

A background image of purple flowers, possibly pansies, with a central semi-transparent grey rectangle containing the word LONELY.

# LONELY



## CHAPTER 6 | LONELY Introduction

It's true that in a crowd of thousands, women are experiencing ever-increasing loneliness. This leads to destructive decisions that already broken families suffer from immensely. This chapter will address turning towards loneliness to find God instead of turning away from loneliness towards unhealthy substitutes. God wants to teach us how much He loves us and has made us for true belonging, regardless of age and cultural background.

Loneliness is the state of feeling alone, isolated, and sad. Our busy society often pushes people toward isolation and loneliness. We spend more time scrolling through social media than having face-to-face conversations. Most people sometimes or always feel alone or left out. A busy lifestyle can hinder the development of close relationships with family and friends.

It is natural to desire to be with others, have a sense of community, and feel supported. God built in us this need to share life and build relationships. Sometimes, we are not physically alone; perhaps we are in interactions at work, yet we feel lonely. Each person's situation is unique. However, certain situations can increase a person's risk of feeling lonely. These include moves, job changes, motherhood, losing a loved one, and more. Someone who has experienced abuse, neglect, or trauma may have this sense of emptiness, aloneness, or feeling unwanted. The older population or someone single may feel and experience a sense of social isolation.

Additionally, individuals with chronic health concerns or physical impairments may encounter loneliness. Physical and emotional conditions that cause depression or anxiety can also contribute to lonely feelings. Understanding the causes can help look for solutions to this painful state.

Loneliness is a season in a person's life and should not be considered permanent. In 2 Kings 20:1-6, we find that God cares about our human experience. He hears our prayers, sees our tears, knows our needs, and responds with love.

*"About that time, Hezekiah became deathly ill, and the prophet Isaiah, son of Amoz, went to visit him. He gave the king this message: 'This is what the Lord says: Set your affairs in order, for you are going to die. You will not recover from this illness.' When Hezekiah heard this, he turned his face to the wall and prayed to the Lord, 'Remember, O Lord, how I have always been faithful to you and have served you single-mindedly, always doing what pleases you.' Then he broke down and wept bitterly. But before Isaiah had left the middle courtyard,[a] this message came to him from the Lord: 'Go back to Hezekiah, the leader of my people. Tell him, 'This is what the Lord, the God of your ancestor David, says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears. I will heal you, and three days from now, you will get out of bed and go to the Temple of the Lord. I will add fifteen years to your life, and I will rescue you and this city from the king of Assyria. I will defend this city for my own honor and for the sake of my servant David.'" (2 Kings 20:1-6).*

We also see in Hebrews 4:14-16 Christ's empathy for the human condition.

*"So then, since we have a great High Priest who has entered heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we believe. This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testing we do, yet he did not sin. So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There, we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most." (Hebrews 4:14-16).*

Feelings of loneliness often result from others' inability to distinguish between God's judgments and their personal preferences.

The uniqueness that God established in us to be used for His glory may often conflict with others' preconceived notions of how Christians should look or behave. While there are clear guidelines for modesty and righteous living, there is room for preferences and personal style.

Satan often uses the words and scorn of others to increase our feelings of loneliness and isolation. We must remember what the Word of God says about us and not give the enemy an open door to plant seeds of doubt about our acceptance at the Lord's table of fellowship.

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# LONELY part 1

*Turn Into Loneliness, Not Away From It*

## Finding Christ in a Crowd

Consider this reflection of a young woman who has struggled with loneliness:

"I remember walking down the hallways of my high school and feeling utterly alone. Not a single person would make eye contact with me or say hello. It was somehow possible to be surrounded by thousands of people and still believe no one understood. I did have friends, but it was easy to fall into the lie that I had no one. I began to seek out people and situations that made me feel like I belonged and had value.

"I found myself drawn to destructive substitutes. In unhealthy relationships, I couldn't see that I was being taken advantage of, or maybe I didn't care. I thought that substances would ease the hurt that I felt. This continued for a few years. My life continued to feel more and more empty.

"Eventually, God intervened in my life by allowing me to hit rock bottom. I was finally able to see things for what they were. The walls of people and distractions I had built around myself to fill the void of loneliness were entirely fake. The people I thought were my friends were gone when I was no longer of use to them. During that time, God began to teach me how to turn into my loneliness and find His love waiting for me."

