

But if we don't first drink the water of life, we will seek people to provide us something they never can; we will seek people to fill the place of God in our hearts. We will seek people to make us whole, to make us feel we have worth. But, until we let Jesus in and unite with Him, while we may be in a relationship, while we may be with people, we will still be lonely.

No person, no drug, no pleasure-seeking activity can fill the deep emptiness, the longing in our souls, because we were built as living temples to be filled by the presence of our living God. Only in union with Him are we complete.

So, if you struggle with loneliness, try the following:

1 Recognize that loneliness is not about being alone; loneliness is about being disconnected from God and longing for the wholeness, validation,

love, contentment, and peace that come only from union with Him.

2 Start out each day (for at least 15 minutes) alone with God, meditate on His Word, and invite Him into your heart. Ask Jesus to walk with you to dark places in your heart—those buried memories, hurts, disappointments, and failures that make you feel inadequate, that incite fear of what others will think, that fuel the loneliness. Ask Jesus what He sees when you were bullied, mocked, raped, molested, rejected, or when you were so lonely you looked at pornography or hooked up for a one-night stand. See the tears in His eyes as He feels your pain, but also listen to His tender voice telling you that you are His child, that He loves you, that He will heal your wounds if you let Him. Hear Him when He says you are loved for who you are—His child—and not for anything you have done or anything that has happened to you. Let Him fill you with His love and presence. Ask Him to restore you to what He

created you to be: His living temple—a holy place of love bursting forth to others.

3 Then, as your day unfolds, talk to Jesus in your mind, make Him a part of the day's activities. Share with Him your joys, frustrations, and concerns. In your mind, say, *"Jesus, thank you for the beautiful cardinal that just landed outside my window,"* or, *"Jesus, thanks for being with me in this traffic jam and giving me patience; please oversee my day. I trust you with how things turn out. Thanks for never leaving me nor forsaking me."*

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LONELINESS

Its Cause and Cure



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MINISTRIES

Have you ever struggled with deep feelings of loneliness? Such emotion can be so intense, so uncomfortable, that it becomes intolerable, spurring people to take all kinds of actions to make the feelings go away.

Deep loneliness leads to:

- Co-dependent relationships—the willingness to tolerate mistreatment to avoid rejection
- Serial relationships—seeking person after person to fill the void inside
- Various forms of thrill-seeking, pleasure-seeking, and risk-taking to feel connected

If you struggle with loneliness, please consider this question for a moment: Is there a difference between loneliness and being alone?

WHAT IS LONELINESS?

Loneliness is not about being alone; those who struggle with loneliness will still feel lonely on dates, in groups, and with family—because loneliness is about something other than being alone.

Loneliness is a deep longing for something that is missing. It is a longing for love, acceptance, and validation; it is a longing to be whole, to be valued, and to be filled with contentment and peace.

But ultimately, loneliness is a longing for God—for His presence in the life, for Him to occupy the place in our spirit temple that was designed for Him to fill. Ever since sin entered the world, every human has been struggling with feelings of fear, isolation, and loneliness—and we have all sought to fill that void with people or things other than God.

In John 4:4–26, we find Jesus meeting a woman who struggled with such loneliness.

Jesus offers her a kind of water that if she would only drink of it, she would never get thirsty again.

What kind of water would that be? It wasn't H₂O! It was something else that could quench the deep thirst of her soul.

What was she thirsting for? At first, she thinks in concrete terms, only of liquid water. She asks Jesus to give her some, but He directs her to the type of water she really needs. He points her mind to the deep emptiness inside her, to the reservoir in her heart that is empty and that she has tried to fill with something other than this water of life. Jesus tells her to go get her husband, but she replies that she doesn't have one. Jesus affirms her honest answer, saying, "You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband" (John 4:17, 18).

What was Jesus pointing out? That she had spent her whole life seeking to fill a deep longing in her soul—a sense of inadequacy, a loneliness—with one man after another. It hadn't worked. She wasn't filled; she was still empty. She was still thirsting for

love, to be made whole, to have the emptiness in her soul filled. She longed for the water of life that, if she drank it, if she let Jesus into her heart, His love would become a wellspring within her that would overflow to others.

Then, rather than seeking to use others to fill her emptiness, validate her, make her feel okay about herself, instead of constantly thirsting for affection, she would become what God designed every human being to be: a living wellspring, a geyser of love, that bursts forth and overflows to others!

GODLY DESIRE IS NOT LONELINESS

Even before sin, God said that it was not good for Adam to be alone; He created Eve to be Adam's life partner. We are created as relational beings—to connect, to love, and to be loved. The desire to have someone to love and to share life with is not the same thing as loneliness.

