

Loneliness Part 3 - July 27th - Overcoming Loneliness

We are in **Part 3 of Loneliness**, and to recap, we looked at what causes loneliness in part 2. Specifically, we looked at the **influences of Culture, Selfishness, and Unforgiveness** and how they can fuel loneliness in our lives. **Loneliness is not simply being alone but feeling emotionally isolated, even if you are in a crowd of people.** This morning, we will look at how to overcome loneliness, so let's go back to the beginning...

A. Our Original Design

We have to look at the original design for us humans. **Genesis 1:26a** Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky...” Look here, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over...” These are not singular but plural, and it shows that the very image of God, the Trinity, is not alone, but there are 3 in 1. This is a great mystery, one I am excited to see and talk to with the Lord in heaven, but for now, we know that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are one and God’s very nature is LOVE! **1 John 4:7-8** Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God. But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love. God is Love!!! Love is not Love. We love one another because that love comes from God! That is why when Jesus was asked, What is the greatest commandment: **Matthew 22:37-40** Jesus replied, “‘You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.” Everything is falling on these 2 commands, Love God & Love People, because this is the original design from the beginning of Genesis. That we are made in God’s likeness and image, and God’s likeness and image is love, and he wants us to love Him and love one another. That just makes sense, right? Spoiler, these are the 2 parts we will be looking at this morning, but we will also take a look at an amazing picture of community and how they loved one another in **Acts 2:42-47** All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord’s Supper), and to prayer. 43 A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. 44 And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. 45 They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. 46 They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord’s Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity—47 all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved. WOW, that must have been something. Can you imagine? I do not think that with wording like “*shared meals with great joy and generosity,*” there was really room for loneliness. BUT I get it, they had it much easier back then, right?

They don't have all the problems we have today with disobedient teenagers, social media, and people were just simply kind to one another all the time, right!! NO, they had their own issues, different, but still the same sin issues like selfishness and unforgiveness were still a big deal back then, like it is today! They had success in this area because they realized something that we need to learn as well. They went back to the original design. They understood that they needed one another. I do not think they woke up in the morning and said, OH NO, it's Sunday morning again, guess we have to go to church... again... I'll just stay in my PJs... No, they went with great joy and generosity! **So the difference between them (Acts 2) and us today is that they knew they needed one another! Today we need one another, but we think we do not...** We have all we need. I do not need anyone... **We have forgotten that we need each other.** God created us from the start so that we need one another. It's not a flaw, it's part of the original design in us. I believe that Acts 2 holds many truths for us on how we can overcome loneliness, and we will take a look at a few of them and how we can apply them to today. We see in the last verse 47 that people could see that they were followers of Jesus, right, because it ends with the Lord adding to their fellowship every day. So how did people know to join them? What was it that drew others in?? We see an answer in John 13 because Jesus already told the disciples earlier what to do... **John 13:25 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.** Our love for one another will prove to the world that we are followers of the way! We have to get back to the original design and **understand that we need one another**, and one way we can overcome loneliness is to love one another!

B. Love People

When we look at **Acts 2:47 all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.** They grew! God kept adding to their number, and I bet you that they were inviting others because more kept coming. This was not just my little small group or friendship group or clique of people, and no one else was involved. This is about my neighbor. This is about one another!

1. **It's about One Another:** I quickly searched the New Testament and found about 100 verses that contain "one another" and not all apply but I very quickly put 27 together, and we are not going to look at them all today, but I included them at the end of my message notes if you want to go and take a look at them, because when we say love one another, what does that look like? Hopefully, these will help you a little with what we are supposed to love one another. Let's go through 5 of them:
 - **Romans 13:8 - Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law.** I think this is an appropriate place to start. Imagine if we borrowed stuff from one another or did work as a business for someone else, and we actually paid them! Novel thought, right!? I had no idea that was even a thing, but Romans says here that the only debt we are to have to another is a debt of love! So if you perhaps had the question of

when it's enough, it actually is never enough. We should always be in debt to love one another!

