



APOSTOLIC CHRISTIAN

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LONELINESS III

Thoughts from “Loneliness I and II”

In the first article of this series, we learned that loneliness is an uncomfortable feeling of isolation – a painful awareness that we are lacking close and meaningful contact with others. We saw that many biblical “heroes of faith” experienced times of loneliness, feeling separated from others or from God. We were reminded that God made the human race to seek and to enjoy communion with Him and with others.

In the second of this series, we learned to recognize the “loneliness cycle” – a tool that Satan uses to make us feel as if no one understands our feelings or has ever faced the challenges we’re facing. This causes us to feel even more isolated and to withdraw even more from our close relationships. We can break out of that cycle by understanding that Satan can be defeated and his lies exposed by God’s power through His Word and prayer.

Dealing with loneliness

In this third and final article, we present a number of very practical ways in which we can deal with loneliness and reduce its disabling effect on our lives.

1. Seek support from God and His Word. Particularly in times of struggle, we should seek passages of Scripture that will bring us comfort and encouragement. Through prayer we can acknowledge God’s presence and express confidence that He can support and encourage us in times of need. During these times with God, we can thank Him for who He is, we can pour out our needs before Him, and we can sit quietly and listen as the Holy Spirit speaks comfort to us.

“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.” (Romans 8:26)

2. Find common ground. Often only a small amount of effort is needed to find common ground on which to build a meaningful relationship. Instead of focusing on differences that cause separation and isolation, try being purposeful in finding similarities and common ground from which a deeper friendship can grow.

“A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.” (Proverbs 18:24)

3. Build your resiliency through relationships. Realize that in the midst of struggles with loneliness, we need to reach out and interact with both God and people.

Identify trustworthy individuals to whom we can turn in times of struggle, and who will look out for us when we have difficulty reaching out. Have those relationships established before we face a trial or struggle. Remember that time is needed to build relationships. Expecting them to deepen quickly or failing to nurture them over time will lead to disappointment.

“Two are better than one; . . . for if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up.” (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10)

4. Invest in meaningful activities. Take time to pursue an activity that brings joy and gives glory to God. This will both bring fulfillment to our lives and help fill the void created by loneliness. We can explore our God-given talents and interests. Take an

inventory of spiritual gifts in order to help identify the ways God has equipped us to serve the Body of Christ. Identifying and then using our spiritual gifts is an important component of the Christian walk.

"Wherefore he . . . gave gifts unto men. . . . For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." (Ephesians 4:8, 12)

5. Find your true worth. Our "identity" and "self-worth" must be based on God rather than "self." In order to understand our true worth and form an accurate identity, we must "put off" the thoughts and feelings that are not based on truth, and "put on" those that are. Many people mistakenly define their identity by what they do. Others, especially married people, inaccurately put their worth and identity in another person. But since a job or a marital status is subject to change, we need to base our identity on something more stable and enduring. An accurate self-worth must be based on our creation in God's image and placement in His family. "Put on" this truth – each individual is fully complete and whole in Christ, and who we are in Christ is steady and constant.

"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness unto his marvellous light." (1 Peter 2:9)

6. Seek counsel. Many barriers can keep us from reaching out for help from others and thus keep us trapped in the cycle of loneliness. Identify and deal with those barriers so that we can reach out for help from a mentor, minister, or counselor when we start to feel lonely. Often, the longer we wait to reach out for help, the more difficult the task becomes.

"Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established." (Proverbs 15:22)

Summary

In summary, remember that loneliness is a common experience: we are not alone in feeling lonely! God is near us even when we don't feel that He is. Review the list of things we can do to help work through times of loneliness, and get started today. Finally, hold onto this promise from Hebrews:

"For he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." (Hebrews 13:5-6)

Our God, Who cannot lie, made this promise for His people, and it will stand unbroken though heaven and earth pass away.

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