

Never Alone

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*Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture
references are taken from the New King
James Version of the Bible.*

The Problem of Loneliness

Loneliness is a real problem for many people. Some people are lonely because they live alone and have very little interaction with other people. Others live in a house full of people, yet they feel alone. All of us know what it is like to have feelings of loneliness, but for some people these feelings never seem to pass. It is as though a heavy cloud has settled over them, and they cannot seem to escape it. Left undealt with, loneliness eventually leads to depression. And sometimes depression becomes despair.

The purpose of this booklet is to help people who are lonely. I am not writing this booklet because loneliness is my favorite topic. I am writing it because loneliness may be our society's greatest problem. In many cases, loneliness is the hidden problem behind many more visible problems. Single people who are lonely often get involved in sexual immorality. Married people who are lonely sometimes have affairs. Some people who are lonely actually lose their will to live. There is no question that loneliness is a real problem, and if it is not properly dealt with, it will lead to other problems as well.

So what exactly is loneliness? One of the best ways to understand what something is is to understand what something isn't. So let me begin by saying that **loneliness isn't the same as being alone.** I know many people who spend an enormous amount of time alone, yet they are not lonely. Spending time alone can actually be a good thing. When we are alone we are able to clear our minds, renew our strength, and get to know God better. In fact, as you study the Bible you discover that God frequently led some of His greatest servants to spend prolonged periods of time alone so that He could develop their character and strengthen their faith. Joseph spent years alone in an Egyptian prison before God made him the Prime Minister of that nation. Moses spent forty years alone in the desert before God used him to deliver the Israelites from Egyptian bondage. David spent many years alone tending sheep on the hills of Bethlehem before God anointed him as Israel's king. Paul spent three years alone in the Arabian desert before he became the greatest preacher in the history of the church. The apostle John was alone on the island of Patmos, exiled on the Alcatraz of his day, when he received the magnificent vision from heaven which we know as *The Book of Revelation*.

I'm not a genius, but I see a pattern here!! And more than a pattern, I see a principle. And the principle is this: **Being alone with God is a good thing.** God knows we need time alone with Him in order to grow. It appears that before God ever uses anyone mightily, He first gets that person alone and goes to work on him.

As Christians, we should actually long for time alone with God. The psalmist said, "As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for You, O God" (Psalm 42:1). The point I am making is this: **Being alone is not the same thing as being lonely.** Being alone is a good thing **if...**and this is a very important **if...we want to be alone so we can grow closer to God.**

The problem many people have with being alone is that they are perpetually alone, and they didn't choose to be that way. They are not alone because they are seeking to grow spiritually. They are alone because life has taken a turn they didn't expect it to take. They are not alone because they **want** to be. They are alone because circumstances have **forced** them to be. And unwanted solitude is not an easy thing to deal with. If you are alone and that is not your preference, then I can guarantee you that you know what it's like to be lonely. I

think about widows and widowers who are alone but desperately miss their spouses. They are alone, but they didn't choose to be alone. They are alone because of circumstances beyond their control, and as a result, they are lonely.

Perhaps you are in that situation now. You are alone, and you don't want to be alone. And in the midst of being alone, you are wondering what in the world God is up to in your life. You are asking questions like these: "Why did my spouse die?" *or* "Why am I still single?" *or* "Will my life always be like this?"

Did you ever stop to think that God has allowed you to be in the situation you are currently in? God has allowed you to be alone. Since God is in control of every situation in life, that means God has His hand in your present circumstances. You **are** where you **are** because that's where God has allowed you to be.

Sometimes God allows us to be alone so we can grow in our relationship with Him. When we are alone, God has a way of becoming more real to us. He begins to work on us and develop our faith. When we are alone, that doesn't mean that God has **abandoned** us.

Instead, it means that God has **surrounded** us and that He will give us the companionship we are longing for if we will turn to Him.

