

“He Was There Alone”

Introduction. Matthew 14:23 says, “And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.” Loneliness is a feeling that is common to all humans at one time or another. Even great men of God, such as Elijah and David, have suffered these feelings of loneliness.

A 2006 study in the American Sociological Review found that Americans on average had only two close friends to confide in, down from an average of three in 1985. The percentage of people who said they had no confidant rose from 10% to almost 25%. The existentialist views loneliness as the essence of being human. Each human being comes into the world alone, travels through life as a separate person, and ultimately dies alone. Thomas Wolfe wrote, “The whole conviction of my life now rests upon the belief that loneliness, far from being a rare and curious phenomenon, peculiar to myself and a few other solitary men, is the central and inevitable fact of human existence.”

But in Genesis 2:18-25, God said that it is not good for man to be alone. God made us to be social creatures who crave companionship. Some like isolation, but most will do whatever necessary to prevent its being a long-term part of their lives. Since the Bible is able to furnish us completely and reveals God’s provisions for everything pertaining to life and godliness, we know that the Lord has an answer for this problem.

I. ***The Causes Of Loneliness***

A. No suitable companion.

1. While this maybe unfortunate, there are outcomes worse than loneliness! Getting desperate and making a poor choice is far worse.
2. Remember that God’s law says that you are to be together as husband and wife until death (Matthew 19:6; Romans 7:1-3).

B. Unscriptural divorce.

1. Remaining alone is the only way some can please God (Matthew 19:11-12). This, again, shows the need for a careful choice of a mate.
2. It also shows the importance of couples working out their problems rather than putting themselves in a terrible and tempting state of loneliness. However, if the problems cannot be worked out, then you must be strong.

C. Death of a loved one.

1. There are no words that can adequately describe the sense of loneliness which can result from the loss of a loved one: child, parent, spouse, or sibling.

2. Several years ago, I heard of a woman who was well 100 years old tell of her childhood. She saw her father sold as a slave and never saw him again. When asked if there were disadvantages to living to be so old, she replied, "Yes, the worst part of growing old is that I have outlived all my children."

D. Serious illness.

1. Depression is one of the most common complications of chronic illness. It is estimated that up to one-third of individuals with a serious medical condition experience symptoms of depression, which can lead to severe feelings of loneliness.
2. For someone who was unfortunate enough to be stricken with leprosy under the Old Law, isolation was the only prescription (Leviticus 13:46; Numbers 5:2-3).

E. Separation of friends.

1. Paul separated himself from his beloved Timothy (1 Thessalonians 3:1-2). Near the end of his life he felt alone because no one stood with him (2 Timothy 4:16).
2. During a PBS program on Abraham Lincoln, a blue box was displayed which held the five items in the President's pockets on April 14, 1865: a handkerchief, a pen knife, a eyeglasses case, a purse containing a \$5 bill, and some old newspaper clippings.
 - a) The clippings discussed the great deeds of Abraham Lincoln, and one of them actually reports a speech by John Bright which says that Abraham Lincoln is "one of the greatest men of all times."
 - b) The world now knows that Mr. Bright was right in his assessment of Lincoln, but in 1865 millions shared a different opinion. The President was in lonely agony because of a cruel, costly war. The mental picture of this great leader seeking solace and self-assurance from a few old newspaper clippings as he reads them under the flickering flame of a candle all alone in the Oval Office is very sad.

II. ***Coping With Loneliness***

A. Pray and meditate.

1. Jeremiah intensely felt his life of solitude (Jeremiah 15:10, 17; 16:1-2, 5, 8). When you feel alone, you can turn to God (Psalm 25:16; 142:3-7).
2. Before Jesus chose His apostles, He went up into a mountain alone to pray (Luke 6:12). His loneliness did not dim His persistence.

B. Learn more of God's word.

1. Study is wonderful for the soul (1 Timothy 4:16; 2 Timothy 2:15). You need to be grounded because loneliness is a state where cults will find you most vulnerable.

2. Learning has often put fire in my soul. Pray that your loneliness may spur you into finding something great enough to live for, and great enough to die for.
- C. Be hospitable.
1. You do not have to shut yourself up, invite others into your home. All Christians are to be "hospitable" (Proverbs 18:24; Romans 12:13; 1 Peter 4:9).
 2. Reaching out to someone who shares the same feelings could give you so much happiness, and it is a joy for Christians to have brethren who can help them!
- D. Work for others.
1. Loneliness is a product of the mind. We feel sorry for ourselves and slump into boredom and inactivity.
 2. Each of us need to see others who need us (Numbers 32:6; Joshua 1:15; cf. Acts 9:36-39). Paul gave the best remedy for loneliness (1 Corinthians 15:58).

III. **Christians Are Not Alone**

- A. In the strangling grip of Golgotha, our Savior experienced the greatest loneliness.
1. One had betrayed Him, His friends had already fled (Matthew 26:47-49, 56).
 2. Even the Father turned away (Matthew 27:45-46).
- B. Truly Jesus knows loneliness (Hebrews 4:15), but because of His sacrifice, God is ever with us (Psalm 23:4; Matthew 28:20; John 16:32; Hebrews 13:5).
- C. When Paul was in his deepest hour of need, he knew he had the Lord (2 Timothy 4:17). May we always have that enduring knowledge and comfort.
1. As his UCLA football team suffered through a poor season in the early 1970s, head coach Pepper Rodgers came under intense criticism and pressure from alumni and fans. It got so bad, he remembers with a smile, that friends became hard to find.
 2. "My dog was my only true friend," Rodgers says of that year. "I told my wife that every man needs at least two good friends -- and she bought me another dog."

Conclusion. Romans 14:7 says, "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself." Loneliness is not a sin; it is a by-product of being human. Loneliness will cripple you if you let it. Happy is the one who has a loving spouse and family, the Christian who is a member of a close-knit congregation, and the individual who recognizes the personal relationship he can have with a caring Shepherd.

I know there are many reasons in later years to feel the burden and ache of loneliness. So many of you have outlived that cherished person you married and built life with, and close friends of many years have passed on. But every one of those people who have obeyed Jesus is part of the great cloud of witnesses, waiting to greet you when you finally arrive in eternity.

Indeed, "two are better than one" (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12). T. O. Chisholm wrote, "Be with me, Lord, when loneliness o'ertakes me, When I must weep amid the fires of pain; And when shall come the hour of 'my departure' For 'worlds unknown,' O Lord, be with me then." Loneliness is a problem the Christian can handle. What a blessing it is to be a Christian!