- **Romans 12:10** - Be devoted to **one another** in love. Honor **one another** above yourselves. OK, yes, we have all heard this: just love one another! But HOW do we love one another? What steps do I take? If you want to know how, there are 2 chapters in the Bible that you can go to. Romans 12 is a GOLD mine for practicality on how we can love one another just like 1 Corinthians 13, that gives some great definitions on how to love others:

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|------------|----------|--------------------|--------------|-------------------|-------------|
| Love: | is Patient | is Kind | Always Protects | Always hopes | Always perseveres | Never fails |
| Love is not: | Envious | Boastful | Dishonoring others | Self-Seeking | Easily Angered | Proud |

Can you imagine the change if we started to adapt these and treat people like that! Being patient, protecting others especially against ourselves.

- **Hebrews 3:13** - But encourage **one another** daily, as long as it is called “Today,” so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. I don't know about you, but I need encouragement sometimes. You know who else needs encouragement? Those who have lost a loved one or those going through tough times. They NEED encouragement! You might say, I do not know how to help. Let me teach you how. SHOW UP!! Show up at the hospital, go visit them. Show up at a Funeral!! I get that we ask that questions when you hear someone has passed away. Should I go? If you have to ask the question, that should be the answer that you should go. When my dad passed away, it meant the world to me when I saw my friends show up in support. You don't have to say anything clever, just show up and maybe even give them a hug; that shows love and shows that you care, and it will encourage them!
- **Hebrews 10:25** - not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging **one another**—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. We can encourage one another to go to church! Call each other up when it's Prayer Summit and say, HEY!!! It's Prayer Summit tonight. Are you coming?? Want me to pick you up?? I am already at the door knocking!!! LET'S GO!! I don't know why you are all thinking this is weird. We do it for the bombers and jets. Why not for church?
- **1 Peter 4:9** - Offer hospitality to **one another** without grumbling. When is the last time you invited someone over, not for your sake, but for theirs? What I mean is, when is the last time you had someone over to bless them, to make them feel seen? I know of a couple in church who have a simple goal. Every week, they invite one couple over for a fireside. They look on the weekends for those who are alone or whom they know do not have many friends, and show them hospitality. Simple...
Ultimately, how we treat one another is a reflection of our relationship with Jesus! - **Matthew 25:42-45** 42 For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, 43 I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.' 44 “They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’ 45 “He will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’ Let's not get comfortable in just taking care of ourselves, but let's keep an eye out for one another.

2. **It's about Taking Action:** Hopefully, by this point, this goes without saying, but looking at all these passages here, they all involve action on our part. **James 2:26** **For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.** Whether you are lonely or you are not, but if you are here and you feel lonely, don't look at these passages and think, oh, I'll just wait now till someone comes along and fixes my loneliness... I'll just wait for a small group to invite me over, or I'll go to this event and that will fix it for me. NO, this takes effort! **You will not stumble out of loneliness, or get lucky to have community; it will take effort on your end as well, and we have to build it.** **Story of getting involved:** When I came to Canada, I did not know anyone else here, and I learnt from my mistakes in Minnesota that it takes effort from my part to be part of a community; I have to do something about it, not simply wait for others. When I arrived here at church, one of the first things I did was get into a Small Group, at the same time I started to volunteer, and I volunteered everywhere, except KidzChurch, I was not brave enough to go there. Before hanging out with friends, I would go online and read if the Bombers won, or something to spark a conversation with someone, whether it was things like who won in the UFC, things I did not care about, but it allowed me to show interest in the things they cared about, and it worked. I made friends, became a Small Group leader, and not because of my tactics, but because the church loved me back and accepted this weirdo! It's a BOTH/AND, and it takes action from both sides! So yes, we can see that we need one another, but I do have to be honest with you, even if we have all the strategies on how to build community, we can still be lonely. Again, when we have one another, it's good! But there is still one very critical piece that, if we do not have it, all of this can still breed loneliness in our lives. Any ideas?? When we have this hole in our hearts, no human can fill it, no relationship can fill it, no amount of LEGO or fame or fortune or "stuff" can fill it... **More than we need one another, WE NEED GOD!**

