

## “Lonely”

By: Doug Warren

### Why am I so lonely?

One of the issues that I am often asked about is the difficulty of loneliness. Contrary to popular opinion this is not something faced only or even predominantly by singles. Some of the loneliest people I have ministered to have been surrounded by people—whether friends, spouse, children, or others. Loneliness is particularly isolating during the long stretch of winter. While you might not wrestle with it severely, odds are that someone around you does.

The first thing for us to understand about loneliness is its source. The reason that we feel lonely at times is because we are ‘hard-wired’ for intimacy. This is true regardless of where we fall on the extrovert/introvert scale. Those differences are not about the degree of our need for others, but rather how we process the balance between our time with others and ourselves. The issue is connectedness. When we don’t have or feel a connectedness to others our internal barometer starts sending alert signals—what we recognize as loneliness.

As I have mentioned before in this column, I am approaching these questions from the perspective that God is real and that he has revealed himself to us in the Bible. Even if you do not share this premise, consider what Scripture says for a moment. If it is what it claims, then it could explain how we work since God made us. The Bible shows that we were created to be in relationship with both God and other humans. God made us first and foremost to delight in him, but even that was not enough. He also made us to be intimate with our fellow creatures. From the beginning of creation until the eternity of heaven, we see the prominence of community in God’s plan for humanity. We are not meant to be alone.

But the problem is that we face all kinds of barriers to the kind of intimacy for which we were created. While we all desire closeness, it doesn’t take us long to figure out the hurt that comes from someone betraying our confidence. Intimacy is a very difficult thing in a world filled with people who will intentionally and unintentionally hurt us. The reality is that loneliness in this world makes sense because of the brokenness all around us.

The great news of the Bible is that Jesus did not leave us to our own isolation. He came to bring healing in the very relationships that we ourselves cannot fix. This is not a magic wand that will make you feel all better. It is the answer for your greatest longings to not be alone, but it will take time to work through.

Having a real relationship with Christ will satisfy your deepest need for intimacy. Because he already knows everything about you, every fault and every strength, and willingly loves you regardless of them all, there is liberation from fear that can be such a barrier in our relationships with others. But remember what we said earlier, God never

intended for it to be all about you and Jesus. He created you not only for relationship with him, but also for intimacy in community.

It is the security of being so unconditionally loved that should free us to love others. You can risk being rejected by others if you know your savior will never reject you. What's more, knowing the cost that Jesus paid to love you gives you the ability to pay the price for intimacy in a broken and isolated world. That kind of vulnerability doesn't come just from self-confidence so much as Christ-confidence. He desires you to be a blessing to others who are struggling with loneliness.

You may be lonely because you are feeling the isolation of hurt or betrayal. You may be lonely because your deepest need for intimacy can only be met by Jesus and you don't have a relationship with him. You may be lonely because while you have a relationship with Christ, you have been neglecting the community he has liberated you to love. Whatever the case, you are not alone in your struggle with loneliness. It is an issue of connectedness. Wherever you are, by the grace of God, take the next step in getting connected with God and other people.