

How You Can Overcome the Pain of Loneliness

Warren R. Olson

Senior Living Ministries

Julia, age 68, sits alone most evenings in her empty three-bedroom home. She still mourns the loss of her husband, who passed away almost four years ago. Her grown children have lives of their own and live several hours away in the city, so she rarely gets to visit them.

In her quaint, suburban town, friends are limited. More and more every day, she feels rejected, alone, and hopeless.

At times her loneliness feels almost unbearable...

There is a silent wave of despair called loneliness crashing into the lives of many senior adults in Americans today. And while our society freely talks about topics such as sex, drugs, and alcohol, the subject of loneliness is rarely addressed...even though the pain loneliness causes is very real.

People in our society tend to deal with loneliness in different ways. Some try to ward off feelings of loneliness by making as many friends as possible, by keeping busy, by purchasing new things, or by revisiting the past. Others just give up on life and settle for living with what feels like a disease without a cure.

But, as believers in Christ, we have hope! Scripture tells us very plainly that the thief's ultimate goal is to steal, kill, and destroy, but Christ came so that we may live life to the fullest (see John 10:10)...even in the depths of loneliness!

A good example is the apostle Paul who, as a prisoner, faced execution in a Roman jail. Yet, we read in his letter to the Philippians that while he was lonely during this time in prison he realized that God gave him a way to live with victory despite his loneliness. He trusted God and praised Him in the midst of his pain.

If you find the wave of loneliness is crashing down on you today, know that God understands...and He has provided practical steps to overcome loneliness through His Word. Here are just three:

1. Focus your mind on Christ and understand His desire to pour grace into your life. In Hebrews 4:15-16, we are told, "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are-yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." Jesus is ready to give you grace in your loneliness if you will just turn to Him.
2. Strengthen your relationship with the Lord by establishing a daily routine of time with Him. Psalm 91:1 says, "He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty." Take time each day to read the Bible and pray.

3. Learn to rely on God completely. One of my favorite verses is Proverbs 3:5-6. It says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight." You can trust God!

There are many other verses of Scripture that will help you or someone you know in the struggle with loneliness. Take some time to read through each of these verses:

* Deuteronomy 31:6

* Joshua 1:5

* Joshua 1:9

* Isaiah 41:10

* Isaiah 43:2

* Psalm 102:1-7

* Jeremiah 1:8

* Hebrews 13:5

* Romans 8:31

* Romans 8:37

I know the Lord will encourage you as you pray these verses into your life!

As I conclude, please remember there is someone who experienced loneliness just as you have-Jesus. In fact, He experienced the ultimate pain of loneliness when His Father turned His back on Him on the cross.

Yet despite the pain His death on the cross caused Him, Jesus willingly died because He loved us. And He rested in the promises of God to endure the pain He suffered.

Today, you may feel as though everyone has forgotten you...that no one can take away the hurt you feel. But know that Christ loves you and He came to give you fullness of joy. Even in the midst of difficult times, I pray you will be able to "Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus"!