

OVERCOMING LONELINESS

8-98 by Mark Beard

Text: Psalms 102:1-7 emphasis on v.7

The sensation of being alone can be very real and troubling. Often this feeling comes upon us when we are in a time of despair, heartache, trouble or a time of decision. But for many more it is an abiding sensation that cannot be shaken. Such was the plight of the young woman in the following story:

In the midst of the scorching hot summer of 1980, in Miami Florida, the Miami Herald reported on the tragic story of a young woman by the name of Judith Bucknell. In his book, *No Wonder They Call Him Savior*, Max Lucado summarizes the heart-rending story of this lonely young woman.

■ Judith Bucknell was homicide number one hundred and six that year. She was killed on a steamy June 9th evening. Age: 38. Weight: 109 pounds. Stabbed seven times. Strangled.

She kept a diary. Had she not kept this diary perhaps the memory of her would have been buried with her body. But the diary exists; a painful epitaph to a lonely life. The correspondent made this comment about her writings:

In her diaries, Judy created a character and a voice. The character is herself, wistful, struggling, weary; the voice is yearning. Judith Bucknell has failed to connect; age 38, many lovers, much love offered, none returned.

Her struggles weren't unusual. She worried about getting old, getting fat, getting married, getting pregnant and getting by. She lived in stylish Coconut Grove (Coconut Grove is where you live if you are lonely but act happy).

Judy was the paragon of the confused human being. Half of her life was fantasy, half was nightmare. Successful as a secretary, but a loser at love. Her diary was replete with entries such as the following.

Where are the men with the flowers and champagne and music? Where are the men who call and ask for a genuine, actual date? Where are the men who would like to share more than my bed, my booze, my food..... I would like to have in my life, once before I pass through my life, the kind of sexual relationship which is part of a loving relationship.

She never did.

Judy was not a prostitute. She was not on drug or welfare. She never went to jail. She was not a social outcast. She was respectable. She jogged. She hosted parties. She wore designer clothes and had an apartment that overlooked the bay. And she was very lonely. “I see people together and I’m so jealous I want to throw up. What about me! What about me!” Though surrounded by people, she was on an island. Though she had many acquaintances, she had few friends. Though she had many lovers (fifty-nine in fifty-six months), she had little love.

“Who is going to love Judy Bucknell?” The diary continues. “I feel so old. Unloved. Unwanted. Abandoned. Used up. I want to cry and sleep forever.”

A clear message came from her aching words. Though her body died on June 9th from the wounds of a knife, her heart died long before.... from loneliness.

“I’m alone,” she wrote, “and I want to share something with somebody.” (Lucado, 43-5) (Madeleine Blais, “Who’s Going to Love Judy Bucknell?” (Part 1), Tropic Magazine, *The Miami Herald*, 12 October 1980.

There are multitudes of Judy Bucknells in the world today who feel that no one really cares for them. They face the world with a smile so that no one will see the pain that they are going through. We think that we can read what people are feeling, but often times we are wrong. We think we are the only ones who feel lonely at times and we are wrong again – which brings me to my point. In the message today there are several *misconceptions* that I would like to deal with concerning loneliness.

I. PEOPLE AND RELATIONSHIPS WILL FIND ME.

A. Many people want relationships but do not know where to start.

We're so involved in everything that we have no time for anything or anybody – and there's part of the problem. Taking time to be involved in a social event or social club is one thing, taking time to be involved in someone's life is something else.

■ In his book, *If Things Are So Good, Why Do I Feel So Bad*, George Barna writes, “We live in a nation of more than 260 million people, the third most populated country in the world. We are connected to a global population of almost 6 billion individuals. Yet we are desperately lonely. We cover up that despair by keeping busy – a whirlwind of activity that tires us physically, occupies us mentally, and consumes our resources shamelessly. Our packed schedules prevent us from even having the time to consider whether such a ‘maximum daily activity’ strategy is necessary.

B. Though sometimes consuming, individual relationships are what we need.

■ In another excerpt from his book George Barna explains that, Real friendships are at a premium in America. Everybody wants them; seemingly few know how to achieve them. Consider some of the research findings from our recent surveys:

- Most adults admit that they want to have a greater number of deep relationships.
- A large portion of adults describe themselves as “feeling all alone” or lonely.”
- The process of identifying potential friends is a mystery to many. Places that formerly served as the spawning grounds for new relationships – jobs, neighborhoods, community social clubs, even churches – are no longer a pertinent or effective means of finding other like-minded people.

- One of people's highest-rated desires for the future is to have "many close, personal friends" on whom they can rely; less than one-fourth of all adults believe they have achieved this goal.
- Suicide, which has increased in recent years, is often attributed to feeling alienated from the world and from individuals.

