

EXCESS BAGGAGE

You Don't Have to Be Lonely, 2 Timothy 4:9-17

What Is Loneliness?

- The painful awareness that you lack meaningful contact with others
- It can be a feeling of being left out, not included, isolated, or being rejected
- Loneliness is not necessarily the “absence of people” around you that determines your loneliness; it’s your *relationship* to them
- You can be in a “crowd” and still be lonely
- Loneliness can and will happen to all of us from time to time
- Loneliness should *not* be a permanent condition in our lives

What Loneliness is Not

- *Solitude* or being alone is *not* loneliness
- Solitude or being alone is a *voluntary withdrawal* from people, while loneliness is often caused by *circumstances of life* that you *didn't* plan
- The purpose of solitude is designed to *help* a person focus on something
- Loneliness can be depressing, draining, and difficult to deal with
- Loneliness unlike solitude can “linger” sometimes even when we try to get rid of it

We Were Created for Relationships

- We were not created to spend our lives alone **Genesis 2:18 (KJV) “... And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; ...”**
- We were created by God for communion, fellowship, and friendship
- Therefore, loneliness is *not* God’s best or God’s plan for our lives

Causes of Loneliness

Transitions in life

- Our lives are not static; they are constantly changing
- We are transitioning from stage in life to another
- Some of those transitions can lead to periods of loneliness
- Sometimes these changes in life leave a void that can lead to loneliness

Separations in life

2 Timothy 4: 9 Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me: 10 For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia. 11 Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.

- Paul had a lot of friends, but at crucial time in his life, all of them were gone except Luke
- One of friends Demas went back to living a worldly lifestyle
- Others were sent to do ministry elsewhere
- We must come to the realization that the relationships we have now may not always be here
- Their absence from your life may lead to loneliness

Oppositions in life

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14 Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works: 15 Of whom be thou ware also; for he hath greatly withstood our words.

- Not only did Paul have friends that were not around when he needed them, he also had enemies working against him
- There is not much detail about what Alexander had done to Paul, but when you are being attacked, your name slandered, and there is no one to defend you; it can be a very lonely place

Rejections in life

16 At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge.

- Paul was on trial before Nero, the emperor of Rome
- He is facing a terrible trial, a trial where the verdict could cost his life, he needs help.
- Paul needs courageous believers standing with him and be character witnesses for him
- What a challenge for us to be courageous and faithful to each other in the dark hours of trial and need!
- The people that Paul thought would be faithful to the end abandoned him
- Rejection is one of the hardest things for us to handle
- It's difficult to handle because they were once there for us and then they vanish

Unhelpful Ways Some People Handle Loneliness

- Recognizing the feelings of loneliness is important and how we deal with loneliness is also important, unfortunately, we can also choose unhelpful and even dangerous ways of dealing with loneliness:
 - *We can have pity parties*
 - We have a woe is me attitude
 - We feel sorry of ourselves, and we want others to feel sorry for us in hopes that it become cure for our loneliness
 - You're not only person who's ever been lonely, abandoned or rejected, Jesus knows about all you're going through
 - *We can overwork ourselves*
 - We think work will be our "cure" for our loneliness
 - *We buy stuff*
 - We resort to "retail therapy" as a cure for loneliness
 - *We resort to drugs and alcohol*
 - Drugs and alcohol are often used to "self-medicate" our loneliness
 - *Social media*
 - Social media is a two-edged sword when we're lonely, it can both help and hurt us
 - Social media can increase your feelings of loneliness
 - *We engage in the ungodly relationships*
 - When we are lonely, we are also *vulnerable* and less discerning
- When we're lonely we do things, we thought would help us, but they can make our situation worse

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How to Overcome Loneliness

Start with Self-Care

13 The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments.

- Paul learned how to make the most out of a bad situation
- Lonely people also have tendency not to take care good care of themselves
- Paul refused to let loneliness get the best of him, he invested in self-care
- God created us as *tripartite* (three parts) beings, we are made of *body, soul, and spirit*
- *All three parts* of us must be cared for and that's what Paul did for himself
- Paul wrote to Timothy are requested three things:
 1. *His cloak* (care for the body)– because winter was coming, and he wanted to stay warm and healthy in a dark and damp dungeon
 - The cloak suggests that Paul was personally caring for his physical body
 2. *Books* (care for the soul/mind)– Paul wanted to continue learning and keeping his mind sharp and keeping his mind off the fact that he was still imprisoned
 - Paul was caring for his soul, his mind by asking for his books
 - Paul was alone in prison, but he made sure his mind was *free* to grow
 3. *Parchment* (care for the spirit)– Paul wanted his parchment scrolls of the Word of God to continue to feed his spirit despite being alone in prison
 - The Bible is the greatest collection of books ever assembled and was created to minister to every issue we face in life *and* prepare us for eternity with Jesus
- Paul made the most of his lonely time
- If you are lonely now, what self-care practices do you engage in to care for your body, mind, and spirit?

Minimize the Pain of Loneliness

2 Timothy 4:16 (KJV) ¹⁶ At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge.

- When Paul needed a friend, when he needed someone to speak on his behalf, when he needed an encouraging word, no one was around
- Paul said although everyone has left me, I'm not holding against them
- Paul maintained a forgiving spirit despite his conditions
- Resentment is not a cure for loneliness, instead it becomes a constant reminder of your loneliness

Recognize God's Presence

2 Timothy 4:17 (KJV) ¹⁷ Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; ...”

- Paul recognized in his lonely moments God was still with him
- God had not forsaken him **Hebrews 13:5 (KJV) “...for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”**
- You can experience the presence of God through prayer, worship, daily Bible study, etc.

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- It is our responsibility to pursue the presence of God

Connect With Other People

2 Timothy 4:17 (KJV) "...that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: ..."

- Paul was lonely and near the end of his life, but he never forgot his focus; to win people to Christ, build them up in their faith, and send them out to do the same
- Lonely people have the responsibility for taking the initiative to connect with others to build fellowships and friendships
- It's been said love is the *antidote* for loneliness

Realize Loneliness Can and Will Happen

Philippians 4:11 (KJV) ¹¹ Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

- For many the biggest hurdle to overcome is not their loneliness, the biggest obstacle is the *acceptance* of their loneliness
- To overcome a season of loneliness, we must first *admit* that we are lonely
- Loneliness is something that Christians will experience from time to time, and we must overcome the shame and embarrassment that we associate with being lonely
- Realize it is a *season* of life that God has allowed and from here we will learn how to navigate *through it*

Be Approachable

Proverbs 18:24 (KJV) ²⁴ "A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly..."

- We must look at ourselves and see if there are things about us that are *contributing* to our loneliness
- What we may discover is that there some are things we can change that will improve our sense of belonging, inclusion, and connection with others
- Many times, we can improve and even overcome loneliness just by making ourselves more available, approachable, and being willing to get involved in things going on around us
- God has also placed "doors of opportunity" that you can walk through to build relationships with others that will bless your life and the lives of others
- Pray for God to direct you to people that need a friend
 - Your helping others will do both of you good