

*The five things you need to know to gain*

Freedom

from

*Loneliness*



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# One is the Loneliest Number

Harry Nilsson wrote a pop song that reached number five on the U.S. top 100 Billboard hits in 1969 called *One is the Loneliest Number*. Nilsson wrote the song after calling someone only to get a busy signal. As he listened to the beep. . .beep. . .beep sounds, an idea for a song entered his mind. In fact the busy signal tone became the opening notes for the first line of the song; *One is the loneliest number that you'll ever do. . .*

Loneliness is one of the most painful experiences of life affecting every age and socio-economic bracket. The empty house at night after the funeral, the couples you no longer see after the divorce, and even the teen who is pushed away from the lunch-room table by her fellow classmates because she is a bit



overweight all feel the emptiness of being alone. Even in our world of instant social media, we find it a hollow substitute for real companionship. No one seems to care!

## **Loneliness is not normal!**

The Bible, a collection of 66 smaller books written by forty different authors who lived over a period of 1600 years, tells us about God and why He created this world. God is a personal God who is the source of pure love. And He created us in His own image so that we could enjoy a personal relationship with Him—returning His love and learning how to love others.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth and everything in the world. He created all of the plants and animals and finished His creative work by making mankind.

### **Genesis 1: 26-27; 2:7-9; 15-22**

Then God said, “Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground.”

**27** So God created human beings in his own image.

In the image of God he created them;  
male and female he created them.

**7** Then the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground. He breathed the breath of life into the man's nostrils, and the man became a living person.

**8** Then the LORD God planted a garden in Eden in the east, and there he placed the man he had made. **9** The LORD God made all sorts of trees grow up from the ground—trees that were beautiful and that produced delicious fruit. In the middle of the garden he placed the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

**15** The LORD God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and watch over it. **16** But the LORD God warned him, "You may freely eat the fruit of every tree in the garden— **17** except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die."

**18** Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him." **19** So the LORD God formed from the ground all the wild animals and all the birds of the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would call them, and the man chose a name for each one. **20** He gave names to all the livestock, all the birds of

the sky, and all the wild animals. But still there was no helper just right for him.

<sup>21</sup> So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep. While the man slept, the LORD God took out one of the man's ribs and closed up the opening. <sup>22</sup> Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib, and he brought her to the man.

God knew that it wasn't good for man to be alone. Loneliness is not normal. But Adam had to come to that conclusion for himself. He finally does after the Lord brings all of the animals He had created before him. Adam was given a wonderful privilege to study each animal and then name them. But in all of his research, there was not one animal he could talk to and have a personal relationship with as a suitable companion until God created the woman.

## **The Beginnings of Loneliness**

Everything was perfect in the world God had created until Satan showed up. Coming in the form of a snake, he convinced Adam and Eve that God's personal love relationship with them was flawed—they could even do better for themselves by eating from the one tree God told them not to eat from; the tree of the knowledge of

good and evil. Satan cast doubt upon God's love for them by asserting that God didn't want Adam and Eve to become like Him, knowing good and evil. He even lied by telling them that they would not die, as God had promised, if they ate of the tree. Genesis 3 tells us the outcome:

### **Genesis 3:6-19**

<sup>6</sup> The woman was convinced. She saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it, too. <sup>7</sup> At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves.

<sup>8</sup> When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man and his wife heard the LORD God walking about in the garden. So they hid from the LORD God among the trees. <sup>9</sup> Then the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"

<sup>10</sup> He replied, "I heard you walking in the garden, so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked."

<sup>11</sup> "Who told you that you were naked?" the LORD God asked. "Have you eaten from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat?"

<sup>12</sup> The man replied, “It was the woman you gave me who gave me the fruit, and I ate it.” <sup>13</sup> Then the LORD God asked the woman, “What have you done?” “The serpent deceived me,” she replied. “That’s why I ate it.”

<sup>14</sup> Then the LORD God said to the serpent,

“Because you have done this, you are cursed  
more than all animals, domestic and wild.  
You will crawl on your belly,  
groveling in the dust as long as you live.

<sup>15</sup> And I will cause hostility between you and the woman,  
and between your offspring and her offspring.  
He will strike your head,  
and you will strike his heel.”