Several years ago, on a night when I was more than a little bit lonely, I remember asking God what He wanted me to do. As best as I can discern the voice of the Holy Spirit, I sensed God say, “**Focus on Me.**” Those three words gave my life order and direction. By telling me to focus on Him, God was also telling me not to focus on circumstances, other people, or what my future might be. Instead, He wanted me to focus exclusively on Him. And as I began to do that, God literally...little by little...began to change my life. He began to purify my faith. And He began to show me that His presence was all I needed to be a happy and complete person.

When we are alone, we normally focus on what we have lost, or in some cases, on what we have never had. When we do that, things can go from bad to worse in a hurry. When we are alone, we don't need to focus on **what** we have lost but on **Whom** we still have. If we are Christians, we still have Jesus!! The first thing we must do is to put our focus on Him.

The Bible says that we are to be “looking unto Jesus” (Hebrews 12:2). The idea behind that word “looking” is that we are to look **to** Jesus and **away** from everything else. As you begin to focus on Jesus, you then begin to see life from a much clearer perspective.

Did you know that your mind can only focus on one thing at a time? Now you may have several thoughts that run through your mind at the same time, but your mind can only concentrate on one of those thoughts at a time. That’s why it is so important to focus on Jesus. If you are truly concentrating on Him, then you cannot be concentrating on anything else. And as you focus on Jesus, He will fill your heart with peace. The Bible says that God will keep us “in perfect peace” if our minds are focused on Him (Isaiah 26:3). So if you are alone, the first step you must take is to focus on Jesus. He is with you.

You see, loneliness is not the same as being alone because if we have Jesus in our hearts we never really are alone. We may be alone from a human perspective, but God never meant for us to live our lives from a human perspective. He meant for us to live our lives from a heavenly perspective. And from a heavenly perspective, Christians are never alone. Jesus

has said, *“I will never leave you nor forsake you”* (Hebrews 13:5).

One of my favorite pastors, Charles Stanley, has a saying that I really like. He says that Christians are **“sometimes lonely, but never alone.”** We may have those feelings of loneliness from time to time, but as we focus on Jesus, those feelings don’t dominate our lives. The primary reason that **loneliness isn’t the same as being alone is because, as Christians, we never really are alone in the first place. Jesus is with us.**

I’ll tell you something else that loneliness isn’t. **Loneliness isn’t the same as being lonesome.** If your business causes you to travel away from home then it is only natural that you would miss your family and friends while you’re gone. That doesn’t mean you’re lonely. That just means you are lonesome. That’s normal. That’s natural. That’s healthy.

Imagine a businessman who is out of town for a week on business. He misses his wife. For him, the plane ride makes him lonesome. The hotel room makes him lonesome. The breakfast buffet makes him lonesome. He misses his wife. He is lonesome for home. Now when he returns home, what will he do?

He will kiss his wife!! Why? Because he missed her. He was lonesome. But he wasn't lonely. He wasn't lonely because he had someone to go home to. And that is the key to understanding loneliness.

Loneliness is not just being alone, and loneliness is not just being lonesome. **Loneliness is feeling cut-off, isolated, disconnected, and separated from other people.** I feel sorry for the businessman who has no one to call, no one to text, no one to go home to. No family. No friends. No meaningful relationships in life. That man is truly lonely. He feels disconnected from the world.

This is not to imply that every single person is lonely and that every married person isn't. If that were the case, I would conclude this booklet now by telling all the single people to get married and all the married people to enjoy not being lonely. That would be simple. But that's not reality.

I know a lot of single people who aren't lonely, and I know a lot of married people who are. Remember how I defined loneliness? I said that loneliness is when we feel cut-off, isolated, disconnected, and separated from

other people. Many married people are connected in a physical sense, but disconnected in an emotional sense. They feel isolated from the person they are living with. They are with another person, yet they feel very lonely. That's why you can be in a room full of people and feel so all alone. Because loneliness is not just physical isolation. Loneliness is emotional isolation.

