

LONELINESS

How to Overcome the Problem of Loneliness

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The problem of loneliness has reached epidemic proportions in our day. Psychiatrist Paul Tournier said that loneliness is "...the most devastating malady of this age." On the Personal Data Inventory sheets that are filled out by our counselees, the problem of loneliness is mentioned as being one of the most serious problems they face. Loneliness affects people of every age, sex, social standing, etc. Loneliness is a universal problem.

God has created us as social creatures (Gen. 2:18). As social creatures, we naturally have the desire and capacity for fellowship, and we cannot be happy unless this basic need is met. The problem of loneliness often has two aspects and will not be solved unless both of these aspects are considered. The problem of loneliness often has a human and a divine dimension. The feeling of loneliness, then, is a symptom of a deeper problem. It often arises because a person does not have or maintain a proper relationship with God and with other people.

Loneliness is often associated with a deficient relationship to God.

A. Study the following verses and note how sin severs our relationship with God.

Deuteronomy 32:19-20: _____

Psalms 66:18: _____

Proverbs 15:29: _____

Isaiah 59:2: _____

Ephesians 2:12: _____

Ephesians 4: 17-19: _____

Titus 3:3: _____

B. Study the following verses and note the way that God restores sinful, alienated man to Himself.

Colossians 1:20,22: _____

I Peter 3:18: _____

Romans 3:24: _____

Ephesians 1:7: _____

Ephesians 2: 13-16: _____

Hebrews 9:26-28: _____

Romans 5:1: _____

John 1:12: _____

Are you a Christian? Have you trusted in Jesus Christ as the only Savior for your sins,
And do you desire to follow Him as Lord? _____

If you are not a Christian, then you need to realize that your loneliness is the result of
your alienation from God. There is a God-shaped vacuum within that can be fulfilled
only by God, your Creator and Sustainer. That vacuum will never really be filled until
you come in repentance and faith to receive forgiveness of sins through Him.

C. What special promises does God give to and fulfill in the lives of Christians who
faithfully trust Him in every circumstance?

Joshua 1:9: _____

Psalms 23:4: _____

Psalms 27:10: _____

Isaiah 49:15: _____

Psalms 90:1: _____

Psalms 71:9, 18: _____

Psalms 139:6-12: _____

Isaiah 43:2: _____

Philippians 4:19: _____

Matthew 28:20: _____

Romans 8:38, 39: _____

Describe the specific way in which Paul experienced these truths (II Tim. 4:9,10,16,17):

What tremendous resources has God given to Christians so that they may be sufficient in
any and every circumstance? (II Pet. 1:2, 3): _____

Augustine, the great theologian and church father, said, “God has made us for Himself and our hearts are restless until they rest in Him.”

Suggested Assignment: Answer the following questions as specifically as possible.

When are you most prone to feel lonely? _____

How should you react when you begin to feel this way? _____

- D. Having come to Jesus Christ and having been forgiven of his sins, how may a person develop and maintain a deep sense of the presence of God? Study the following verses and note how the Bible instructs us in developing a closer walk with God.

Exodus 33:12-16: _____

Psalm 116:3,4: _____

Psalm 119:9,11: _____

Psalm 119:104: _____

Psalm 66:18: _____

Psalm 34:18: _____

Psalm 46:10: _____

John 14:21,23: _____

Hebrews 4:14-16: _____

Hebrews 10:20-25: _____

Jude 20,21: _____

John 7:37-39: _____

Psalm 119:2,3: _____

Colossians 3:16: _____

Psalm 4:4: _____

Ephesians 3:16-19: _____

Philippians 3:8-11: _____

Philippians 4:6,7: _____

I John 3:22: _____

Isaiah 41:10: _____

Isaiah 57: 15: _____

Isaiah 66:2: _____

Ephesians 2:18: _____

II Corinthians 6:14-18: _____

James 4:8: _____

John 15:1-7: _____

Hebrews 13:5,6: _____

Are there some specific areas where you are knowingly rebelling against God?

If so, what are they? _____

According to Ephesians 4:22-24, you must forsake and repudiate those sinful practices in which you are engaging and replace them with Biblical habits and practices. As long as there is an unwillingness to submit to the clear teaching of the Word of God, the Holy Spirit will be grieved and fellowship with God will be hindered. (Ps. 66:18).

Loneliness is often associated with a deficient relationship to other people.

A. Here is a catalog of some qualities and behaviors that hinder good relationships with other people. Put a circle around the qualities or behaviors listed below which are present in your life and may be contributing to your feeling of loneliness.