<sup>16</sup> Then he said to the woman,

“I will sharpen the pain of your pregnancy,  
and in pain you will give birth.  
And you will desire to control your husband,  
but he will rule over you.”

<sup>17</sup> And to the man he said,

“Since you listened to your wife and ate from the tree  
whose fruit I commanded you not to eat, the ground is cursed  
because of you. All your life you will struggle to scratch a

living from it.

<sup>18</sup> It will grow thorns and thistles for you,  
though you will eat of its grains.

<sup>19</sup> By the sweat of your brow  
will you have food to eat  
until you return to the ground  
from which you were made.

For you were made from dust,  
and to dust you will return.”

Because Adam and Eve listened to Satan and decided that “getting more” was better than enjoying God’s perfect relationship and returning His love, selfishness enters God’s world and begins to flow through mankind. What follows is estrangement and separation. These are the two culprits behind much of the loneliness we face in our lives, including the ultimate separation—death.

The couple just celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary in their new home in a beautiful gated community just outside of Phoenix. They were glad to get away from the cold weather and the on-going drama of their adoptive son who ruined his marriage by getting hooked on drugs. They tried everything to help him, to no avail. Now they don’t even see their three precious

grandkids anymore. The wife thought, “Well at least we have each other.” But that too was short lived when her husband suddenly died of a massive stroke. Now she was really alone and there was nowhere else to go. They left everything and everybody behind. The loneliness and pain were so great that one night as she sat alone in her home, she contemplated ending her life. The more she thought about it, the more unacceptable the idea became: “Who would even bother to check on me? No one would find me for days or even weeks on end. Who really cares about me?”

The same God who said that it was not good for man to be alone, also tells us, through the remaining pages of the Bible, that He doesn't want us to be estranged from Him or to be lonely. In verse 15 (above), God gives a promise that someone from the family of the woman will fatally wound the head of the serpent (Satan). This action will ultimately impact the entire world and end our estrangement. We will see this promise unfold through the rest of the Bible.

I hate to be a spoiler by telling someone how a book ends. But in this case, let me just say, loneliness ends forever!



# A Lonely Runaway

Being away from our family and friends for an extended period of time can bring feelings of loneliness. Not having anyone who is able to relate to us or to our unique situation can make us feel all alone. But perhaps the most painful feelings of loneliness develop when we have been, or believe to be rejected by family and friends.

Remember back to elementary or middle school when on the playground, you tried to hang around a group of kids who you



thought were your friends? But the moment you tried to join them, they told you to beat it. Their huddle just grew tighter and you were on the outs. Do you

remember feeling like a stranger at your own school? These “tight huddles” exist in other places of life and even throughout adulthood. Sometimes these tight huddles of rejection are real. And sometimes they are nothing more than our own false perceptions and judgments based upon our past rejections. Sadly, there are many people who feel that even God has rejected them. He is in a “tight huddle” with some people, but not with them. Guilt, shame, and memories of all the bad things that have happened in their lives often lead people to believe God has eternally rejected them.

Jacob, the son of Isaac and the grandson of Abraham, was asked to leave his family. He had stolen the family blessing away from his brother Esau by deceiving his blinded father. As the eldest son, Esau would have received a double inheritance and be the new patriarch of the family. It would be today’s equivalent of becoming the CEO of the family business, plus majority share holder. Is it any wonder why Esau threatened to kill his brother. Even Jacob’s own parents advised him to run far away to a place called Haran.

## **Genesis 28:10-17**

<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile, Jacob left Beersheba and traveled toward Haran. <sup>11</sup> At sundown he arrived at a good place to set up camp and stopped there for the night. Jacob found a stone to rest his head against and lay down to sleep. <sup>12</sup> As he slept, he dreamed of a stairway that reached from the earth up to heaven. And he saw the angels of God going up and down the stairway. <sup>13</sup> At the top of the stairway stood the LORD, and he said, “I am the LORD, the God of your grandfather Abraham, and the God of your father, Isaac. The ground you are lying on belongs to you. I am giving it to you and your descendants. <sup>14</sup> Your descendants will be as numerous as the dust of the earth! They will spread out in all directions—to the west and the east, to the north and the south. And all the families of the earth will be blessed through you and your descendants. <sup>15</sup> What’s more, I am with you, and I will protect you wherever you go. One day I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have finished giving you everything I have promised you.” <sup>16</sup> Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, “Surely the LORD is in this place, and I wasn’t even aware of it!” <sup>17</sup> But he was also afraid and said, “What an awesome place this is! It is none other than the house of God, the very gateway to heaven!”