Some of the loneliest people live in some of the most heavily populated cities. Henry David Thoreau observed this and poetically said that a big city is a place where you find "millions of people being lonely together." Why are so many people in big cities lonely? Because they are emotionally cut-off from meaningful relationships. They may know a lot of people, but they aren't truly known by those people. The **quality** of our relationships is much more important than the **quantity** of our relationships. Most relationships are superficial. I am being honest with you when I say that most of mine are. I know hundreds of people on a casual, social level, but there are only a few people with whom I would share my deepest feelings. Those are the meaningful relationships in my life.

If people are lonely because they feel isolated from these meaningful relationships, then we need to think about why we sometimes feel isolated. In the next section, I want us to think about some of the **causes** of loneliness.

Why Do People Feel Lonely?

I heard a story about how some school children were playing on the soccer field one day during recess. Their teacher, Mrs. Jackson, noticed that all the kids were playing soccer on one end of the field and that a little girl named Rachel was all by herself on the other end of the field. Concerned about the little girl, Mrs. Jackson walked all the way to where Rachel was to make sure that she was alright. Rachel assured her that she was. A few minutes later, Mrs. Jackson asked her again if she was ok, and Rachel once again assured her that she was fine. Not convinced that Rachel was telling her the truth, Mrs. Jackson asked her, “Then why are you on this end of the field away from all the other children?” To which Rachel replied, “Because I’m the goalie!!”

Sometimes in life we feel like the goalie. Everyone else is playing together, and here we are, on the other end of the field, all by

ourselves. We feel cut-off, isolated, disconnected, and separated from everybody and everything. We feel lonely.

Years ago, Billy Graham preached a sermon on loneliness in which he gave several reasons why people feel lonely. Convinced that I could never improve on anything Dr. Graham has said, I want to mention the reasons he gave and see if you can identify the source of your loneliness. If you can figure out **why** you're lonely, you will be better equipped to deal with your loneliness. So here are the types of loneliness Dr. Graham identified.¹

First of all, there is **the loneliness of solitude**. Many people feel lonely because they are physically separated from family and friends. I think of our military personnel who are serving our country away from their loved ones. I think of the men and women in our state prisons and city and county jails. Unless you have ever visited a prison or a jail, you cannot imagine how lonely these men and women can be. They are isolated. Some are literally in solitary confinement. They are lonely because they have no one to talk to.

As I think about the loneliness of solitude, I also think about the elderly. Many of them live

alone. Houses that were once full of laughter, love, and lots of noise have now become strangely quiet. A spouse is gone. Children have grown up and moved away. Grandchildren are seldom seen. The person in that house is experiencing an unwanted solitude. Many of our elderly are in nursing homes and assisted living establishments. Not only are these people separated from their loved ones, but they are also separated from the familiarity of their own homes. They feel like the psalmist who said, “I am like a pelican of the wilderness; I am like an owl of the desert. I lie awake, and am like a sparrow alone on the housetop” (Psalm 102:6-7). They are lonely because they feel like no one is there with them. They are lonely because theirs has become a life of unwanted solitude.

Another type of loneliness is **the loneliness of society**. There is a fascinating story recorded in John 5 about a man who had been sick for thirty-eight years. He sat outside the pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem. It was believed by many that an angel would come along from time to time and stir the water. After the water had been stirred, many people believed that the first sick person to get into the water would be healed. One day Jesus approached the man at the pool and asked him this question: “Do you

want to be made well?” (John 5:6). The man responded to Jesus with these words: “Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up” (John 5:7). Notice the lonely words that came from this man’s mouth. He said to Jesus, in essence, “I have no one.” Even though there were thousands of people living in Jerusalem, he didn’t have anyone to help him get into the water. He felt very alone.

