will accept them. ***So rather than building bridges subconsciously they build walls and they close themselves in.***
- 3) **PERSPECTIVE.** (see Job 19:13-19) Some have gone through deep sorrow, deep tragedy, deep loss, and they lose their sense of perspective. They feel like nobody really cares, nobody really understands, and nothing really makes sense to them. (see Job 7:16)
- 4) **SELFISHNESS.** Somebody said, "There is no life so empty as a self-centered life and there's no life so centered as a self-empty life." People turn themselves inward and it's a form of sin and sin always separates, sin always isolates, and brings death to relationships.

## 5 Steps to Conquer Loneliness<sup>6</sup>

(from Christian Counselor, Gary Oliver, Ph.D.)

1. **LOOK UP** (develop your relationship with God) see 1 Peter 5:7; Psalm 142; Matthew 28:20
  - The best place to start is by looking up – developing your relationship with God. When you strengthen your walk with God, you know that one person, your Creator, is always with you.
2. **LOOK BEHIND** (reflect on yourself)
  - In the past, when you have had feelings of loneliness, what have you told yourself? One idea is to take a piece of paper and reflect on complete the phrase "I am lonely because –" ten times. What did you discover? Have you placed unrealistic expectations on yourself? Have you been focusing on your weaknesses at the exclusion of your strengths? You may have been ignoring (or may not even be aware of) what God has to say about your significance, value and worth in Christ. Is it possible that these have merely been excuses to keep you from trusting God, facing your fears and risking growth?
3. **LOOK AT** (learn to communicate with others)
  - Quality communication **takes time**. We need to intentionally take time with the significant people in our life.
  - Quality communication involves **more than words**. Albert Mehrabian researched the components of communication. He found that often the actual words we say account for only 7% of how someone interprets our messages. The other 93% involves other factors (tone of voice – 38%; body posture, gestures, eye contact and facial expressions – 55%). One of these components contradicts the other, a mixed-message is sent.
  - Quality communication involves **listening**. Ecclesiastes 3:7 says there is a time to be silent. (see also Proverbs 18:13; 21:11; 10:14).
  - Quality communication involves **small talk**. Someone told me, "Small talk is when you get to know others."
4. **LOOK TO OTHERS** (develop relationships with others)
  - An article I read recently gave the admonition to arrive at church 15 minutes early and leave 15 minutes late from service. It said it will help you cultivate friendships as you are not hustling to arrive and leave.<sup>7</sup>
  - Exodus 33:11 says that friends speak "face to face". Someone once said, "The best way to have a friend is to be a friend." Proverbs 18:24 says, "A man who has friends must himself be friendly" (NKJV).
5. **LOOK AROUND**
  - What are some creative options for dealing with your loneliness? What has worked for others? Talk with someone who has overcome loneliness and find out what worked for them. Is there anything that you could do to reach out and help others? Could you expand your areas of interest? (See Philippians 1:3-5 – partnership!)

<sup>5</sup> Rogers, 101-104.

<sup>6</sup> Based on Gary Oliver, *Real Men Have Feelings Too* (Chicago, Ill: Moody, 1993), 153-162..

<sup>7</sup> <https://lifewayresearch.com/2018/07/18/the-small-change-that-can-radically-improve-your-church-experience/> accessed 10/25/2021.