We suggested earlier, that the two main causes behind our loneliness were estrangement and separation. Jacob

is experiencing both of these as he runs away from home. His brother hates him and wants to kill him. He is forced to run away from the people he loved, and the only home he knew, to live with his uncle Laban in Haran, some 450 miles away. However, on the first night of his lonely and fearful trip, God approached him personally through a dream. Jacob's father knew God personally, and his grandfather Abraham knew God as a friend, but Jacob had no such experience until God visualized a staircase with angels ascending and descending into heaven doing His bidding in the world. Ultimately it was God's words of promise to Jacob that brought hope and comfort to this lonely runaway, including the realization that God desired to enter into a personal relationship with him. He would no longer be traveling alone.

## **The Runaway Returns!**

Moving ahead in time, we see that God was faithful to His promises. Jacob finds his uncle, marries his two cousins and has 12 sons and 1 daughter. He grew wealthy with sheep and goats, even though his father-in-law had treated him like a slave. But after 20 years, God finally approached Jacob and told him that it was time

to go home. It was time to end the separation and the estrangement and return home to his father, and, to his brother Esau.

God was with Jacob over the course of 20 years. But will God be with him as he finally meets his angry brother? Jacob is still afraid, but he moves forward. Read the following passage to see how it ends for Jacob.

### **Genesis 33:1-4**

Then Jacob looked up and saw Esau coming with his 400 men. So he divided the children among Leah, Rachel, and his two servant wives. <sup>2</sup> He put the servant wives and their children at the front, Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph last. <sup>3</sup> Then Jacob went on ahead. As he approached his brother, he bowed to the ground seven times before him. <sup>4</sup> Then Esau ran to meet him and embraced him, threw his arms around his neck, and kissed him. And they both wept.

Like Jacob, fear of rejection often keeps us from moving forward in our lives. And many of the inner voices of doubt about ourselves and of our own critical judgements of others can keep us from experiencing new and restored relationships. This even includes seeking a personal relationship with God.

Loneliness is not normal. Being estranged from others and especially from God is not how God intended for us to live. But, as with Jacob, God always makes the first move desiring to restore and establish a relationship with us. He will even be with us and help us meet our own Esaus if we seek and ask Him.

## Reflection

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1. Have you ever felt the pain of being on the outside of a “tight huddle”? What was the most painful part of being an outsider?
2. Why do some people think God could never be in a “tight huddle” with them? Do you think Jacob had this attitude?
3. Do you have any Esaus in your life? Have you ever tried to move forward and restore these broken relationships?

## Mara the Lonely

It was the perfect family. Naomi and her husband had two grown boys ready to marry. She couldn't wait to get her hands on grandkids. But then a drought on the farm forced them to move to a new area.

The two boys quickly found eligible bachelorettes and it seemed like everything was going to be just fine in this new home until the unlikely happened. Her husband died. The loss was great, but she still had her two boys to care for her. She still had many good things to look forward to in her life. Soon grandkids would come and she longed for the day when she could even possibly see the third generation be born. But that dream soon evaporated, when after 10 years, neither one of her boys gave her any heirs. And then, her two boys died. Death, the ultimate separation, strikes again.

In Naomi's world, being a widow without any sons was about as bad as it got for a woman. Now add two more widows who had to be fed, and the situation couldn't

have been any worse for Naomi. Lets read what Naomi asks her two daughters in-law to do next.

### **Ruth 1:6-18**

<sup>6</sup> Then Naomi heard in Moab that the LORD had blessed his people in Judah by giving them good crops again. So Naomi and her daughters-in-law got ready to leave Moab to return to her homeland. <sup>7</sup> With her two daughters-in-law she set out from the place where she had been living, and they took the road that would lead them back to Judah.

<sup>8</sup> But on the way, Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, “Go back to your mothers’ homes. And may the LORD reward you for your kindness to your husbands and to me. <sup>9</sup> May the LORD bless you with the security of another marriage.” Then she kissed them good-bye, and they all broke down and wept.