In our fast-paced society, in our over-populated cities, many people feel the same way. They feel like they have no one. They never receive a phone call, a letter, or an e-mail. In the midst of a people-saturated society, they feel as though they have no one. And the sad thing is, they may be right. They very well may be all alone. They may not have a friend in the world. Society itself can be a very lonely place.

And then there is **the loneliness of suffering**. Suffering has a way of isolating us from others. As I am writing this booklet, there is a young lady in our church who is in an isolation room at M. D. Anderson Hospital. She is undergoing a stem-cell transplant, chemotherapy, and radiation. Her condition is so serious, and her immune system is so weak, that she has to be isolated from other people so

she won't pick up a germ that her body can't fight. Not only is her suffering painful, but it is also terribly lonely.

But not all suffering is physical suffering. People suffer emotionally when relationships end. People suffer financially when jobs end. People suffer psychologically when stress mounts. And all of this suffering can make us feel cut-off from other people. Sometimes in our suffering we feel like no one is going through what we are going through. But that is not true. The Bible says that “the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world” (I Peter 5:9). Other people are suffering in ways similar to the way you are suffering. And, yet, even though that is true, our suffering can cause us to feel terribly lonely.

And then there is **the loneliness of sorrow**. I stood at a graveside recently and tried to bring words of comfort and hope to a grieving mother and father who had just lost their son. I tried to say something that could help his surviving sister and other family members. I quoted the Scriptures and talked about heaven. The Holy Spirit ministered to the family, and yet, for now at least, their suffering is almost more than they can bear.

In Old Testament times, when a person died the people would take a prescribed period of time, perhaps thirty or even seventy days, to mourn. The Bible says there is “a time to weep” (Ecclesiastes 3:4). That is part of the healing process. But the Bible also teaches that we shouldn’t weep forever. The psalmist wrote these insightful words: “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy *comes* in the morning” (Psalm 30:5).

The problem is that some people have wept for so long that they don’t think the joy will ever come. They fear the morning will never dawn. They feel stuck in the isolation of their sorrow, and they see no way out.

As debilitating as the loneliness of sorrow can be, there is even a worse type of loneliness, and that is **the loneliness of sin**. Solitude, society, suffering, and sorrow have a way of separating us from other people. But sin is worse because sin separates us from God. Just like a wedge separates wood, sin separates us from God.

Before a person receives Christ as Savior, he is separated from God in the sense that he has no relationship with God. In order to become a Christian, the sin barrier must be broken. Jesus

broke the sin barrier with His death, burial, and resurrection. And when a person asks Jesus to forgive him and save him, Jesus comes into his heart and establishes a permanent relationship between him and God. Jesus becomes our bridge to God. When we trust Him to save us, we become the children of God.

While we are thankful beyond words that, as children of God, we will never have to be eternally separated from God because of our sins, we also recognize that even after we become Christians we still have to deal with temptation and sometimes with sin. What does sin do in the life of a Christian? Does it cause us to lose our **relationship** with God? No. Not at all. But it does cause us to lose our **fellowship** with God. Sin robs us of our closeness, our intimacy, with God. Sin in our lives causes God to seem a million miles away. And that causes us to feel lonely...cut-off from communication with God.

There is nothing good about sin. Sin hurts us. Sin hurts others. Sin hurts our witness. Sin hurts God. Sin robs us of our joy and steals our peace. How grateful we are that God forgives us of our sins. But how careful we must be not to continue committing them. We must learn to

avoid sin. If we don't, we will lose the anointing of God upon our lives.