1. Pride
2. Hostility
3. Fear of not being adequate
4. Fear of being rejected
5. Impatience and irritability
6. Prejudice
7. Fear of being taken advantage of
8. Suspiciousness

9. Educational and social barriers
10. Excessive dependence on other people
11. Smothering—being too demanding
12. Selfishness—self-centeredness
13. Being critical and complaining
14. Perfectionism
15. Bossiness, pushiness, officiousness
16. Moroseness, gloominess, heaviness
17. Excessive shyness or bashfulness
18. Unwillingness to compromise, change, yield, or sacrifice
19. Critical and complaining attitude
20. Having the spirit of Diotrephes. Always “wanting to have the preeminence and the first and last say among other people” (III John 9, 10).
21. Stinginess
22. Blameshifting, inconsiderateness, cruelty
23. Sloppiness
24. Gossiping
25. Deceitfulness

B. Qualities and Behaviors That Foster Good Relations and Help to Alleviate Loneliness.

1. Love others unconditionally.
 - a. What standard does Jesus establish that should be a Christian’s guideline for loving others? (John 13:34; Rom. 5:8): _____

 - b. How would you describe the “just as” kind of love? _____

 - c. How will the world recognize that you are a true disciple of Christ? (John 13:35): _____
 - d. Read John 13:34; 15:12,17. Is loving others an optional matter?

How should a true disciple treat his enemies? (Matt. 5:44): _____

According to Matthew 5:48, is there ever a time when you may be exempted from loving someone else? _____

2. Be helpful to other people.

Read the following verses and note the specific ways in which you can serve other people.

Proverbs 3:27, 28: _____

Proverbs 18:24: _____

Proverbs 25:21, 22: _____

Acts 20:35; _____

Luke 2:36-38; _____

Matthew 5:41, 42; _____

Matthew 5:40: _____

Philippians 2:3, 4: _____

II Corinthians 1:3-5: _____

I Peter 4:9 _____

Study Philippians 2:25-30. In what specific way did Epaphroditus minister to Paul and extend himself for other Christians?

What was Paul's opinion of Epaphroditus? _____

What did Paul want other Christians to think about him? _____

_____ (cf. vs. 29).

Plan specifically how you will begin to help other people. Consider your time, home, money, job, recreation, etc. How can you best serve Christ with all your abilities and resources by serving other people? Make a list of 10 practical ways you may serve other people.

1. _____ 6. _____

2. _____ 7. _____

3. _____ 8. _____

4. _____
5. _____

9. _____
10. _____

3. Developing the Fruit of the Spirit

If you are a Christian, the Holy Spirit dwells in you (I Cor. 6:19). By the power of the indwelling Spirit you now have the desire and ability to become more and more like Jesus Christ. Study the following verses and note specifically the character qualities that are deficient in your life. Ask God for the strength to change where you need to change and look for opportunities and situations to “put on the new man”. (Eph. 4:22).

Galatians 5:22: _____

Ephesians 4:2: _____

Colossians 3:12, 13: _____

Study I Corinthians 13: 4-8. List the eight negative characteristics of love and the positive characteristics of love.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____

9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____
13. _____
14. _____
15. _____
16. _____

James 3:17: _____

Study II Peter 1:2-10. List the eight character qualities that are listed in verses 4-7

1. _____
2. _____

5. _____
6. _____

3. _____ 7. _____
 4. _____ 8. _____

How is it possible for a Christian to develop these qualities? (cf. vss. 2,3):

How should the Christian respond to the fact that he has been made a partaker of the divine nature? (cf. vss. 5, 6): _____

What will be the result of diligently applying ourselves to growing in Christian character? (vs. 8): _____

How does Peter describe the person who remains dormant and unwilling to make changes in his life? (vss. 8. 9): _____

If you are a lonely person, you must ponder whether or not it may be because you are not developing the fruit of the Spirit, and as a result people do not want to be around you. List the qualities that are most lacking in your life.

1. _____ 2. _____
 3. _____ 4. _____

4. Focus on becoming the right kind of friend.

Note: Some verses listed below describe the ways in which you should act.

Others describe things you should refrain from doing if you are going to be a good friend.

