

# LONELINESS

By Conrad Barrett

No feeling seems more oppressive nor unwelcome than a sense of being alone. It has an emptiness which is both bitter and tragic.

In our world where there is so much social diversification and so many philosophical persuasions one must wonder why should anyone feel alone. But, many do. Compatibility with others and a sense of truly belonging seems to elude many who are lonely. The feeling of not being wanted, or of not being a significant part is a plaguing experience. No socio-economic structure is exempted. It is a classless curse and the pain is both real and seemingly everywhere present.

Loneliness is a grievous feeling, and it is a feeling, but it is as real as life itself. Whether in a crowd or in a place of solitude, there seems to be little difference in its cruelty. The reality of loneliness makes the heart ache in an agony which gnaws and persists. Often it is depressing, often it is relentless, and always it is uncomfortable.

Deep within the heart of the lonely is that significant vacancy which neither numbers nor solitude seems to address. It is a voice which many times goes unanswered. It is like a voice crying in the wilderness.

It would be difficult to know how many truly lonely people there are in our world. They seem to be in every social type. They may drive the best of cars or the worst of cars. They may wear the best clothes or the worst clothes. They go to work and they go to churches. They sing and they teach and sometimes they preach. They count and store our money. Some build our houses and some make and implement our laws. Some walk our streets and sleep in our gutters. Some sleep in the best of beds. Some work hard and some don't work at all. Some become very rich while some remain very poor. All lonely people seem to be caught in a similar trap. This trap can be described as being a place where "I do not feel at home" and it can be in a church, on a job, in a marriage or in a single life. It can be any place, anywhere, and with anybody, or with nobody. It is a feeling peculiar to the individual. Often it is not easily detected except by the lonely. Sometimes it is very well camouflaged. Our language is used often to carefully guard our true feelings and our dress can easily punctuate the positive side of us all; but then, there are the eyes which serve us in ways much deeper than for vision; they are the windows of our souls. They tell others whether we are lonely or not. Sometimes they speak volumes.

The tragedy of being lonely is that it is difficult to admit. Whom do we tell and whom do we trust with our inner thoughts? Once put into words and said to the wrong person, can be just as devastating as loneliness itself. Sometimes the voice of the lonely asks, "Who cares anyway? And, would it really make a difference, or what if my supposedly confidential friend betrays my confidence and does not tell my story like it really is?" Many have become casualties to such betrayal and sometimes such comes from professionals. What a pity! This should never be, but even Jesus experienced the bitterness of such. It was Judas who betrayed Him and it was Simon Peter who lied about being associated with Him. Both were painful experiences. There are, however, many wonderful people who are good confidants and who will be very loyal. Some are just good common people and some are professionals. Whoever they are and wherever they are they must rank among the best in our human family. If you are lonely, find a good friend, but wait a while before using them as a confidential person. Time will tell us all if they are truly a special friend and if they can be a treasure more valuable than gold.

Why is it that those closest to us may never understand us nor really come to know us? Can it be that the volumes of things which happen all around us propel our deepest emotions with such

speed that they hinder us from really understanding each other? Do we ever feel like robots which are socially engineered as human machines in the economy of life? Do we really understand ourselves? No person is truly complete until there is a relationship established with our Creator. The lack of understanding as to who He is and what He wants for us could be basic to our feeling of being estranged. Take steps today to help correct that maladjustment. You can meet the Master privately or in a worship service. The place is not what matters.

There are many thoughts on how to overcome the feeling of loneliness. I am offering six for your consideration. They just may be helpful.

### **Considerations which can lead to a happier and more fulfilling life.**

**1. Allow the Lord to be your special friend.** He will be that and more. In fact the Bible tells us about God's friendship and it is ours just for asking. Think about these wonderful words in Proverbs. "There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother," Prov. 18:24. No doubt, these words express how much the Lord desires to be close to us. In Christ there is that special relationship which is richer and better than any other and it gives us that great sense of belonging not only to God, but also of being a vital part in His universe. We are never alone when we have a close relationship with the Lord. He is that special Friend. He can help us feel at home wherever we are.

**2. Reach out to others because if we want to have friends we must be willing to reach out to other people.** Solomon said, "A man that hath friends must show himself friendly." Never wait on someone else to take the initiative in establishing friendships. Be the first one to act. Of course there will be rejections, but there will be those who will gladly reach back to you. If we never reach out, we may never know the good that can come from a warm handshake, a smile or a simple "hello". Try it. It will work.

**3. Look inward because in doing so we may discover a tendency to withdraw from others.** This tendency can stem from a feeling of inadequacy or low self-esteem. Never dwell too long on weaknesses; instead, think about the positive. When God made you He made you special and you are unique. No other person is just like you. In fact no two people are alike, so don't compare yourself to anyone else. Life is not to be a time of continuous contests with anyone. We are individuals created for a special purpose and that purpose is to give and receive love and to be at peace with God, others and ourselves. Never let the feelings of inadequacy rule your life. Simply put, none of us are totally lacking; we have something to share and as we begin sharing we then realize a new energy being developed in us. It's rewarding! It's exciting! Do it now!

**4. Let faith become a source of strength.** We all have faith to some degree and it is a gift from God. Let it grow and the reward will be great.

Faith in God is primary to us all. It simply means that we can believe in God and that He will guide us throughout life, and He will if we put our trust in Him. The shepherd boy who became king of Israel (David) said, "The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want. He leadeth me ..." Psalm 23. For a special blessing read the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm in its entirety. It will bless you.

**We should have faith in ourselves, too.** Think of the words of Paul in the Bible who said, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me", Philippians 4:13. Our talents and gifts are given to us on purpose and for a reason and each of us have been endowed by our Creator with special blessings. The real reward of those blessings comes when we exercise the courage to share. Remember God loves us all individually, He loves us uniquely, and He loves us collectively.

**5. Don't dwell on loneliness; it can become a burdensome thought pattern.** Think about the good things in life and all the good people you know. Reach out to lots of people and don't expect more out of others than they can deliver. Remember, they too, may be victims of a spirit of loneliness or even depression. By reaching out to others could become much like a situation that a poet once described. When the poet was asked about what the lamplighter was doing, he simply replied, "He is making holes in the dark." That is precisely what light does. Jesus told us to let out light shine because some people see darkness instead of light. All Christians should spread light and never darkness.

**6. Look directly at the cause of why you may be lonely.** Please never let selfishness nor jealousy be center stage in your life. It's true somebody may have done you wrong, but leave that problem in the just and capable hands of your Creator. He will take your burden if you let Him and then He will let you go free. There is no greater feeling than knowing you are free from your burdens of sin and that you are now in a special friendship with the Lord. God is light.

Pastor Barrett has been a pastor for over 50 years and has talked with many lonely people. This brochure reflects the heartbeat of many people who over the years have spoken to him freely about being lonely, and it is his hope that this article will be helpful to anyone who is lonely.

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