There is a story that I once read which beautifully illustrates this point. Years ago, a pastor and his wife moved from the United States to Israel. They moved into their new home, and they started getting accustomed to a new way of life. The couple noticed that a beautiful dove had made himself a home on the roof of their house. This made them especially happy. After all, what could be better than living in Israel with a dove on top of your house!! Well, the couple noticed that when they would go in and out of their house that if they closed the door too hard, the dove would fly away. A few days later, the dove would return, perch himself on the roof, stay there until they closed the door too hard, and then he would fly away again. This happened again and again. The couple finally figured out what was happening and discussed what they should do so that the dove would remain on their roof. At first, they had assumed the dove would get used to the door slamming and get comfortable enough to stay. But after months of experience, they had learned otherwise. Finally, the husband said to his wife, "Sweetheart, I think we are going to have to **adjust to the dove** because the dove is not ever

going to adjust to us. Let's start closing the door more gently and see what happens." And so they did. And as they closed the door more gently, the dove never flew away again.

In the Bible, the Holy Spirit is compared to a dove. And there is a wonderful truth that we must learn if we are going to avoid the loneliness of sin. If we want the Holy Spirit to be on our lives in a close, meaningful way, then **we are going to have to adjust to Him because He will not adjust to our sin.** The Holy Spirit, like a dove, is very sensitive, very delicate. Sin makes Him feel uncomfortable. In fact, sin makes Him feel so uncomfortable that He cannot be a part of it. Sin will make Him "fly away" from our lives. Again, I am not saying that sin causes us to lose our salvation. Salvation is "everlasting life," and "everlasting life" lasts forever (John 3:16). But sin will cause the Holy Spirit not to be as close to us, as real to us, as active in our lives as He would otherwise be. If you want the Holy Spirit to not only be **in** you but also to be **on** you, then I encourage you to make the necessary adjustments so that He will always feel comfortable in your presence. **Adjust to Him, and His anointing will be upon your life!!**

How Do People Deal with Loneliness?

It is interesting to observe how people deal with loneliness. In this section, I want to identify several things people do in an attempt to handle the loneliness they are experiencing. Whether the loneliness comes from solitude, society, suffering, sorrow, or even sin, the following ways seem to be the primary ways most people deal with their loneliness. If we are honest, we would probably have to admit that at some point in life we have done most, if not all, of these things.

Sometimes we turn to the **media** when we feel lonely. Most people cannot stand silence. The first thing they do when they get in the car is to turn the radio on. When they get home, they turn the television on. There is something about noise that makes us feel less lonely. Through the television and radio, we feel connected to the world.

Now I am not condemning radios and televisions. I have four televisions in my house. I even had one in the garage until I recently gave it away!! So I am certainly not on an anti-television campaign. But I have noticed there are good reasons and bad reasons for watching television (and the same could be

said of all forms of media). Let me share some reasons why we should use the media and then I want to share one reason why we shouldn't use the media.

First of all, we should use the media for **information**. Through the media, you can find out what is happening and how it affects you. There are many good news programs you can watch. We need to be knowledgeable, informed people, and so information is a good use of the media.

Second, we should use the media for **meditation**. There are certain Christian programs that bless my life. There are certain preachers who speak to my heart. While I do realize that we have to be careful to sift all teaching and preaching through God's Word, I also think that a lot of Christian programming is true to His Word. So use the television to bring Jesus into your home.

Third, we should use the media for **recreation**. Sometimes we need a diversion. Sometimes we need to watch a ballgame or a sitcom (if it is decent). Sometimes our minds need to air out. Sometimes we need to unwind. Sometimes a good movie relaxes or inspires us. And sometimes it just makes us laugh. As long

as it is clean, all such laughter is good. The Bible says, “A merry heart does good, *like* medicine” (Proverbs 17:22). Most of us are too serious anyway. A little more laughter would help us all.

So use the media for information, meditation, and recreation. But don't use the media for **alleviation**. By that I mean that we shouldn't use the media to alleviate our loneliness. Some people watch soap operas because they are lonely. They get hooked on them. They long for meaningful relationships, and since they don't have any, they settle for substitutes. They begin to live vicariously through the characters they watch on the soaps. When we immerse ourselves in the media for the purpose of alleviating our loneliness, we discover that the media **imitates** reality, but it is not reality. Additionally, we discover that the media isolates us from the real, meaningful relationships we desire. And this can happen before we realize it.