Exodus 33:11: _____

Psalm 31:11: _____

Psalm 38:11: _____

Proverbs 17:17: _____

Genesis 18:17: _____

Proverbs 25:19: _____

Proverbs 26:18,19: _____

Proverbs 16:28, 29: _____

Proverbs 27:17: _____

Proverbs 29:5: _____

Proverbs 28:23: _____

Proverbs 27:14: _____
Ecclesiastes 4:9-12: _____
I Samuel 20:17: _____
John 13:15: _____
Proverbs 27:5, 6: _____
Proverbs 27:9, 10: _____
John 15: 13-15: _____
Romans 5:1, 2: _____
I Thessalonians 2:8: _____
Hebrews 10:24: _____
James 2:23: _____

Assess your relationship with others. Have you been an example or a stumblingblock? Have you been faithful or unfaithful to your commitments? Have you communicated that you are sincerely interested in other people? Give specific examples confirming your answers. If others were describing you, would they describe you as one who is considerate, truthful, loving, loyal, etc., or would they see you as one who is aloof, suspicious, unconcerned, all talk and no action?

5. Encourage and appreciate other people.
Study the following verses and consider how they illustrate the need to become a more appreciative and concerned friend.

II Timothy 4:11: _____
Philemon 4, 5: _____
I Thessalonians 4:9: _____
Proverbs 25:20: _____
Proverbs 27:14: _____
Proverbs 16:24: _____

Proverbs 15:4: _____

I Corinthians 16:16, 17: _____

II Timothy 1:16: _____

Proverbs 17:9: _____

Proverbs 15:22, 23: _____

I Corinthians 1:4-6: _____

Philippians 2:19-22: _____

Revelation 2:1-3: _____

Revelation 2:18, 19: _____

Revelation 2: 12, 13: _____

Revelation 3:9: _____

Notice how our Lord Jesus Christ in Revelation 2 and 3 did not notice only the peculiar problems of each church. He also commended each church for ministries and qualities which were the strong points of the particular church. Begin to emphasize the strong points of others and to lovingly commend them for their abilities and qualities that have been a blessing to you.

Make a list of ways you can encourage someone else. Make it a practice to express appreciation to someone else. Keep in mind that the difference between expressing appreciation and flattery is that expressing appreciation demonstrates a real concern for the welfare of the other person and an unselfish desire to see the other person grow and develop. Flattery, on the other hand, is a selfish manipulative device of insincerely complimenting someone else in order to win a favorable response from him.

6. Become vitally involved in a local church which believes and *preaches the Bible*. God has ordained that the local church is to be one of the channels of Christian service and spiritual growth for every Christian. While it is Biblical that the church exists for the purpose of worshiping God (I Pet. 2:9) and for the purpose of evangelism (Matt. 28:19), it is equally true that the local church exists for the mutual edification of each believer. Look up the following verses and describe the kind of relationship that the early Christians had with each other. Notice the

deep involvement and concern they had for one another. Note what these early believers did to and for each other.

Acts 2:44-47: _____

Acts 4:23: _____

Acts 9:36-41: _____

Acts 12:1-5: _____

Acts 14:19-28: _____

Acts 16:40: _____

Acts 20:17-38: _____

Acts 20:7-14: _____

Acts 28:11-15: _____

Romans 16:1, 2: _____

Romans 16:3-4: _____

Romans 16:8, 9: _____

Romans 16:13: _____

I Corinthians 16:15-18: _____

Philippians 1:3-8: _____

Philippians 2:25-30: _____

Philippians 4:10: _____

I Thessalonians 2:7-11: _____

I Thessalonians 3:5-10: _____

I Thessalonians 4:9, 10: _____

II Timothy 1:16-18: _____

Philemon 1, 2: _____

It is evident from these verses that the relationship of these early believers was extremely close and satisfying. In spite of their differences, the spiritual and social needs of these Christians were satisfied through their deep involvement with each other in the church. Are you deeply involved in and associated with other Christians in a church, or is your relationship to the church superficial and casual? What efforts have you made and what other efforts could you make to

develop deep relations with other Christians? Don't wait for others to solicit your friendship. Don't demand perfection in the church or other Christians, and don't demand absolute agreement on all issues. Find a church where the Bible is preached, Christ is honored, and people are honestly seeking to live the Christian life and really become involved. Seek to be the kind of Christian brother/sister and church member described in the verses you studied earlier. As you do, you will find your spiritual and social needs being satisfied and your problem of loneliness diminishing.

Summary: If a person is to overcome the problem of loneliness, he must first of all establish and maintain a proper relationship to God through His Son Jesus Christ. One's relationship to God is maintained by studying and meditating on the Word of God, through prayer, by obedience to the Scriptures, and through Christian fellowship. But also, if one is to overcome the problem of loneliness, he must seek to establish good relationships with other people. These two dimensions of the problem can be summarized and solved by obedience to the words of Jesus when He said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself". (Matt. 22:37-39).