God can use all of our circumstances to accomplish His will. He desires us to be like Him and have a godly character. Through our weaknesses, He can fulfill His perfect plan by displaying His power and grace.

*"Each time he said, 'My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness.' So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me."*

*(2 Corinthians 12:9).*

Trials and challenges are prime opportunities for our Savior to demonstrate His great love, miraculous works, and care for us. It is human nature to trust in our own strengths and abilities. But when we rely on His divine presence and focus on God's love, He can bring His plan and purpose to pass.

The Bible reminds us that God uses trials to show His love for us and that we should be thankful. Some view these burdens as gifts that help to strip away self and conform us to the likeness of Jesus. God can use loneliness to cause us to seek Him. The Holy Spirit can help us to learn about healthy closeness with others. The Holy Spirit is with us to guide, comfort, and bring us peace.

The godly comfort we receive can then be shared with others.

*"All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort. He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we can give them the same comfort God has given us." (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).*

Remember God's history of faithfulness in your life.

In the book of Joshua, God instructed the Children of Israel to build an altar of remembrance.

*"When all the people had crossed the Jordan, the Lord said to Joshua, 'Now choose twelve men, one from each tribe. Tell them, 'Take twelve stones from the very place where the priests are standing in the middle of the Jordan. Carry them out and pile them up at the place where you will camp tonight.'" So, Joshua called together the twelve men he had chosen, one from each of the tribes of Israel. He told them, 'Go into the middle of the Jordan, in front of the Ark of the Lord your God. Each of you must pick up one stone and carry it out on your shoulder—twelve stones in all, one for each of the twelve tribes of Israel. We will use these stones to build a memorial. In the future, your children will ask you, 'What do these stones mean?' Then you can tell them, 'They remind us that the Jordan River stopped flowing when the Ark of the Lord's Covenant went across.' These stones will stand as a memorial among the people of Israel forever." (Joshua 4:1-7).*

When they faced new challenges and difficulties, God wanted His people to remember His past actions and have a visual reminder of His faithfulness.

We would do well to follow this example, maybe not with huge stones but with memories and perhaps even keepsakes. When we feel overwhelmed by trials, remembering what God has done in the past will help us strengthen our faith for the new challenge we face. Looking back, we can see how we benefited and grew as Christians because of the hard times the Lord brought us through.

Our lives are in God's hands; nothing is out of His control. We have hope because of God's promises.

You can count on Him to be true to His Word. He cares for you, wants your best, and wants you to be blessed in relationships. He can infuse your life with peace and give you strength each day.

*"And we know that God causes everything to work together[a] for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them." (Romans 8:28)*

The Bible shares many accounts of how God is faithful to the lonely. Jesus suffered from loneliness, yet He said the Father was with Him.

*"But the time is coming—indeed it's here now—when you will be scattered, each one going his own way, leaving me alone. Yet I am not alone because the Father is with me." (John 16:32).*

Jesus relates to us about needing strength for troubles, negative thoughts, and lies from the enemy. He often turned to lonely places to connect with His Father.

*"But Jesus often withdrew to the wilderness for prayer." (Luke 5:16).*

## Listen to this!

In those lonely moments, he could escape the world's noise and connect meaningfully and powerfully with God the Father.



Reflect on the following examples of God's sovereign interventions and faithfulness:

- *The account of Ruth in the Old Testament says that she was left alone after her husband died. Naomi, Ruth's mother-in-law, had lost her husband and two sons. Because of her selfless compassion, Ruth left her native country to face an uncertain future and support Naomi. God was faithful to them despite their sorrow, loneliness, and great hardship. Through God's providence, Ruth became the great-grandmother of King David. (Consider reading through the book of Ruth for the complete story.)*
- *Esther, an orphan raised by her cousin, was sent to the king's harem and risked her life to save her people after she became queen. Despite circumstances that could have made her feel very alone, God turned Esther's trials into life-changing blessings. Esther fasted and prayed along with God's people. She put off selfish interests and developed divine courage (Esther 4:14). God was faithful. His timely interventions demonstrate that He is always in touch with our lives.*
- *The woman with the bleeding problem, found in the Gospels of Mark, Luke, and Matthew, was considered unclean, unwelcome, and isolated from others. She suffered twelve years of loneliness. She became desperate for Jesus' healing power. He spoke words of encouragement to her and not only healed her body but her spirit as well. She received His blessing and affirmation. "And he said to her, 'Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace. Your suffering is over'" (Mark 5:25-34).*
- *The apostle Paul experienced rejection, imprisonment, and the threat of death; he had very lonely times. Even someone with Paul's fortitude can struggle with loneliness. Paul looked for solutions to help bring him out of his desolate condition: Companionship, physical support, books, and Scriptures (2 Timothy 4:13). He did not dwell on his situation and was not resentful of others. Instead, he knew that his life had an eternal purpose, and that God would provide comfort and strength.*

