

The Surest Way to Relieve Your Loneliness

The COVID-19 pandemic hit the world hard and unexpectedly in 2020. It became a public health crisis that sent humanity into a panic and consumed people's lives for the better part of three years.

But there is another public health crisis that many don't talk about—one that is just as devastating, if not more so, as COVID.

It's called loneliness.

In 2021, the United States surgeon general issued this warning: "Our epidemic of loneliness and isolation has been an underappreciated public health crisis that has harmed individual and societal health."

Those are some strong words. Loneliness—an epidemic? A public health crisis?

Perhaps the surgeon general had insight into some recent research. A study toward the end of 2023 sadly revealed 30% of US adults admit they are lonely. Those who track Google trends notice that "loneliness" is a top searched keyword.

While loneliness may be more prevalent these days, like fear, guilt or depression, it is not a new emotion. It plagued some of our favorite Bible heroes. King David complained of being lonely. So did the prophet Jeremiah. Even Jesus experienced loneliness.

The Truth About Loneliness

It might be easy to understand loneliness among people who lived centuries ago. They didn't have all our modern methods

of communication and travel.

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But what's *our* excuse?

The average person today has 338 "friends" on Facebook. Most people have a phone they can use to contact someone at any time. Churches, shopping centers and restaurants abound. It's not hard to be among people.

When it comes to loneliness, an absence of people is not the whole issue. Loneliness is ultimately rooted in an absence of understanding. You feel lonely and disconnected when you feel misunderstood. That's why you can feel alone in a crowd of people.

Story of my life.

In my 20s and early 30s—though I was in leadership in ministry and took part in various groups—I still felt lonely.

Why? Because I was trying to connect with people from behind a mask. I was afraid to let people know my true self and my true interests, even the most trivial things, such as music, food and hobbies.

I'd feel lonely at a party or a small group because I didn't feel understood or connected.

The Loneliness Solution

Thankfully, I feel less lonely than ever these days. That's not because I grew my circle of friends. It's because I grew in my understanding of the gospel.

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First and foremost, the gospel assures that I am fully known and fully loved. From my strangest interests to my most secret

weaknesses, God knows everything about me. He knew it all before I was born, in fact. He loved me then, He loves me now, He promises to love me forever, without exception.

The most healing truth I accepted, though, is that I don't need to be ashamed of anything about me. The gospel assures me that Jesus made me right.

"We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are" (Rom. 3:22, NLT).

These truths apply to you, too. You too are fully known and fully loved. Because of Jesus, you too are right.

I can't overstate how much relief I have found from loneliness since understanding the gospel more fully. Because I know there is nothing wrong with me, I am comfortable to let others see the real me. Or more of it, at least.

Some people like what they see. Others don't.

That's OK. The understanding and connection I get from one or two people who really know me is sufficient to quench my loneliness.

I believe it will be the same for you.{eoa}

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