<sup>10</sup> “No,” they said. “We want to go with you to your people.”

<sup>11</sup> But Naomi replied, “Why should you go on with me? Can I still give birth to other sons who could grow up to be your husbands? <sup>12</sup> No, my daughters, return to your parents’ homes, for I am too old to marry again. And even if it were possible, and I were to get married tonight and bear sons, then what? <sup>13</sup> Would you wait for them to grow up and refuse to marry someone else? No, of course not, my daughters!

Things are far more bitter for me than for you, because the LORD himself has raised his fist against me.”

<sup>14</sup> And again they wept together, and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-bye. But Ruth clung tightly to Naomi. <sup>15</sup> “Look,” Naomi said to her, “your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods. You should do the same.”

<sup>16</sup> But Ruth replied, “Don’t ask me to leave you and turn back. Wherever you go, I will go; wherever you live, I will live. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God. <sup>17</sup> Wherever you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD punish me severely if I allow anything but death to separate us!” <sup>18</sup> When Naomi saw that Ruth was determined to go with her, she said nothing more.



Naomi persuaded Orpah to go back to her parents, but Ruth refused to go back. Was Naomi’s request for the two women to return to their parents and their people a loving gesture or did she simply want to be left alone in her misery? Many people who have faced loss and even abuse try to build

up huge walls and will often send people away, desiring to be left alone in their pain and self-pity. In the case of Naomi, her daughter-in-law Ruth persisted and went along with Naomi back to Naomi's old home of Bethlehem. Its there she meets some of her old acquaintances and she tells them about her misery.

### **Ruth 1:19-22**

<sup>19</sup> So the two of them continued on their journey. When they came to Bethlehem, the entire town was excited by their arrival. "Is it really Naomi?" the women asked.

<sup>20</sup> "Don't call me Naomi," she responded. "Instead, call me Mara, for the Almighty has made life very bitter for me. <sup>21</sup> I went away full, but the LORD has brought me home empty. Why call me Naomi when the LORD has caused me to suffer and the Almighty has sent such tragedy upon me?"

<sup>22</sup> So Naomi returned from Moab, accompanied by her daughter-in-law Ruth, the young Moabite woman. They arrived in Bethlehem in late spring, at the beginning of the barley harvest.

Naomi, whose name in Hebrew means "beautiful" wasn't feeling very beautiful. She tells the women of Bethlehem to call her Mara, which means "bitterness".

Her new status in life is now emptiness because the Lord afflicted her with tragedy.

Sadly, Naomi overlooked two things. She forgot about her daughter-in-law Ruth who had not left her side. And the other fact was that God had brought her back to Bethlehem, which means “house of bread”. While Naomi blamed God for what happened to her family, God had not left Naomi, and in fact, was preparing to bless and restore what was lost.

### **Ruth 2:1-12**

Now there was a wealthy and influential man in Bethlehem named Boaz, who was a relative of Naomi’s husband, Elimelech.

<sup>2</sup> One day Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, “Let me go out into the harvest fields to pick up the stalks of grain left behind by anyone who is kind enough to let me do it.”

Naomi replied, “All right, my daughter, go ahead.” <sup>3</sup> So Ruth went out to gather grain behind the harvesters. And as it happened, she found herself working in a field that belonged to Boaz, the relative of her father-in-law, Elimelech.

<sup>4</sup> While she was there, Boaz arrived from Bethlehem and greeted the harvesters. “The LORD be with you!” he said.

“The LORD bless you!” the harvesters replied.

<sup>5</sup> Then Boaz asked his foreman, “Who is that young woman over there? Who does she belong to?”

<sup>6</sup> And the foreman replied, “She is the young woman from Moab who came back with Naomi. <sup>7</sup> She asked me this morning if she could gather grain behind the harvesters. She has been hard at work ever since, except for a few minutes’ rest in the shelter.”

<sup>8</sup> Boaz went over and said to Ruth, “Listen, my daughter. Stay right here with us when you gather grain; don’t go to any other fields. Stay right behind the young women working in my field. <sup>9</sup> See which part of the field they are harvesting, and then follow them. I have warned the young men not to treat you roughly. And when you are thirsty, help yourself to the water they have drawn from the well.”

