



APOSTOLIC CHRISTIAN

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LONELINESS II

Thoughts from “Loneliness I”

In the first article, we learned that loneliness is an uncomfortable feeling of isolation – a painful awareness that we are lacking close and meaningful contact with others. We saw that many prominent “heroes of faith” in the Bible experienced times of loneliness, as evidenced by their descriptions of feeling separated from others or from God. And we were reminded that God made the human race to seek and to enjoy communion with Him and with others.

Divine companions

According to the Word, every believer can be comforted by the continual presence of God through the Holy Spirit. Because He is our Helper, we need not fear.

“For he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.” (Hebrews 13:5-6)

We may need to remember that God is ever-present, even when our feelings may indicate otherwise. We may feel emotionally distanced from God, but our feelings do not always align with the truth. Even when we don’t feel God’s presence, His presence is constant and steady.

“For the LORD will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his inheritance.” (Psalm 94:14)

Jesus was comforted by this very thought, as He faced the agony of His suffering and death:

“Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.” (John 16:32)

Likewise, the Holy Spirit, dwelling in the hearts of every believer, is a constant companion and faithful Comforter.

“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; . . . he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” (John 14:16-17)

Recognize and break the “Loneliness” cycle

When we are experiencing loneliness, Satan works hard to make us feel as if no one could possibly understand what we’re going through. He leads us to believe the lie that no one understands or has ever faced the challenges we’re facing. This distorted perspective can make us feel even more isolated. We become stuck in the cycle of pulling away from our close relationships, and then feeling even more alone.

How can we break out of this cycle? We need to understand that Satan works by lies and deception, and that he can be defeated by God’s power through prayer, the Word, and the Holy Spirit. We also need to understand how our thoughts affect our feelings of loneliness.

The role of our thoughts in loneliness

“For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he.” (Proverbs 23:7)

Our thoughts and feelings are closely connected. How we think about and interpret a situation greatly affects how we feel about it. For example, we may have a negative thought such as, “That person probably thinks I’m not very interesting to be around.” Negative thinking like this leads to negative emotions and behaviors. To continue the above example, we may react to that negative thought by

feeling lonely, sad, discouraged, or depressed. Those feelings may cause us to withdraw from people, or try to temporarily feel better by eating, shopping, etc.

Sometimes our thoughts do not align with truth, which leads to reactions that are not based on reality. Two typical examples of this pattern of distorted thinking are “mind-reading” and “comparison.”

Mind-reading occurs when we think we know what other people are thinking about us and believe that they are looking at us negatively. Comments we hear from friends and family may increase our isolation, especially if we interpret them (correctly or incorrectly) as insincere or insensitive. We must use discernment when interpreting others’ comments. We do not need to accept opinions as facts; neither should we interpret others’ opinions as true for us when they are not.

“For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.” (2 Corinthians 10:12)

Even though the Word warns against comparison, it is unfortunately a very common practice. Our thoughts and feelings about the extent to which we “fit in” can increase our sense of isolation as well. Any one of us can easily look around and find something that can serve as “evidence” that we don’t fit in. However, when we look through the clouded lens of loneliness, we only see our differences that separate us from others.

But looking through the clear lens of God’s Word, we find that this diversity is part of God’s design for the body of Christ to fulfill His purpose in the world.

“For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and everyone members one of another.” (Romans 12:4-5)

Dealing with loneliness

There are a number of very practical ways in which we can deal with loneliness and reduce its disabling effect on our lives. The first is presented here, and the others will be discussed in a future article “Loneliness III.”

Seek support from God and His Word. Particularly in times of struggle, seek passages of Scripture that will bring you comfort and encouragement. Through prayer we can acknowledge God’s presence and express confidence that He can support and encourage us in times of need. During these times with God, we can thank Him for who He is, we can pour out our needs before Him, and we can sit quietly and listen as the Holy Spirit speaks comfort to us.

“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.” (Romans 8:26)

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