

The Friend Who Can Help You Say No to Loneliness

Standing in the middle school lunch line, my eyes were lingering on the pretty girl ahead of me. In addition to the long lashes framing her clear green eyes, and the blonde hair perfectly framing her smooth skin, I noticed how at ease she was with herself—a quality unfamiliar to me, and I envied her.

I envied her looks, her friendships and her freedom.

I was ultra-aware of the large pimple protruding from my cheek and certain it contributed to the rejection I felt that day. Every day.

Reminders came again after school as I boarded the bus for the long ride home. Girls my age sat together, but I had no one.

Living farthest away, I was one of the last ones to get home. I looked forward to the hour I'd get to spend getting lost in the lives of Marcia, Jan and Cindy Brady in their 1970s home in their blended family. I looked forward to entering into adventures with Gilligan, Skipper and Mary Ann until the inevitable sound of Mom's voice came calling from the kitchen, "Time to change and do chores!"

I'd learned by seventh grade that it was more miserable to linger in front of the TV and feel her frustration than to just get up and go out to the barn. Whether we procrastinated or not, there was no getting out of feeding the calves, scraping the manure into the gutter, adding bedding to the stalls and getting ready for the next round of "going out to the barn" to milk the cows after dinner.

Evening milking was an even more painful task to embrace, especially during our Minnesota winters when we'd lie on the floor after supper in front of the cozy wood-burning stove

until we heard Dad, "Okay, let's get out to the barn."

Milking chores were usually done by 9:30, then I'd walk the quarter-mile back home with my siblings, shower and fall into bed before waking to another day reflecting the one before.

I tried hard not to allow my loneliness to be an issue after having complained to Dad a couple of years earlier. His reply had been, "That is not what you go to school for."

But try as I did, the reality of it suffocated me daily and led to a constant striving to be liked and included. It was a difficult task coming from a family with little money to purchase trendy clothes, not to mention my necessity to go home after school instead of playing sports.

I'd honestly never even dreamed of asking anyway. I was the firstborn, and my dad depended on me.

Years later, at the age of 24, after our first baby was born, my husband and I moved across the state line. I had recently dedicated my life to the Lord and found myself in the familiar place again, painfully isolated and lonely.

We'd joined a little church, and I was part of a Bible study, but again found myself limited by circumstances and finances. Unable to gather with friends due to a lack of funds, I found myself feeling left out of their stories.

But this time, I had a new forever Friend named Jesus; I found consolation through His Word. He filled the gaping wound of loneliness and inferiority I'd experienced most of my life.

"I no longer call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master does. But I have called you friends, for everything that I have heard from My Father have I made known to you" (John 15:15).

"He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from

him; he was despised, and we did not esteem him" (Isa. 53:3).

I walked with Him through the gospels and the prophet Isaiah as He felt rejection and embraced those "outside" the popular crowd of His day. I watched how He revealed the duplicity of the superior, remaining unruffled by their attempts to squash Him. He had no need to prove Himself to anyone.

And He walked with me in all my feelings of rejection, reminding me of His passion to rescue me and that He'd poured into my own heart His capacity to offer love to others.

"But now, thus says the Lord, who created you, O Jacob, and He who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are Mine" (Isa. 43:1).

"Let nothing be done out of strife or conceit, but in humility let each esteem the other better than himself. Let each of you look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Let this mind be in you all, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:3-5).

Additionally, through His light, reality became obvious. I saw that feeling inferior due to being "on the outside" was not because I was unlovable, overweight and ugly, as I'd believed, but more due to my limiting circumstances and the chokehold my feelings of inferiority had on me.

Immature reasoning and inferior feelings had stripped me of any confidence I might have had that would have enabled me to look for another lonely girl to befriend rather than hoping the popular girls or the girls on the bus would notice and validate me.

Now when I feel lonely, I listen for His voice to hear Him say, "I love you Kathy." {eoa}

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passionate about the freedom and power we have access to in the Word of God. She lives to encourage women to walk in the freedom, wisdom and authority that Jesus has purchased for us. She has served the local church through prayer, teaching, leading women's ministry, and mentoring women and youth. Besides being a wife for 34 years, a mom of two, grandma of six, she also loves decorating, gardening, biking and enjoys dining and outdoor adventuring with family.

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