

Overcoming Loneliness

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, more people than ever are dealing with a sense of loneliness. For many, the forced time spent in isolation brought to the surface the need to be around others!

But overcoming loneliness is more than filling up the space around ourselves with other people. You can be lonely even in the middle of a crowd of friends and admirers. Activities and conversations sometimes just mask the fact that deep in our hearts we feel lonely.

Most of us can't even bring ourselves to admit that we are lonely. Somehow that sounds pitiful and weak. We resist seeking answers or looking too closely at the painful places in our hearts. Instead, we fill up every idle minute with other things.

Believe me, I get it. I have been a single mom for 23 years, raising a daughter completely on my own with no one to share the decisions or even to share the joys and triumphs. And I can tell you that the only thing more lonely than that is feeling completely alone inside a bad marriage.

But what is it that makes us feel so alone, even when we are surrounded by people? I think that we all need a connection with someone who really understands us, accepts us and cares deeply for us. But even in a healthy, loving relationship, that is putting a lot of pressure and expectation on another person.

The answer we are looking for can only be found in the one person who knows us even better than we know ourselves, who accepts us with all our failings and who loves us with an everlasting love. And that is God Himself.

From the moment we turn our hearts toward God and accept His forgiveness through Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit comes into

our lives with a promise that He will never leave us or forsake us (Heb. 13:5). We are literally never alone. Everywhere we go, whatever we do, God's presence is always with us (Josh. 1:9).

But the fact that the omnipresent God is unquestionably with us at all times does not mean that we won't feel lonely. But He has given us some keys in His Word to help us develop the kind of relationship with Him that truly satisfies our lonely hearts.

God is not a far-away Creator who expects you to figure out life on your own. He can be your best friend, a friend that sticks closer than a brother (Prov. 18:20). He can be your counselor and advisor in your everyday, practical decisions (Jer. 33:3). He can encourage you in life's challenges (Ps. 42:5). He can give you extra strength when you need it (Neh. 8:10). He can help you carry your heavy load (Matt. 11:29).

Like a true friend, He will tell you the hard truth when you are in the wrong (Ps. 129:23). And like a sensitive lover, He will surprise and delight you with gifts (Ps. 81:16). He will defend you and shield you and hide you in times of trouble (Ps. 61:3).

So how do you develop the intimacy with God that we all crave? By consciously turning to Him and having conversations with Him all through your day. Do you have a decision to make? Ask Him first what He thinks about it. Do you have a financial need you don't know how to meet? Tell Him, "God, You've got mail." Has something wonderful happened? Share the joy with Him first and give thanks.

Make it a practice to set aside special time just to be with Him, just to read His love letters to you and to listen to His heart as you lean on His shoulder. He knows you like no other and He will fill the aching need of your heart to be loved unconditionally. Absolutely nothing can separate us from the

love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:38-39).

For more encouragement about how you can overcome loneliness, listen to my recent podcast with friend Kellie Copeland, on the link here. {eoa}

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