C. Love God

Pastor Eric talked about this last weekend. We cannot neglect meeting with God; we have to be intentional. God is love, so if you want to learn how to love others, we need to learn how to love God. We cannot, we must not forget the one who designed us to be like Him. When we learn to love God, and we then continue to love others from that love, it's irresistible; it has a wonderful fragrance because it's the Holy Spirit who ministers and loves, not just me. When you are with others, you will not feel lonely, but when you are alone, you will also not feel lonely because you are with the Lord. Paul shows this in **2 Timothy 4:16-17** **The first time I was brought before the judge, no one came with me. Everyone abandoned me. May it not be counted against them. But the Lord stood with me and gave me strength so that I might preach the Good News in its entirety for all the Gentiles to hear. And he rescued me from certain death.** Look at the

love that Paul shows here! *“No one came with me. Everyone abandoned me. May it not be counted against them. But the Lord stood with me and gave me strength”*. What love Paul demonstrates here to one another, even though they are not even there, and his strength is not from a few clever tactics, but from the Lord. it’s from the vine! **John 15:5** *“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.* So how much should we stay connected to the vine? Look again at **Acts 2:46** *Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts.* How often? Everyday! It’s a daily time to connect with the Lord! I am not even asking you to come to church every day like they did. I am simply asking you to take some time, open your bible, and spend time with your Creator!

1. **Bible Reading:** If you are unsure how to read your bible or you don’t know where to start, come talk to me, come talk to one of our staff. We LOVE helping people in that. I had recently read a **report from the Center of Bible Engagement**, which was based on a 40,000-person study, and the statistics of that report were eye-opening. The study revealed that if you read your bible two to three times a week, there was little noticeable change in your life, but if you read it four or more times a week, all of a sudden, there was a dramatic change in the impact that your reading had upon your life. The research revealed that:

- **loneliness dropped 30%**
- anger issues dropped 32%
- bitterness dropped 40%
- alcohol consumption - 57%
- spiritually stagnant - 60%
- viewing pornography - 60%

A great resource you can also use is **Bible Recap by Tara-Leigh Cobble**. I prefer the book, but there is also a FREE app with YouVersion where you can watch videos, and she takes you through the bible in a year. Sign up today and join us as we read through the Bible in a Year. You don’t have to wait for a New Year’s resolution to start; start today! This morning, though, I want to focus on this last piece of **Acts 2:42** *All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals, and to prayer.*

2. **Prayer:** I believe that the key to overcoming loneliness in my life and in our church and community is Prayer! You have heard this before. Not everything is about prayer, but everything should come out of prayer. What better place to start than a place of humility and seeking the Lord through prayer for your own struggles in loneliness, but also to see how you can make an impact in others' lives when it comes to loneliness. You might object and say that it's just a coincidence that we talked about it and now, bam, I have someone... Let me tell you a **Story of an Evangelist:** *Back in the early 1800s, after a long time in Africa, he returned to his sending church in Scotland to report on his work and the ministry and to call more people to go to Africa. He arrived at the church; it was winter, cold, and raining. There were not*

many people who came, and he was a little disappointed. Many of the people present were elderly. It was great that they were there, but they were not suitable for the mission field. He still felt that he should give the same message, so he proceeded with the message. He explained they needed more laborers and ended the talk. This is how he ended it: "Who will go? Who will go? Who will go?" He didn't know that the organist had a little boy assistant. As the organ music played, the boy stood up and shouted, "I will go! I will go! I will go!" The name of that little boy was David Livingstone. He then advised David, "If God has called you to Africa, I suggest you become a medical doctor, and you can go to Africa as a medical missionary." David grew up, went to medical school, and became a doctor. He then went to Africa as a medical missionary and there was one particular tribe they were trying to reach, and it was very difficult. The chief sent him a message saying, "We are going to come tonight, and we are going to murder you and everyone in your compound." Now, the reason we know every detail of this story is that David Livingstone kept diaries, and all of this is written in them. In his diary, he wrote, "Lord, we've labored so faithfully. Please, please protect us. Please help us." He was fearful of what might happen, concerned that their ministry would be obliterated and everyone would die. But they didn't come to kill them. A couple of years later, they eventually introduced the chief of the tribe to Jesus, and the entire community converted and became Christians. David Livingstone later said to the chief, "You sent me a message that you were going to come and kill me and everyone in the compound." The chief replied, "Yes, we came." David asked, "Why did you not kill us?" The chief said, "When we came to the compound, we saw 39 giants surrounding the compound. We counted them — they were big warriors, and there were 39 of them surrounding the compound." A couple of years later, David Livingstone returned to his sending church in Scotland and told that story. At the end of the meeting, the church secretary approached him and said, "Doctor Livingstone, do you remember the date when the chief was going to come and kill you?" He replied, "Of course I know the date." She gave him the date. The secretary of the church opened the church diary and showed him that on that date, there were 39 people in the church in Scotland praying for him, and there were 39 warriors surrounding the compound.