<sup>10</sup> Ruth fell at his feet and thanked him warmly. “What have I done to deserve such kindness?” she asked. “I am only a foreigner.”

<sup>11</sup> “Yes, I know,” Boaz replied. “But I also know about everything you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband. I have heard how you left your father and mother and your own land to live here among complete strangers. <sup>12</sup> May the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose

wings you have come to take refuge, reward you fully for what you have done.”

The Lord led Ruth to glean the left-over barley in Boaz’s field which provided food for both Naomi and Ruth. But when Boaz realized that Ruth was the same woman who remained faithful to her mother-in-law, Boaz, a bachelor from Naomi’s family, fell in love.

In the Jewish law, there was a provision made for widows, especially those who had no male heirs. The law of “Kinsman-Redeemer” allowed Boaz to not only buy the abandoned property of Naomi’s late husband, but he was also responsible to carry on Naomi’s family line by marrying the widow of her son—Ruth. This he gladly did! Listen to the words of the women after Naomi’s first grandchild was born.

### **Ruth 4:13-17**

<sup>13</sup> So Boaz took Ruth into his home, and she became his wife. When he slept with her, the LORD enabled her to become pregnant, and she gave birth to a son. <sup>14</sup> Then the women of the town said to Naomi, “Praise the LORD, who has now provided a redeemer for your family! May this child be famous in Israel. <sup>15</sup> May he restore your youth and care for you in your old age. For he is the son of your daughter-in-law

who loves you and has been better to you than seven sons!”  
<sup>16</sup> Naomi took the baby and cuddled him to her breast. And she cared for him as if he were her own. <sup>17</sup> The neighbor women said, “Now at last Naomi has a son again!” And they named him Obed. He became the father of Jesse and the grandfather of David.

## Reflection

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1. Why do some people erect huge walls around themselves when they are hurting inside?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Has the Lord ever sent you a “Ruth” when you faced a painful time in your life? Did your Ruth get past your huge walls of seclusion?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Boaz became Naomi and Ruth’s kinsmen-redeemer. How would you describe the role of a “redeemer”?

## A Lonely Sufferer

While there are many lonely people in our world, and you may consider yourself one of them, there are also a number of people who sadly take advantage of the lonely. Some of the most vulnerable, lonely people are folks who are separated from their families and friends and are in times of transition. A few decades ago, followers of Rev. Moon (Moonies) and followers of Hare Krishna would hang out in airports selling flowers, while looking for lonely new arrivals. They and many other cult groups would also hang out around college campuses, in a sense, preying upon lonely people in transition. Even today, through social media, people who are lonely are often exploited for financial gain, or nefarious purposes. I recently spotted a billboard along side of the road advertising a family law firm. The message on the sign said, “We are YOUR family!”. If

that's true, I'm sure they wouldn't mind having all of us over for Christmas dinner.

There is One who not only understands what its like to be lonely, but He also wants us to be a part of His family. Jesus left His heavenly home and became our “kin” taking on our nature with flesh and blood, born as a baby to Mary. He came because man had rejected God (see page 9) which brought estrangement and separation from Him. We still reject God and hide from Him. But Jesus came as our “Kinsman-Redeemer” (remember Ruth and Naomi) to restore our broken relationship with God and end our eternal estrangement from Him (hell). More than 700 years before Christ was born, an Old Testament prophet named Isaiah foretells how God would restore us to Himself through Jesus.

### **Isaiah 53:1-6**

Who has believed our message?

To whom has the LORD revealed his powerful arm?

<sup>2</sup> My servant grew up in the LORD's presence like a tender green shoot, like a root in dry ground.

There was nothing beautiful or majestic about his appearance, nothing to attract us to him.

<sup>3</sup> He was despised and rejected—

a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief.  
We turned our backs on him and looked the other way.  
He was despised, and we did not care.

<sup>4</sup> Yet it was our weaknesses he carried;  
it was our sorrows that weighed him down.  
And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God,  
a punishment for his own sins!

<sup>5</sup> But he was pierced for our rebellion,  
crushed for our sins.

He was beaten so we could be whole.

He was whipped so we could be healed.