*"The Lord is close to all who call on him, yes, to all who call on him in truth." (Psalm 145:18)*

*"He heals the brokenhearted and bandages their wounds." (Psalm 147:3).*



This indicates that God can and will help you and heal your situation.

*"God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble." (Psalm 46:1)*

### Note to self:

We are promised rest if we become lowly in heart.

*"Then Jesus said, 'Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.'" (Matthew 11:28).*

### Dig Deeper:

- *What other individuals or groups in the Bible experienced loneliness?*
- *How did they find help for their loneliness?*
- *What can God show us through times of loneliness?*
- *How can we know Him more?*



# LONELY part 2

*Finding Healthy Substitutes to Fill the Void*

## Take Action

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When looking for ways to combat loneliness, you should ask yourself, "Why am I feeling lonely?"

The answer to this question can help direct your plan of action. Loneliness indicates that change is needed. God can help us choose actions every day that will move us toward connectedness, joy, and peace.

*"The LORD is my strength and shield. I trust him with all my heart. He helps me, and my heart is filled with joy. I burst out in songs of thanksgiving." (Psalm 28:7)*

Being lonely can be a barrier to reaching out and connecting with others. Even King David struggled with this!

*"Turn to me and have mercy, for I am alone and in deep distress. My problems go from bad to worse. Oh, save me from them all!" (Psalm 25:16-17).*

## Write your response in a journal or notebook.

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- *Describe a time when you felt like the psalmist David.*
- *What did you do?*

Discouragement may prevent you from reaching out. In those moments, know that you are valued and that relying on God's word will strengthen you. He has the answer to any fear associated with seeking the company of others.

*"Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:6,7)*

God really does provide divine peace. Your Savior really does answer prayer and will guide your steps as you walk away from loneliness.

Resting in His peace may seem difficult at first. As faithful as our Heavenly Father is, it is human nature to look to ourselves or others for help and strength rather than going to Him. It can feel awkward sometimes not to worry about our difficulties and challenges.

Yet, throughout scripture, we are instructed to look to God for provision, peace, security, and rest.

Society tells us to work harder, strive for security in our assets, show our maturity by solving our own problems, and do whatever it takes to be successful by world standards.

Yet, God says His Kingdom doesn't operate on the same principles as the world.

*"So those who are last now will be first then, and those who are first will be last." (Matthew 20:16).*

*"If you cling to your life, you will lose it; but if you give up your life for me, you will find it." (Matthew 10:39).*

Although it may feel alien at times, we are to trust and rest, even in the midst of trials, especially when we feel lonely and discouraged.

### Write your response in a journal or notebook.

- *Do you have self-confidence and self-esteem? What does God say about you?*

*"You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous—how well I know it." (Psalm 139:13-14)*

## Listen to this!

You are fearfully and wonderfully made!

Do you believe Him?

Are you thankful that you are a complex individual who the Lord loves?

God's works are wonderful; your soul should know this very well! Implant this in your heart.

## Here are some examples of ways to combat loneliness:

- *Read the Bible! Dwelling on God's promises in His word helps us to experience His loving comfort. "Come close to God, and God will come close to you." (James 4:8)*
- *Pray! God stands ready to help you overcome all feelings of isolation. Ask for His help. "You will show me the way of life, granting me the joy of your presence and the pleasures of living with you forever." (Psalm 16:11).*
- *Avoid feelings like blame and guilt! Our Savior, who loves us, wants us to walk in freedom: "So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus."*
- *(Romans 8:1) "Our actions will show that we belong to the truth, so we will be confident when we stand before God. Even if we feel guilty, God is greater than our feelings, and he knows everything." (1 John 3:19, 20).*
- *"A cheerful heart is good medicine." (Proverbs 17:22). Surround yourself with joy as much as possible. Expect the best by focusing on positive thoughts and attitudes. "Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you." (1 Peter 5:7)*
- *Be proactive about your health! Have you had a check-up? Know your health status. (Example: Hormone imbalances and thyroid issues can cause emotional changes.)*
- *Exercise! Get some sunlight! You could even find someone to exercise with. "Dear friend, I hope all is well with you and that you are as healthy in body as you are strong in spirit." (3 John 1:2)*
- *Get involved in a small group or ministry team at your church! For example, consider joining a mom's group or volunteering in the nursery to meet other young moms. You could also consider starting one with others who have a common interest. (Think outside the box: rock climbing, knitting, biking, walking, scrapbooking, painting; the list is endless). "Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near." (Hebrews 10:24, 25)*