Do not say that's a coincidence. - **To quote William Temple, "*When I pray, coincidences happen; when I don't, they don't*".** There is so much power in prayer.

Stop making the same mistake by not praying. Do not neglect prayer, we cannot afford it, make the change, and Pray!! We can confidently approach the Lord in prayer to fight against loneliness in our lives and in other people's lives. **1 John 5:14 This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.** Do you think it's God's will for us to fight against loneliness and walk in unity? We know that God wants us to have community; we

saw it in Acts 2, and it's in His very nature, it's in the Trinity, and inside us. **Psalms 133:1** How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity! And even Jesus' prayer for us! **John 17:20-21** I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me. **Prayer is the key!** If you are lonely this morning, if you feel disconnected even when there are lots of people in the room, I want to encourage you to take this to the Lord in Prayer. To wrap up this miniseries, **Loneliness may be the silent epidemic, but church we have the cure!**

D. We have the cure!

We are not an Acts 2 church yet, but we can start today to take a few steps towards that goal of Loving God and Loving People like we never have before, and we have an opportunity to cure this silent epidemic in our church and community by no longer being silent about it, not letting it drift and get worse, or waiting for someone else to take action, but deciding to take action ourselves. **John 15:12-14** - “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. So here are a few things that you can practice over summer, and summer is a great time to practice because there are many opportunities like firesides, going for walks, etc., that you can use to start, and these are for both spending time with people and with God!

1. Love God

- i. **Spend time in the Word**, feed on it, learn from it, memorize it, grow in it, fall in love with it!
- ii. **Spend time praying!** – Pray for opportunities to reach others and pray for the lonely.

2. Love People – “one another”

- i. **Each one, Reach one!** – Pick a person, go and love them. (1 Corinth 13)
- ii. **Practice Hospitality** – invite someone over you typically don't have over.

A few “one another” verses in the New Testament. (NIV)

- **John 13:25** - By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love **one another**.
- **Romans 12:10** - Be devoted to **one another** in love. Honor **one another** above yourselves.
- **Romans 12:16** - Live in harmony with **one another**.
- **Romans 13:8** - Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love **one another**, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law.
- **Romans 14:13** - Therefore let us stop passing judgment on **one another**.
- **Romans 15:7** - Accept **one another**, then, just as Christ accepted you,
- **2 Corinthians 13:11** - Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice! Strive for full restoration, encourage **one another**, be of one mind, live in peace.
- **Galatians 5:13** - You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve **one another** humbly in love.
- **Eph 4:2** - Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with **one another** in love.
- **Ephesians 4:32** - Be kind and compassionate to **one another**, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.
- **Ephesians 5:21** - Submit to **one another** out of reverence for Christ.
- **Phil 2:5** - In your relationships with **one another**, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus
- **Colossians 3:13** - Bear with each other and forgive **one another** if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.
- **1 Thessalonians 5:11** - Therefore, encourage **one another** and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.
- **Hebrews 3:13** - But encourage **one another** daily, as long as it is called “Today,” so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.
- **Hebrews 10:24** - And let us consider how we may spur **one another** on toward love and good deeds,
- **Hebrews 10:25** - not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging **one another**—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.
- **Hebrews 13:1** - Keep on loving **one another** as brothers and sisters.
- **James 4:11a** - Brothers and sisters, do not slander **one another**.
- **1 Peter 1:22** - Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love **one another** deeply, from the heart.
- **1 Peter 3:8** - Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love **one another**, be compassionate and humble.
- **1 Peter 4:9** - Offer hospitality to **one another** without grumbling.
- **1 Peter 5:5** - In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward **one another**, because, “God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.”
- **1 John 1:7** - But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with **one another**, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.
- **1 John 3:11** - For this is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love **one another**.
- **1 John 4:12** - No one has ever seen God; but if we love **one another**, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.
- **2 John 1:5** - And now, dear lady, I am not writing you a new command but one we have had from the beginning. I ask that we love **one another**.