<sup>6</sup> All of us, like sheep, have strayed away.

We have left God's paths to follow our own.  
Yet the LORD laid on him the sins of us all.

Jesus was sent by  
God into a world  
that rejected Him  
just as Adam and  
Eve had rejected  
His perfect love,  
selfishly thinking  
they could do  
better without  
Him. The



punishment for rejecting God is eternal separation from His goodness. But Jesus came and bore our punishment.

### **Mark 15:22-39**

<sup>22</sup> And they brought Jesus to a place called Golgotha (which means “Place of the Skull”). <sup>23</sup> They offered him wine drugged with myrrh, but he refused it.

<sup>24</sup> Then the soldiers nailed him to the cross. They divided his clothes and threw dice to decide who would get each piece. <sup>25</sup> It was nine o’clock in the morning when they crucified him. <sup>26</sup> A sign announced the charge against him. It read, “The King of the Jews.” <sup>27</sup> Two revolutionaries were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left.

<sup>29</sup> The people passing by shouted abuse, shaking their heads in mockery. “Ha! Look at you now!” they yelled at him. “You said you were going to destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days. <sup>30</sup> Well then, save yourself and come down from the cross!”

<sup>31</sup> The leading priests and teachers of religious law also mocked Jesus. “He saved others,” they scoffed, “but he can’t save himself! <sup>32</sup> Let this Messiah, this King of Israel, come down from the cross so we can see it and believe him!” Even the men who were crucified with Jesus ridiculed him.

33 At noon, darkness fell across the whole land until three o'clock. 34 Then at three o'clock Jesus called out with a loud voice, "*Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?*" which means "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"

35 Some of the bystanders misunderstood and thought he was calling for the prophet Elijah. 36 One of them ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, holding it up to him on a reed stick so he could drink. "Wait!" he said. "Let's see whether Elijah comes to take him down!"

37 Then Jesus uttered another loud cry and breathed his last. 38 And the curtain in the sanctuary of the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.

39 When the Roman officer who stood facing him saw how he had died, he exclaimed, "This man truly was the Son of God!"

Just before Jesus died on the cross, he cried out an agonizing plea that only those who are separated from God and estranged from Him understand. God's rejection of Jesus was a rejection we all should have experienced. The depth of Jesus' love to take our place opens the door for us to be accepted by the Father into His family. By accepting and trusting what Christ did in our place, the estrangement and separation from God ends. And through His Holy Spirit who enters our

hearts, the estrangement and separation we experience with others can begin to heal.

Christ doesn't exploit the lonely, but He took the initiative to liberate them and to be a "friend who sticks closer than a brother". As we accept and experience His love, we become free to leave our huge protective walls. We not only embrace the "Ruths" God sends our way, but we also leave our walls reaching out to others in love. The ultimate cure for loneliness is love!

## Reflection

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1. Do you think Jesus knows what it feels like to be lonely? Could He relate to you?
2. Why did the Father reject Jesus on the cross?
3. How does love become the ultimate cure for loneliness?

# Never Alone Again!

Two boys were pushed into one foster home after another. The two brothers would just get settled into a routine, and then they would have to pack up and go to another foster home.

Finally, the two boys were adopted by a family, and their reluctance to bond with their new father and mother became apparent on the first day. Perhaps the most painful part for these new adoptive parents were the sounds



of their new sons crying themselves to sleep every night. When asked why they were crying, the oldest boy reluctantly opened up and said: ***We are afraid that***

***we'll have to leave and go somewhere else.*** The parents hugged their two boys and said, ***No one will ever take you away again. You are part of our family from now on!***

The two boys didn't understand the difference between being a foster child and the permanence of being an adoptive child. They had nothing to fear. Their adoption papers were signed and sealed.

When we become Christians, we too become adoptive children, signed and sealed. Read the following verses from the Apostle Paul's letter to the Romans.

### **Romans 8:14-16**

<sup>14</sup> For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.

<sup>15</sup> So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, "Abba, Father." <sup>16</sup> For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children.

As God's children, we can talk to Him through prayer and read the Bible (His words to us) and experience His presence in our hearts. Listen to the Apostle Paul's own testimony of God's comforting presence in his heart

when he faced trials and was rejected by others for his faith in Jesus.

