

I. INTRODUCTION.

-  A. Scripture text: **Genesis 4:9**.

Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where is Abel your brother?” And he said, “I do not know. Am I my brother’s keeper?”

-  B. Loneliness is a common problem which has been described as “one of the most universal sources of human suffering.” It can be a static condition knowing no limits of class, race, or age.
- C. Lonely people feel “left out,” unwanted, or rejected, even when they are surrounded by others. They have a sense of worthlessness and appear unable to build significant relationships.
- D. Tonight some ideas on how to overcome loneliness.

II. KINDS OF LONELINESS.

-  A. EMOTIONAL involves the lack or loss of a psychologically intimate relationship with another person or persons.
- B. SOCIAL is the feeling of aimlessness, anxiety, emptiness.
- C. EXISTENTIAL refers to the sense of isolation which comes to the person who is separated from God and feels that life has no meaning or purpose.

III. SOLITUDE IS NOT LONELINESS.

-  A. Solitude is a voluntary withdrawal from other people. Loneliness comes when are forced to be alone.
-  B. Solitude can be refreshing, rejuvenating, and enjoyable. Loneliness is painful, draining, and unpleasant.
-  C. Solitude can be started and terminated at will. Loneliness sweeps over us and hangs on in spite of our efforts.

IV. THE BIBLE AND LONELINESS.

-  A. God said that is was not good for man to be alone (see Gen. 4:9).
- B. Loneliness is rarely discussed in the Bible, but it is seen often. Moses, Job, Nehemiah, Elijah, and Jeremiah all experienced it. David once complained that he was lonely and afflicted (Psa. 25:16).
Turn to me and be gracious to me, For I am lonely and afflicted.
- C. Jesus must have been lonely in Gethsemane.

V. CAUSES OF LONELINESS.

-  A. Social Causes:
1. TECHNOLOGY... As efficiency and convenience become more important there is less time for developing satisfying relationships.
 2. MOBILITY... Widespread mobility tears up friendships, separates families, eliminates community or neighborhood spirit and causes people to avoid close friendships that may later end in painful separations.
 3. URBANIZATION... As people move closer together, especially in cities, there apparently have been a tendency to withdraw from others. A fear in the midst of so many strangers leads to suspicion and withdrawal.
 4. TELEVISION... People who sit in front of the screen, seldom communicate with each other. The unreality of TV allows people to relate to the characters rather than neighbors or others.

- [Icon] B. Developmental Causes:**
 1. LACK OF ATTACHMENT... Ex: children need to feel close bonds with other human beings.
 2. LACK OF ACCEPTANCE... Touching, listening, discipline, showing affection and spending time with others.
 3. LACK OF SKILLS... Social misfits are people who have never learned how to get along with others. They keep trying, but continually fail and remain in their loneliness.
- [Icon] C. Psychological Causes:**
 1. LOW SELF-ESTEEM... If it is too low, we underestimate our value and withdraw. If too high, we overestimate to the point of conceit. Both reactions hinder close relationships.
 2. INABILITY TO COMMUNICATE... Not knowing how to communicate causes isolation and loneliness.
 3. SELF-DEFEATING ATTITUDES... Loneliness may be our own fault. If one is caught up in intense competition, struggling for self-sufficiency, self-centered with a pre-occupation with themselves, critical and intolerant of others, and being very demanding of others drives people away.
- [Icon] D. SITUATIONAL CAUSES:** The loneliest people of all are those who are single or widowed, living alone, grieving, and/or elderly. People in leadership positions are sometimes lonely because they have moved ahead of and away from the group.
- E. SPIRITUAL CAUSES:** Loneliness, especially existential loneliness comes because of sins which we have not acknowledged or confessed, guilt for which we feel no forgiveness.

VI. SOLVING THE PROBLEM OF LONELINESS.

- [Icon] A. First, admit the problem.**
This doesn't mean a person is a social misfit, unattractive or unable to have good relationships.
- [Icon] B. Second, consider the causes.**
It is much easier to treat causes than symptoms. Symptoms will reoccur if the causes are not remedied.
- [Icon] C. Third, accept what can't be changed.**
The widow or divorcee can't do anything but accept the situation and try to form new relationships.
- [Icon] D. Fourth, alter what can be changed:**
 1. DEVELOP SELF-ESTEEM by realizing:
 - a. Each person is valued and loved (Jn. 3:16).
"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.
 - b. Every sin can be forgiven (1Jn. 1:9).
If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
 - c. Each one has abilities and gifts which can be used and developed (Rom. 12:6).
And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let each exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith;
 2. TAKE RISKS... by trying to enlarge one's social circle. Risk failure, it's worth it.
 3. LEARN SOCIAL SKILLS... by reviewing proper etiquette and patterns of behavior.
- [Icon] E. Fifth, meet the spiritual need.**
Loneliness will never be completely cured until that person meets JC. Jesus is the best friend a person could ever have:
 1. He has loved us unconditionally (Rom 8:35,37).
Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?... [37] But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.

2. He has adopted us into the family of God (Rom. 8:14-17).
 For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. [15] For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, “Abba! Father!” [16] The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, [17] and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him* in order that we may also be glorified with *Him*.
3. He is a friend who sticks closer than a brother does (Prov. 18:24).
 A man of *many* friends *comes* to ruin, But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.
4. He is our mediator in salvation & prayer (1Tim. 2:5).
 For there is one God, *and* one mediator also between God and men, *the* man Christ Jesus,
5. He sent the HS to be our intercessor (Rom. 8:26).
 And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for *us* with groanings too deep for words;

VII. PREVENTING LONELINESS.

-  A. Five things can be done to prevent loneliness:
 1. BUILD THE LOCAL CHURCH... Have different kinds of ministries and fellowship events to keep people involved (Ac. 2:42; “fellowship”).
 2. COPE WITH CHANGE... Technology, mobility, and convenience are changing things that keep us from developing relationships (Heb. 10:24). and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds,
 3. INSTILL ACCEPTANCE AND CONFIDENCE... we must teach that everyone is valuable, worthwhile and able to relate with others (Rev. 3:4). ‘But you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk with Me in white; for they are worthy.
 4. STRENGTHEN FAMILY TIES... This is done by better communication, working, playing, and eating together (Eph. 6:1-4). Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. [2] HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER (which is the first commandment with a promise), [3] THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH YOU, AND THAT YOU MAY LIVE LONG ON THE EARTH. [4] And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.
 5. GROW SPIRITUALLY... This builds one’s relationship with God through X. This means a lot of prayer and Bible study (Jas. 4:2c). ...You do not have because you do not ask.

VIII. CONCLUSION AND INVITATION.

-  A. Loneliness may not be a problem you have in your life. But those who suffer from a low self-esteem and the inability to create or sustain lasting relationships feel lonely.
- B. May we take this lesson to heart to know that with the many problems in society there are many tired, scared, and lonely people who need a friend. You may be that one person who can help them overcome their feelings of loneliness.
- C. Jesus wants to be their Friend, and yours too.
- D. Plan of salvation for non-Xians, erring Xians.