

# Loneliness: Friend or Foe?

*As you consider the topic of loneliness, it might be good to establish at the outset of this session that loneliness is different from aloneness. Loneliness is a state of emotional isolation not necessarily accompanied by physical separation. Aloneness, on the other hand, is brought about by physical separation. While we may not be able to change circumstances which cause aloneness, we can look to God to find positives in the circumstances of loneliness.*

*As your group discusses loneliness and delves into how they can help one who is dealing with this, you could bring out that loneliness is not always reasonable. The person suffering from loneliness feels equally isolated whether the separation is real or imagined.*

*Coming to terms with loneliness can bring some surprising discoveries. Some, when looking to the root of their loneliness, have found self-pity or even resentment against God and have been able to lay those feelings down. Others have found that the Lord can use loneliness as a tool to draw them into a closer relationship with Him.*

*Few people get through life without feeling lonely at times. The purpose of this study is to help your group focus on how to respond to this feeling in a positive manner.*

**Response 1** — Help your students recognize that God spoke in a still, small voice and secured the attention of His servant. Though His voice may seem distant and faint at times, it is still there. This is often our only comfort and guide through the darkest valleys. The Psalmist wrote, “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me” (Psalm 23:4), and Paul reminds us that God said, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Hebrews 13:5). Even in the valley of the shadow of death, the presence of God is there. God gave Elijah the assurance that he was not alone. There were still “seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which

## Objective

The students will be able to identify the symptoms of loneliness and recognize how to combat this feeling personally. They will also be able to define their role in giving spiritual support to those who are suffering from loneliness.

## 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

have not bowed unto Baal” (1 Kings 19:18). At times when we feel alone, there are, in actuality, those around us who are willing to stand with us to help us bear our burdens.

**Response 2** — Paul was attempting to encourage singles by pointing out some advantages to being unmarried. He wrote, “For I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.” That includes the state of singleness. Though the gift of close companionship with a spouse is not the lot of a person who is single, God offers compensations. God can use singles as tools in His service. Ask your class to expand on this thought. You will be able to conclude that

God has an individual plan for every life, and as we yield to Him, He will offer a fulfilling and rich life for each of us, no matter what our marital status.

**Response 3** — Our Heavenly Father's offering of Himself as the Father to the fatherless, shows His desire to fill the void of loneliness that comes with the loss of or separation from a loved one. If one loses a spouse, God desires to be his or her spouse. If one loses a parent, God desires to be his or her father or mother. Examples of God's compassion for widows can be found in 1 Kings 17:8-23 and Luke 7:12-15.

**Response 4** — As your students discuss various ways they can come to the aid of a lonely brother or sister, bring out that doing so is an honor and a privilege. Christ said that when we help even "the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Remind your students of what Christ said in Matthew 10:42: "And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward." Many of the same methods can be used in reaching to those outside of the Church family. Offering comfort and encouragement can be a tool for reaching and bringing them to God.

**Response 5** — Your discussion should include Jesus' being led up into the wilderness to be tempted (Matthew 4:1-11). Another example was when He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36-46). When the disciples deserted Him (Matthew 26:56), and when He hung on the cross and cried out "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46), He en-

dured loneliness too. As your class comments on ways Jesus combated loneliness, they should see that Jesus did not succumb to self-pity, but spent His time reaching out to others. He maintained a close prayer relationship with His Father in Heaven. He drew His helpers around Himself, and spent His time and effort in nurturing them. All of these are methods that we can and should use to combat loneliness when it comes into our lives.

**Response 6** — The first prerequisite for genuine fellowship with believers is conformity to God's laws (1 John 1:7). Other ingredients are reciprocation (Proverbs 18:24); faithfulness (Proverbs 17:17); and confidentiality (Proverbs 16:28). Malachi 3:16 brings out the blessing in edifying and encouraging each other. Obviously, close friendships are also likely built upon the basis of time spent together, common interests, shared experiences, etc.

**Response 7** — Examples offered may include: Jacob who fled from Esau (Genesis 28:10-19); David who ran from King Saul (1 Samuel 22:1,2); Job as he suffered through his trials (Job 23:1-9); John the Baptist in prison (Matthew 11:1-6); or Paul in the prison at Rome, as he wrote his letter to Timothy (2 Timothy 4:9-12). Discuss with your class how each of the characters mentioned overcame. Develop with your students some principles for overcoming loneliness.

**Response 8** — Lead your students to share any personal experiences where difficult and lonely situations have benefited them, even though it may have been difficult to see the potential gain while they were enduring the trial.