Several years ago, I got hooked on the sitcom “Everybody Loves Raymond.” For the most part, that is a pretty clean show. I used to watch it most every night. After a while, I felt like a member of the Barone family!! I didn't realize it at the time, but I was using that show

to alleviate my own loneliness. The show made me feel like I had a lot of people in my life, but those people weren't real to me. They were substitutes. They were an imitation of reality but not reality itself. When I finally figured out what I was doing, I said to myself, "This is ridiculous." And now I seldom watch the show. Listen friend, God made you for meaningful, real relationships with Himself and with other people. Don't settle for the substitute ones offered up through the media.

While we often turn to the media in times of loneliness, I have also noticed that we turn to **activities** to alleviate our loneliness. We bury ourselves in "busyness." As long as we are on the go, we don't have time to think about our loneliness. We work extra long hours when we don't have to. We run unnecessary errands. We take on superfluous projects. We take trips. We do anything rather than sit in a chair and face the reality of our situation. We try to escape reality by being as active and busy as we possibly can.

When we have not properly dealt with our loneliness, we are not content. We are unable to relax and just take it easy. The apostle Paul said these insightful words: "I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content" (Philippians

4:11). And he said that while he was in a Roman prison. He wasn't restless. He wasn't uptight. He wasn't even lonely. He knew that God was with him, and for Paul, that was enough. But even Paul had to "learn" to be content. It didn't come naturally for him. And it won't come naturally for us either. We learn to be content when we learn to relax and focus on Jesus instead of focusing on staying as busy as we possibly can.

Sometimes people turn to **drugs, alcohol, and even immorality** in an attempt to deal with their loneliness. This is their way of escaping reality. **And that is really what sin is...a temporary escape from reality.** But these behaviors don't help the situation at all. They only make matters worse. They produce their own set of negative consequences in a person's life that are far worse than the original problem of loneliness.

Perhaps the way most people deal with loneliness is to turn to **other people**. And that makes sense because we were made for relationships with others. The only problem with this is that when we are depending on someone else to take away our loneliness, we are depending on them to do for us what no human being can do. We cannot depend on

another person to meet the deepest needs of our souls. Only God can do that. Augustine, the great Christian of long ago, had it right when he prayed, “You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless until we find our rest in You.”

If you look to others to meet the deepest needs of your soul, you will be like a leech to them. You will be so “needy” that you will drain the life out of them. Your relationships won’t be healthy, and they probably won’t last. A relationship involves giving and taking, but if you are lost in your own loneliness you won’t have anything to give to the relationship. You will only take from it, and eventually the relationship will dry up and die. Make no mistake about it. People can be a tremendous blessing to our lives. But we must never depend on them to “fix us.”

Which leads me to the only effective way to deal with our loneliness and that is through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Pastor Adrian Rogers once said, “Jesus alone is the cure for loneliness.” I have found that to be true in my life, and I know it is true for you as well. Allow me to share with you some reasons why Jesus is the only One Who can really help you with your loneliness.

Why Jesus Alone is the Cure for Loneliness

The first reason Jesus alone is the cure for loneliness is because **Jesus is the One Who made us.** The Bible says, “by Him all things were created” (Colossians 1:16). He is the One Who knit us together in our “mother’s womb” (Psalm 139:13). Since He made us, He knows us. He knows how we work. No one can fix a clock like the man who made the clock. And no one can fix a person like Jesus...the One Who made us. The old song says, “No One Understands Like Jesus.” And that song is so true.

When you turn to Jesus in your loneliness, you are turning to the One Person Who knows you inside and out. He knows how you work. He knows how you are wired. And He alone knows how to handle your loneliness.