(Barna, 121)

This should serve as a mandate to Christian people to reach out to as many individuals as possible. In addition, it should serve as a reminder to us as to the importance of relationships.

II. I REALLY DO NOT NEED ANYONE BUT MYSELF.

A. Many see self-sufficiency as the cure all for self-image problems.

We want very much to be our own person. We want to believe that we do not need anyone – but we are wrong. We wonder through life determined not to depend on anyone else while all the time getting more and more lost.

B. Some simply refuse to admit that they need someone else.

■ On November 20, 1988, the *Los Angeles Times* reported: A screaming woman, trapped in a car dangling from a freeway transition road in East Los Angeles was rescued Saturday morning. The 19-year-old woman apparently fell asleep behind the wheel about 12:15 A.M. The car, which plunged through a guardrail, was left dangling by its left rear wheel. A half dozen passing motorists stopped, grabbed some ropes from one of their vehicles, tied the ropes to the back of the woman's car, and hung on until the fire units arrived. A ladder was extended from below to help stabilize the car while firefighters tied the vehicle to tow trucks with cables and chains.

"Every time we would move the car," said one of the rescuers, "she'd yell and scream. She was in pain."

It took almost 2 1/2 hours for the passers-by, CHP officers, tow truck drivers, and firefighters – about 25 people in all – to secure the car and pull the woman to safety.

“It was kinda funny,” L.A. County Fire Capt. Ross Marshall recalled later. “She kept saying, ‘I’ll do it myself.’” (Larson, 119)

III. IF GOD CARED ABOUT ME I WOULD NEVER FEEL LONELY.

A. Many wonder, “If God were near wouldn’t I feel His presence?”

Too often we see God as being distant and disconnected from our lives. We’re like the little boy who had problems repeating the Lord’s prayer.

■ He prayed, “Our father, who art in heaven, how’d you know my name?” (Rowell, 76)

■ David wrote in *Psalms 139*,
“You have hedged me behind and before,
And laid your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
It is high, I cannot attain it.
Where can I go from your Spirit?
Or where can I flee from your presence?
If I ascend into heaven, you are there;
If I make my bed in hell, behold you are there.” *NKJV*

B. Many think, “If God really cared wouldn’t He intervene in my life.”

■ Max Lucado writes, “The Shepherd knows his sheep. He calls them by name.

When we see a crowd, we see exactly that, a crowd We see people, not persons, but people. A herd of humans. A flock of faces. That’s what we see.

But not so with the Shepherd. To him every face is different. Every face is a story. Every face is a child. Every child has a name....

The Shepherd knows his sheep. He knows each one by name. The Shepherd knows you. He knows your name. And he will never forget it.” (Lucado, 125)

■ Psalms 116:1 says, “I love the Lord, because he has heard my voice and my supplications.”

CONCLUSION

As we can see, these and many more *misconceptions* about loneliness have caused many to be distraught for long periods of time when they could have looked to the Lord and found hope.

In addition, the people of God should be the instruments of God in bringing people to that knowledge. It is sad when people of the world do not wish to be involved in the lives of others. But it is an indictment when God’s people fail to seek out relationships with others – especially within the household of faith.

■ A few years ago, the press carried a heartrending story of a young father who shot himself in a tavern telephone booth. James Lee had called a Chicago newspaper and told a reporter he had sent the paper a manila envelope outlining his story. The reporter frantically tried to trace the call, but was too late. When the police arrived the young man was slumped in the booth with a bullet through his head.

In his pockets they found a child's crayon drawing, much folded and worn. On it was written, "Please leave in my coat pocket. I want to have it buried with me." The drawing was signed in childish print by his daughter, Shirley Lee, who had perished in a fire just five months before. Lee was so grief-stricken he had asked total strangers to attend his daughter's funeral so she would have a nice service. He said there was no family to attend, since Shirley's mother had been dead since the child was two.

Speaking to the reporter before his death, the heartbroken father said that all he had in life was gone and he felt so alone. He gave his modest estate to the church Shirley had attended and said, "Maybe in ten or twenty years, someone will see one of the plaques and wonder who Shirley Ellen Lee was and say, 'Someone must have loved her very, very much.'" The grieving father could not stand loneliness or the loss so he took his own life. He felt it better to be dead than live in an impersonal world.

How many James Lees are there in this world? They don't wear signs saying "I'm lonely—will you help me?" Let's discover these in His name.

--James S. Hewett, *Illustrations Unlimited* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc, 1988), p. 319.

Child of God, do not wait for those who are lonely to find you. Go out and find them.

For those who are lonely, do not lose hope. There are people who care and a God who will never leave you that you can find.

References

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