

Isolation Will Cost You Spiritually

“If the foot should say, ‘Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,’ it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body” (1 Cor. 12:15, NIV).

God made you for community. You need others.

I have a friend who is the perfect example. When she is connected with others, her life goes well. She can see beyond her struggles and maintain a healthy perspective. When she is disconnected from others, her life begins to stall. She gets absorbed by her struggles and loses her perspective.

Sounds like an obvious problem with an easy fix, right? Wrong.

Interestingly, Thomas Jefferson had a period of social isolation. And as he explained in a letter to his daughter Polly, the ill effects were significant:

“I am convinced our own happiness requires that we should continue to mix with the world, and to keep pace with it. ... I can speak from experience on the subject. From 1793 to 1797, I remained closely at home, saw none but those who came there, and at length became very sensible of the ill effect it had upon my own mind, and of its direct and irresistible tendency to render me unfit for society, and uneasy when necessarily engaged in it. I felt enough of the effect of withdrawing from the world then to see that it lead to an anti-social and misanthropic state of mind, which severely punishes him who gives in to it; and it will be a lesson I never shall forget as to myself.”

Without others, we begin to collapse upon ourselves. As our world becomes smaller, our issues grow bigger.

Amidst the pressures of life, our default is to take the easy road. When we finally get a few moments to relax, staying at home, vegetating in front of the TV or mindlessly roaming the Internet all seem like better choices than making the effort to engage others.

Ironically, our social media culture has us in touch with more people than ever, but it also has us less connected than ever. We email, tweet and Facebook, but we spend less and less time face to face with others. (Maybe the reason we email, tweet and Facebook is because we can stay connected without the real effort of staying connected.)

Take an honest inventory. Are you living your life in authentic community, or are you living your life on the edge of isolation? When is the last time you went out on a weeknight? When is the last time you sat and talked with a friend over coffee?

It might seem easier to stay home, but not in the long run. Every choice has a cost. Community takes more up front, but the effort pays for itself. Isolation takes less up front, but you wind up paying a steep price.

Get off the couch. Shut off the computer. Go to that activity at church. Take a class. Join a small group. Call a friend. God knows you need it.

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