Another reason Jesus is the cure for loneliness is because **Jesus is the only One Who can truly satisfy us.** He gives us peace. In fact, “He Himself is our peace” (Ephesians 2:14). He makes us content. In His presence there is “fullness of joy” (Psalm 16:11). He makes us calm. Friend, let me say it plainly: **Jesus is real. His presence is real. And since He is with us, we have all that we need.**

I can think of times in my life when I have turned to Jesus in my loneliness, and every single time He has given me peace. He has given me a strong awareness of His presence. In fact, there have been times in my life when His presence has been so real that I have felt I could almost reach out and touch Him. At these times, I didn't need a television show, an activity, or another person. I didn't need a substitute. I had Jesus...and He is the Ultimate Reality.

A third reason Jesus is the cure for loneliness is because **Jesus is the only Person Who can always be with you.** You may have the greatest family and friends in the world, but they cannot always be with you. You may have the greatest spouse on the planet, but Romeo or Juliet cannot always be with you. That's what I love about Jesus. I never have to tell Him goodbye!! Not when I go to work. Not when I travel. And not even when I die. **Jesus is the "World's Greatest Companion."** He is Proverbs' "friend *who* sticks closer than a brother" (Proverbs 18:24). He has given us this promise: "*I will never leave you nor forsake you*" (Hebrews 13:5). No one else can be with us 24 hours a day, 7 days a week!! Only Jesus can do that.

Several years ago, I had my gallbladder removed. It was my first surgery (and hopefully my last). My family was with me before surgery, and so were a few close friends. But when they rolled me down the hall to go into the operating room, I had to tell them goodbye. They could go with me so far, but no farther. When I went through those double doors and down that long hall, I cannot describe to you the peace that I had. I couldn't see Him, but I knew Jesus was with me. His presence was amazingly real to me. Just before they put me to sleep, I said this little prayer: "Jesus, I'll either wake up with You in the recovery room, or I'll wake up with You in heaven. But either way, when I wake up, I'll be with You." I think if I could have heard Jesus audibly, I would have heard Him say these words to me: "That's true, Jon, and even while you're asleep, I'll be with you. I'll be watching over this surgery...and I'll never take My eyes off of you."

I'm telling you, there's nobody like Jesus!! He is **always** with us. And He alone is the cure for our loneliness.

Not long ago, a friend asked me if I would visit his grandmother in the nursing home. He explained that she didn't have long to live. We

arranged a time for me to meet him and his father at the nursing home so we could visit with his grandmother...his father's mother.

The three of us met. We went into his grandmother's room, and we started talking to her. We were having a great visit when all of a sudden she said, "It sure was nice for the four of you to come see me today." When I heard her refer to the *three of us* as the *four of us*, I thought, "Well, she's old. She miscounted." And then it hit me like a ton of bricks. She may be old, but she didn't miscount. There were four of us there to see her. I was there. Her son was there. Her grandson was there. And then there was Jesus...**the Fourth Man**. He is with us in life, and He will be with us in death. He was **the Fourth Man** in the fiery furnace with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego (see Daniel 3:25). And He is **the Fourth Man** in all of our troubles. He is Jesus. And He is always with us. He is the only One Who is. That's why He alone is the cure for loneliness.

How Jesus Can Become Real to You

Knowing that Jesus is the solution to your loneliness is one thing. Letting Jesus actually

become the solution to your loneliness is quite another thing. In this section, I want to share several things you can do that will make Jesus more real to you. And as He becomes more and more real to you, your loneliness will become less and less real to you. **More of Jesus means less of loneliness!!** And that is what we want.

The first thing you can do to make Jesus more real to you is simply to **spend time in His presence**. How do you get to know someone? By spending time with him or her. We get to know people by talking with them on the phone, by going out to eat with them, and by going places with them. Simply put, we get to know people by spending time in their presence. And that is how we get to know Jesus. By spending time with Him.