- *Add encouragement to your life! Listen to uplifting music, read a devotional, listen to a motivational speaker, or find a life coach or counselor. Commit to being an encouragement to others as well. Even something small, like a smile to someone you pass or a call or text to let someone know you are thinking of them, can mean a lot. "So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing." (1 Thessalonians 5:11)*
- *Service work! Helping those in need and making a difference feels great. It also provides social interaction and could lead to new friendships. "And don't forget to do good and to share with those in need. These are the sacrifices that please God." (Hebrews 13:16).*
- *Don't rely on social media. It is not always socially engaging, so seek out real people. Try reaching out to others once a week.*

Read each of the above verses listed. Then, note which of these suggestions you feel would work for you.

## Write your response in a journal or notebook.

Try setting a daily goal and journaling about it. It is perfectly fine to start small! Change takes time, and God offers us grace and assistance throughout the process. What steps can you take to move toward your goal?

## Dig Deeper:

- *What can you add to these suggestions?*
- *List activities or interests that you would enjoy.*
- *Name some ways you would begin getting involved with your listed choices.*



# LONELY part 3

*Believing in the Power of God's Love*



## Unity with Christ and His Body

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Satan seeks to separate us from the belonging and comfort we have found in our loving Father and His church, our community of fellow believers. As we have discussed, He sees opportunities in all seasons of our lives to push us towards isolation and loneliness. We cannot let him win and rob us of the love we have found. We will forever belong because of the one who died for us!

*"No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us. And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love." (Romans 8:37-38).*

God's love is powerful. We were created to be in relationship with Him, and His love for us is beyond comprehension. The more we seek to know Him and study His word, the greater our sense of comfort and belonging will be.

## Write your response in a journal or notebook.

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- *What are some ways that you can incorporate time with God into your daily routine?*

We read earlier in Psalm 139 that we are uniquely made in God's image! How we draw close to our Father does not have to be the same. What works for one may not work for another. That is okay! God will meet you right where you are and delight in your intentional devotion, whatever it may look like.

*"God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins. Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other." (1 John 4:9-11).*

## Write your response in a journal or notebook

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- *List some of your unique strengths that God has gifted to you.*

God wants us to be in relationship with other believers and with Him. He created His church as a place of belonging and fulfillment for His children. When we engage with other Christians, God uses our friendships to build us up. Closeness grows in friendships centered around our hope in Christ.

*"He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love."  
(Ephesians 4:16).*

As Christians, we aren't meant to go it alone. We need each other. It's not a sign of weakness as the world would have us believe, but a sign of strength to follow God's command and join with like-minded believers.

This way, we can "Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ," as instructed in Galatians 6:2.

*"And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love." (Romans 5:5).*

When you ask God to reveal the depth of His powerful love, He will.

## Dig Deeper:

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- *What mindsets need to change to become the functioning part of His body Christ intends you to be?*
- *Are there concerns and burdens you carry that prevent the trust and peace of God from ruling over your life and contribute to feelings of isolation and loneliness?*
- *How can you become involved in your church and reach out to other girls?*

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**DEBBIE OSS and LAUREN COROLEUSKI** are mother and daughter and best friends.

Debbie has lived and worked in New York, St. Louis, Philadelphia, and Salt Lake City. She and her husband, Doug, were U.S. missionaries in Salt Lake City. Debbie has three children and three grandchildren. She is a professor of nursing at Cox College in Springfield, Mo.

Lauren grew up in Salt Lake City. During those years, she experienced isolation and loneliness, as well as God's love and emotional healing. Lauren is married with three small children. She has studied at university and is currently operating a home-based business.

Debbie and Lauren seek to encourage women in their faith.