

Rick Warren: Don't Waste Your Season of Loneliness

What should you do when you go through a season of loneliness? The answer is illustrated in the life of Paul in 2 Timothy 4, when he was in prison and awaiting his execution.

When you go through a season of loneliness, you need to make the most of your time.

That means make the best of a bad situation. Resist the temptation to do nothing. Take some action—any kind of action. Try to think of creative ways to take advantage of the seasons in which you are alone.

Paul wrote to Timothy from prison and told him, “When you come, be sure to bring the coat I left with Carpus at Troas. Also bring my books, and especially my papers” (2 Tim. 4:13, NLT).

In a season of loneliness, you need to be comfortable and productive. Even though he was lonely, Paul didn't throw a pity party. He didn't complain or give up. This is Paul, one of the greatest Christians who ever lived, after Jesus Himself, who won countless people to Christ and who was completely alone in his final days. What does he do? He makes the best of the situation. He utilizes his time. He says two things:

1. **“Bring my coat.”** Those Roman prisons were damp, dark and cold. He did the best he could to take care of himself. It is true of human nature that when we are lonely and depressed, we don't take very good care of ourselves—physically or any other way. We don't exercise. We don't rest well. We don't eat right. Paul did the best he could to take care of himself. Some of you need to hear this today, because you're not taking

very good care of yourself because you're lonely.

2. **"Bring my books."** Paul was a people person. He didn't like to be alone; it wasn't the way God wired him. Being in solitary confinement in a Roman prison was the opposite of where he wanted to be. Yet he did the best he could. He wrote letters that today are compiled in the New Testament. Maybe the only way God could slow him down was to put him in solitary confinement. Two thousand years later, we are still benefiting from Paul's loneliness.

Talk It Over

1. What can you do now, when you're lonely, that would be difficult to do with others around?
2. What practical steps do you need to take today to take better care of yourself?
3. Who would benefit the most from what you have learned in a season of loneliness? {eoa}

Rick Warren is the founding pastor of Saddleback Church. His book, *The Purpose Driven Church*, was named one of the 100 Christian books that changed the 20th century. He is also founder of , a global internet community for pastors.

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