It is absolutely imperative that you spend time alone with Jesus every day. If you don't, your spiritual tank will be on empty before long. If you are lonely, you especially need to spend time with Jesus. I recommend that you set aside one month and read through *The Book of Psalms*. If you will read five Psalms a day, you will be able to read through *The Book of Psalms* in a month. As you do, you will discover the full spectrum of human emotions.

You will read about loneliness, fear, depression, anxiety, and uncertainty, and you will discover how the people of God dealt with these issues in their lives long ago. You will see the writers of Scripture pouring out their hearts to the Lord, and you will see God lifting their spirits and intervening in their circumstances. And then something amazing will happen. It will dawn upon you that God hasn't changed. As He helped Moses, David, Solomon, and others, He will help you. Something supernatural happens when we spend time alone with God. Our circumstances may not immediately change, but **we** will begin to change. Those who saw Peter and John marveled at their confidence and boldness in the face of seemingly impossible circumstances. The Bible reveals that as the people saw Peter and John press on in faith that "they realized that they had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13). Could the same be said of you? Is Jesus so real to you that others notice His presence in your life? He will be if you will spend time with Him.

And I don't just mean spend time reading your Bible and saying your prayers. That's part of it, but that's not all of it. I mean spend **all day** with Jesus. Talk to Him in your house, in your car, while you work, while you shop, and

while you run errands. Jesus is real!! And He is always with you. So begin to develop an awareness of His presence at all times.

Another thing you can do to make Jesus more real to you is to **stand firm on His promises**. God's Word is filled with promises. Someone has said that there are more than 7,000 promises from God in the Bible. One of the best things you can do is to claim these promises as your own.

Let me give you an example. Not long ago, I was talking on the phone to a widow. She was sharing with me some of her financial concerns. We prayed about them and claimed God's promise which says that He "shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19). Several days later, she called to tell me how God had supernaturally met her financial needs. And her story was amazing!!

When we claim the promises of God for ourselves, God becomes very real to us. The Bible is no longer just a Sacred Book to us. Instead, it is "**God's Promise Book**" written directly to us. And as we trust Him to meet our needs, fight our battles, and lift our burdens, our faith begins to grow. Faith is to your life

what gasoline is to your car. It is what makes you go. So if you want to go forward with God, trust Him to do what He has promised to do.

Another thing you can do to make God more real to you is to **serve others in His Name**. One of the ways we serve the Lord is by serving others. I have noticed something. The more we serve others, the less we think about ourselves. And the less we serve others, the more we think about ourselves. So if you want to be less lonely, get out there and serve somebody. Visit someone in the hospital. Visit someone in the nursing home. Write a letter to a discouraged friend. Take someone to lunch. Do something for someone else. As you seek to encourage others, you will be encouraged. As you seek to help others, you will be helped. And as you seek to bless others, you will be blessed. The Bible says that “whatever a man sows, that he will also reap” (Galatians 6:7). **So if you want to be blessed, go out and bless someone else.** Your focus will change and so will your attitude.

A Closing Word

Loneliness is something we may all get a taste of from time to time, but loneliness is not something we have to live with. Jesus really is the cure for loneliness, and my prayer is that this booklet will help you to take the steps you need to take to **reduce any loneliness** you may be experiencing and to **increase the quality of your life**.

If you don't know Jesus personally, I encourage you to come to Him today. Let Him be the answer to your loneliness. Pray this prayer right now:

“Dear Jesus,

I am lonely. My heart is empty. And I know only You can fill that emptiness. I invite You to come into my heart, forgive me of my sins, and make me a Christian. I ask You to save me and to save me now. And I trust You to do it. Welcome to my heart.

*In Your Name I pray,
Amen.”*

Friend, if you prayed that prayer, Jesus just came into your heart. You never have to be alone again. Find a good church. Develop

meaningful friendships with others. Read your Bible. Talk to Jesus. Get to know Him. And let His presence be the solution to your loneliness.

¹ Billy Graham, "The Answer to Loneliness," *Decision*, February 2006, p. 2-5.

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