



**A Spiritual Encouragement Message
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Loneliness

by Derrick Victor

Loneliness has been a problem in our modern world since before the rise of Coronavirus and the stay-at-home orders we are now experiencing. According to a 2020 U.S. Report by Cigna, three out of five Americans are lonely (yes, three out of FIVE). Just think, that report was completed prior to the stay-at-home directives. Indeed, much of the information I will share has been reported prior to this pandemic. Which means when the data comes in, we will likely see these numbers increase, rather than decrease.

Loneliness has also played a major role in suicides. Suicide has become the second leading cause of death for teenagers and the tenth leading cause of death overall for Americans. These suicides often attributed to loneliness have been called *Deaths of Despair*, by Princeton economists Anne Case and Angus Deaton. There are a number of reasons we are dealing with loneliness:

- A lack of social support and infrequent meaningful social interactions
- Negative feelings about one's personal relationships
- Poor physical and mental health
- A lack of "balance" in one's daily activities – doing too much or too little of any given thing (e.g. sleep, work, TV, Games, etc.)

The 19th U.S. Surgeon General, Vivek Murthy stated, "We find ourselves with a silent but common challenge of loneliness that people are struggling with all over the country and all

over the world. And now on top of that, we're being asked to pull back from life-sustaining interactions with other people”.

Interestingly enough, before the advent of modern scientific research, surveys, and other forms of data collecting, God had said, “**it is not good for man to be alone**”. Are you familiar with when he said these words? It was not a quote from Jesus to the disciples. Nor was it many years into the existence of our world. God said this in the second chapter of Genesis, verse 18. He said it when Adam was without Eve. While we can acknowledge the specific intention of God to create Eve as a way to combat Adam’s loneliness, the point is widely appropriate for humankind. In order for Adam to “not be alone”, he needed a helpmate so they could create a society (i.e. “be fruitful and multiply”).

Now that we live in this society, we are realizing that even in the abundance of people, we can feel truly alone and isolated. Some of us even share homes with others and feel completely isolated! Isn’t that fascinating, but terribly sad at the same time? How can we be with people, and still feel alone?

One reason we feel alone even among others is we tend to self-isolate. We get inside our very own heads and poison the relationship within. Just look at the second bullet point above. Our own insecurities within our relationships tend to create loneliness within us. We must be aware of this reality!

However, the intention of this article is not to be used as data for a scientific endeavor. Rather, to encourage each of us to flee loneliness and despair. Therefore, here are some practical tips to help combat the isolation we face. Thankfully, for all of you reading, these points come from scripture and researchers smarter than I:

1. Keep your thoughts on that which is good (**Phil. 4:8**). It is so easy to sit in isolation and dwell on evil. Especially when evil is so prevalent! However, when we are left with nothing but ourselves and our assumptions, we ought to lean towards “**excellent, honorable, lovely, and praiseworthy**” assumptions.
2. Keep in touch with others. Communication is a true blessing from God. He intended for us to use the full scale of our communication to be together (**Rom. 12:15-16**). Murthy

suggests that we spend at least “15 minutes a day” on the phone, zoom, Skype, or even from a safe distance, speaking with others. It doesn’t sound like much, but it is enough to make you feel connected and loved. Take full advantage of the technology we have.

3. Don’t stop training! The Apostle Paul said, **“So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.” (1 Cor. 9:26-27).**

Physical and mental health are important! Yet, so is your *spiritual* health. Just because we are cannot gather as a body in our current climate, does not mean we should miss out on Bible study, family devotionals, zoom classes, virtual sermons, etc. Our families need these now more than ever!

4. Finally, be gracious. No matter what people are communicating with their words, we are all dealing with this change in our normal life in extremely different ways. If you or someone else have been unkind, be gracious and forgiving to them and yourself. We need not excuse poor behavior, but we certainly can forgive it.

Folks, I cannot wait to see you again. I pray you are well. If you need a listening ear and a prayer, I am just a phone call away. I love you!