

# What the Bible Says about Loneliness and How to Overcome It<sup>1</sup>

By Michael Lee Stallard<sup>2</sup>

At times in your life, have you felt that you were all alone and yearned to be with and feel connected to others? I have. This feeling describes the emotion of loneliness. Other words people use to describe loneliness include feeling empty, isolated, excluded or left out. You can feel lonely when you are physically alone and you can also feel lonely in the presence of others. Loneliness is really a reflection of whether or not you feel connected to others.

God is a God of relationship and community. That is evident in His very nature. He is the Trinity — three in one; God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. In the opening chapters of the Bible, God established that “It’s not good for the man [Adam] to be alone...” (Genesis 2:18a, The Message). His solution? God continued, “... I’ll make him a helper, a companion.” (Genesis 2:18b, The Message). He brought Eve to Adam and they “become one flesh.” (Genesis 2:24b). We are designed to be in community with God and with one another. Perhaps that is why loneliness hits us the way it does.

The Bible has a lot to say about feeling lonely and its opposite, feeling connected. But before we get to that, let’s take a closer look at loneliness and the effect it has on us.

## Signs of Loneliness

It may be clear to you that you feel lonely—you long to feel connected to others, even to be held. But what if it’s not obvious?

Depending on the situation, signs of an underlying state of loneliness may include the following:

- Feeling bored and/or excessively tired
- Feeling helpless and threatened
- Not sleeping well
- Being physically inactive (including not exercising)

While it’s normal to feel lonely from time to time, ongoing loneliness triggers stress that is so potent it affects everyday life. A person may feel tired and lethargic, and less mentally



alert. He or she may experience stomach and digestive problems, and other incidents of sickness and disease. Recent research found loneliness was associated with a risk of early death that is equivalent to smoking 15 cigarettes a day and that it was more lethal than obesity. In contrast, people who reported having greater social connections were associated with a 50% reduced risk of early death.

Because people who experience ongoing loneliness don't feel well, they frequently engage in behaviors or ingest substances that make them temporarily feel better or numb the pain. The danger is that many of these substances and behaviors are addictive. Common addictions include alcohol, drugs, tobacco, eating, exercise, media (including television, internet, and smartphone use), sex, shopping, and working. Research has found that nearly half of Americans have an addiction to one or more substances or behaviors that have serious negative consequences for their health.

In discussions about loneliness, boredom and depression often come up. Feeling bored and feeling lonely are closely related. In both instances, you feel disengaged from tasks (i.e. boredom) and/or people (i.e. loneliness). Depression, though distinct, frequently follows and is co-existent with loneliness as the person who is depressed will often withdraw from engaging with others.

## **Examples of Loneliness in the Bible**

God's people are not exempt from the pain of loneliness. David was well-acquainted with it, and his honest cries to God are recorded in the Psalms. As you read Psalm 25:16-21 below, you'll see David's longing to be connected to God and his reliance upon that relationship:

Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted. Relieve the troubles of my heart and free me from my anguish. Look on my affliction and my distress and take away all my sins. See how numerous are my enemies and how fiercely they hate me! Guard my life and rescue me; do not let me be put to shame, for I take refuge in You. May integrity and uprightness protect me, because my hope, Lord, is in You.

God's prophets often felt the pain of rejection and loneliness. Consider the prophet Jeremiah. The Lord told Jeremiah not to marry. He had few friends. Scholars refer to Jeremiah as the "weeping prophet." God called him to speak out against the sinfulness of Judah and warn of impending judgment unless the people of Judah repented and changed their ways. Jeremiah chapter 15 captures the prophet speaking to God about his loneliness, unending pain, and suffering. Despite his pain, Jeremiah trusted the Lord and followed God's calling for his life.



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Scripture tells us that Jesus experienced loneliness. On the cross, He cried out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mark 15:34). And in Isaiah 53:3, a prophecy about Jesus, we read, “He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.” Jesus can empathize with the pain of loneliness because he experienced it.

## Scriptures on Loneliness

Throughout the Bible, we see that connection with God and other followers of Jesus is good and desirable, and preferable to being isolated and alone. David wrote “How good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity! ... For there the Lord bestows His blessing, even life forevermore.” (Psalm 133). Jesus assured His disciples, “For where there are two or more gathered in My name, there I am with them.” (Matthew 18:20). Speaking to the effects on a person’s work and enjoyment of life when we are not connected with others, King Solomon observed:

*Again I saw something meaningless under the sun: There was a man all alone; he had neither son nor brother. There was no end to his toil, yet his eyes were not content with his wealth. “For whom am I toiling,” he asked, “and why am I depriving myself of enjoyment?” This too is meaningless—a miserable business! Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken. (Ecclesiastes 4:7-12)*

In Ephesians 4:25-27, Paul conveyed a sense of urgency about repairing broken relationships so that we are not alone and weak, thereby giving Satan a foothold to attack the Body of Christ. These and many other verses communicate the message that together we have greater support and strength to resist temptation and idols so that we can continue playing our part in God’s plan to advance His kingdom.

