

# Loneliness: Friend or Foe?

God made man a social creature, stating from the beginning: “It is not good that the man should be alone” (Genesis 2:18). The Bible also says that “two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour” (Ecclesiastes 4:9). However, few people can say they have never experienced the pain of loneliness. Loneliness is the feeling of abandonment, rejection, or isolation, brought on by a sensed lack of adequate companionship. Though these feelings are quite common, they can get the better of us and even lead us onto the road of despair and defeat. One who has experienced loneliness or been a bystander of another’s loneliness, can draw encouragement and wisdom from examples in the Bible to help them through this wilderness.

**1** • The great temptation, when caught in depths of loneliness, is to question God and to retreat to the “cave of Mount Horeb” with the feeling that nobody cares or understands. Such was the case when Elijah was running from the threats of Queen Jezebel. What lesson can be learned from the plight and eventual recovery of Elijah? See 1 Kings 19:1-18.

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**2.** Some people equate singleness with loneliness and thus view it as a liability or even a curse. The Apostle Paul provides an alternative outlook and even capitalizes on being unmarried (1 Corinthians 7:32-34). What was Paul trying to accomplish when he addressed these words to singles? Read also Philippians 4:11.

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**3.** When two pieces of wood which were once glued together are pulled apart, splinters often result. Many have experienced the abrupt ending of a relationship which was dear to them. Whether the relationship was that of a parent and child, husband and wife, or boyfriend and girlfriend, those “splinters” of loneliness and of hurt are often difficult to overcome. However, the Bible shows God’s marvelous compassion and plan of restoration to those who have experienced such loss. In what ways does God heal the hurt and loneliness that comes with a loss? Read Psalms 27:10; 146:9; and Jeremiah 49:11.

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**4.** Have you ever had a particle of dust enter your eye? It causes an immediate physical reaction. Your eyelid closes; perhaps your hand goes up to rub the eye. When you step on a pin, the reflexes of your leg instantly pull away from the obtrusive object. Whenever any part of the body is in-

jured, the automatic reaction by the rest of the body is very natural. So it is in the body of believers: “For the body is not one member, but many . . . and whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it” (1 Corinthians 12:14,26). The Lord has charged us with the responsibility to “Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body” (Hebrews 13:3). Name some ways we can help others in His Church combat the pitfalls of loneliness. Read Isaiah 1:17, Matthew 25:33-40, and James 1:27. Explain the benefits of administering the same kind of help to those outside the Body of Christ.

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**5.** There is truth in the cliché, “Misery loves company.” Knowing that someone else cares and knows how we feel can help to alleviate loneliness. God’s Word lets us know that no matter what our circumstance, Jesus is, always has been, and forever will be, the perfect sympathizer: “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). When Jesus walked on earth as a man, when might He have endured some times of loneliness? What can we learn from the way He handled loneliness in His life?

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**6.** Active fellowship with others in the Body of Christ satisfies the Christian's basic human need for comradeship. It is both a natural result of the new birth and a key ingredient to spiritual success. Yet, meaningful fellowship for some people can be impaired because of shyness, insecurity, or a naturally reserved personality. This gives rise to times of unnecessary loneliness. Which Scriptures can you provide that help us to know how to establish and maintain profitable friendships?

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**7.** When faced with loneliness, there may be a tendency to wrap oneself in a blanket of self-pity and to ask, "Why me?" The Bible states, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you" (1 Peter 4:12). List and discuss examples of Biblical characters who experienced and overcame loneliness.

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**8.** In times of loneliness, one must search for and actively rely on the many promises the Scriptures afford. Two of those are, "My grace is sufficient for thee" (2 Corinthians 12:9), and "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20). One of the most precious promises is, "All things work together for good to them that love

God” (Romans 8:28). Though it is hard to see the end, God does work all things together for good. What are some of the ways God has used difficult and lonely times in your life?

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### **Key Texts**

Genesis 2:18; 1 Kings 19:1-18; Psalms 27:10; 146:9; Ecclesiastes 4:9; Isaiah 1:17; Jeremiah 49:11; Matthew 25:33-40; 28:20; Romans 8:28; 1 Corinthians 7:32-34; 12:14,26; 2 Corinthians 12:9; Philippians 4:11; Hebrews 4:15; 13:3; 1 Peter 4:12; James 1:27

### **Other Scriptures Used in This Study**

Genesis 28:10-19; 1 Samuel 22:1,2; 1 Kings 17:8-23; Job 23:1-9; Psalms 23:4; 121:4; Proverbs 16:28; 17:17; 18:24; Malachi 3:16; Matthew 4:1-11; 10:42; 11:1-6; 26:36-46, 56; 27:46; Luke 7:12-15; 2 Timothy 4:9-12; Hebrews 13:5; 1 John 1:7

### **Suggested Verse for Memorization**

And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. — 2 Corinthians 12:9