## **II Corinthians 1:3-7**

<sup>3</sup> All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort. <sup>4</sup> He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us. <sup>5</sup> For the more we suffer for Christ, the more God will shower us with his comfort through Christ. <sup>6</sup> Even when we are weighed down with troubles, it is for your comfort and salvation! For when we ourselves are comforted, we will certainly comfort you. Then you can patiently endure the same things we suffer. <sup>7</sup> We are confident that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in the comfort God gives us.

## **God places the Lonely in Families. . .**

One of the most beautiful promises God makes on behalf of the lonely is found in the book of Psalms. Through David, God tells us in Psalm 68, God is:

Father to the fatherless, defender of widows—  
this is God, whose dwelling is holy.

<sup>6</sup> God places the lonely in families;

Not only do we have a place in God's family as His adoptive children, but He also wants us to enjoy being with other family members. The Lord established the Church for that very purpose. Churches exist so that we may share our faith with one another, encourage one another in the faith, and grow together like a body grows and functions with its many different parts. The Apostle Paul uses this analogy in Ephesians 4.

### **Ephesians 4:11-16**

<sup>11</sup> Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. <sup>12</sup> Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. <sup>13</sup> This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.

<sup>14</sup> Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. <sup>15</sup> Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. <sup>16</sup> He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own

special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.

You may have found that there isn't a perfect church. Sometimes, even though God places the lonely in families, His church families fail to embrace the lonely. However, if you are God's child, He has given you gifts and His love that needs to be shared within a local church. Don't go running back to your high walls of seclusion! Pray and ask the Lord to show you where He wants you to serve. You may be just the person God wants to use to teach others how to love the lonely.

### **Eternal Togetherness. . .**

We began our study in a place called Paradise. It was here God placed Adam and Eve. This was a place and time of perfect togetherness with God and between Adam and Eve. There was no estrangement and no separation.

The Bible tells us that a time is coming when the Lord will make all things new. He will not only recreate the heavens and the earth, but He will also restore our bodies and will reunite us with those who became

separated from us through death. The Apostle Paul tells us what will happen when Jesus finally returns.

### **I Thessalonians 4:13-18**

<sup>13</sup> And now, dear brothers and sisters, we want you to know what will happen to the believers who have died so you will not grieve like people who have no hope.<sup>14</sup> For since we believe that Jesus died and was raised to life again, we also believe that when Jesus returns, God will bring back with him the believers who have died.

<sup>15</sup> We tell you this directly from the Lord: We who are still living when the Lord returns will not meet him ahead of those who have died. <sup>16</sup> For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. First, the believers who have died will rise from their graves. <sup>17</sup> Then, together with them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Then we will be with the Lord forever. <sup>18</sup> So encourage each other with these words.

Did you notice in the passage that when Christ returns all of us will meet the Lord **together** and that we will be with Him for ever? No more estrangement, no more separation and no more loneliness.

## Reflection

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1. What makes heaven the exact opposite of hell according to the I Thessalonians 4 passage?
  
2. Are you an adopted child of the Lord, or do you feel more like a foster child? Do you feel like God is a million miles away and that you are on the “outs” with Him? One of the ways you can be certain of your standing as a child of God and begin a personal relationship with Him is ask Him to make you a family member. Pray the following prayer:

***Father, like Adam and Eve, I've rejected You and thought only of myself. I've sinned against You and others. I believe You sent Jesus to suffer and die in my place and I accept and trust His gift of love offered on the cross for my sins. I do not want to be separated from You ever again so I ask that you live in my heart and teach me how to love as your little child. Amen***

# Summary

The Bible tells us that loneliness is not normal. God made us in His image to fellowship with Him and with others. Loneliness is caused by estrangement and separation from God and others. But the Lord takes the initiative to restore our broken relationships with Him and with others. He sends us friends and family to pursue us when we feel like hiding behind huge protective walls, and He encourages us to leave these lonely places of rejection and self-pity and seek out others to love and to forgive just as He did with us through His Son Jesus.

Ultimately, the Lord places us in families to enjoy giving and receiving the love of others. These are family ties which will live on for eternity.

We would like to send you another booklet which will give you an overview of the entire Bible from Genesis to Revelation. This booklet is called ***Guide to Happiness.***



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