When I’ve felt lonely, I have found that reading or listening to Scripture being read on one of the Bible apps has been a source of comfort to me. Scripture is supernatural and can help anyone who feels lonely, including lonely singles, lonely married couples and those who are experiencing loneliness and depression. As the foundation, God’s Word reminds us that, despite our loneliness telling us that we are alone, as His beloved children, we are never alone. The following verses are a good place to start:



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*Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me. (Psalm 23:4; I recommend reading all of Psalm 23)*

*Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you. (Deuteronomy 31:6)*

*Though my father and mother forsake me, the LORD will receive me. (Psalm 27:10)*

*For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38-39)*

*Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you. (1 Peter 5:7)*

*A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in His holy dwelling. God sets the lonely in families, He leads out the prisoners with singing; but the rebellious live in a sun-scorched land. (Psalm 68:5-6)*

*See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! (1 John 3:1a)*

*Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." (Hebrews 13:5)*

## **God's Answer to Loneliness**

As a follower of Jesus, you are part of God's Kingdom of priests and you have a role to play. Let me explain. In 1 Peter chapter 2, Peter wrote: "...you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light." The function of priests was to connect the Jewish people with God. The Law was clear that priests were to be from the tribe of Levi (interesting side note: the word "levi" means connect) and there were strict rules in place about how and when and who could approach God on behalf of the people. Jesus changed that. Mark's account of the death of Jesus on the cross includes a curious statement: "With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last. The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom." (Mark 15:37-38). What is the significance of the curtain? This is the curtain that separated the people from the holy of holies. Only certain priests were allowed to step into that sacred space. In ripping open the curtain, God communicated that the old priestly order ended so that now we are the priests and together we are a royal



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priesthood charged with connecting people with God and empowered by the Holy Spirit for that purpose. God's plan is for you to proactively live your life as a priestly calling.

So when you're sad and lonely, or when you feel so alone, remember that you are called to connect people with God. Intentionally living into your calling will help you overcome chronic loneliness. Being a Kingdom of Priests means that each of us is to connect with God, connect with fellow believers (i.e., our fellow priests) and reach out to connect with people who don't know God.

1. Connect with God through reading Scripture, praying, participating in worship and communion. One practice I enjoy is writing out meaningful Bible verses on index cards, organizing them into topics (e.g. love, the Trinity, service, the Holy Spirit, etc.) and then reading several cards at a time or taking one card and memorizing the verse written on it. Sometimes I will do this as I am preparing to head off to sleep.

2. Connecting with fellow believers includes attending worship services on a regular basis, participating in a Sunday school class Bible study or small group, enjoying times of fellowship, and serving alongside others at events or out in the community. I recommend you look for a group you can participate in weekly that combines time spent in the Word, sharing prayer requests and praying for each other. Developing trusted friendships in a men's Bible study group at my church has been an enormous blessing in my life.

3. Reaching out to connect with people who don't know the Lord is integral to the Christian life. Get involved in your community by volunteering for social sector organizations and finding ways to humbly love and serve the people you meet. As God puts people on your heart, pray for them then reach out to connect with them.

Your natural inclination when you are feeling lonely might be to pull back and see if anyone will reach out to you. I would encourage you to turn that around. Start by praying for God to help you live out your priestly calling, to fill you with the Holy Spirit, and to give you wisdom about who to connect with in your local church family and community. God is faithful. He will open doors for you to become more connected to your local church family and community. When people come in contact with the Divine connection reflected in you as a priest, John 17:20b-23 tells us they will see that God loves them. Hear Jesus' heart for you and His heart for connection in this prayer to our Heavenly Father:



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<sup>1</sup> [Jesus] pray also for those who will believe in Me through their [His followers] message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as You are in Me and I am in You. May they also be in Us so that the world may believe that You have sent Me. I have given them the glory that You gave Me, that they may be one as We are one—I in them and You in Me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that You sent Me and have loved them even as You have loved me.

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<sup>1</sup> **Source:** Copied in its entirety from <https://www.biblestudytools.com> for the express purpose of ministry by Men In the Hood Ministries at Gardenside Baptist Church, Lexington, KY, [www.gbclcx.com](http://www.gbclcx.com).

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