

OVERCOMING LONELINESS

A **MANNAHOUSE** RESOURCE



INTRODUCTION

Loneliness has troubled mankind since the beginning of time.

Adam's relationship with God was disrupted, and humanity has suffered from the pain of loneliness ever since.

It may be easy to understand why an unbeliever who lives in a self-centered world with no meaningful fellowship with God can suffer loneliness, but it is not so easy to understand why Christians occasionally suffer also. This is a difficult subject for many.

In this booklet we will examine this subject and offer some helpful guidelines for achieving victory over our loneliness.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title	Pages
What Is Loneliness?	3
How Does Loneliness Affect People?	4
How Common Is Loneliness?	5
What Does The Bible Say?	6
Common Causes Of Loneliness	7-12
Is There Hope?	13
How Should We Respond?	14-21
Conclusion	22

WHAT IS LONELINESS?

Loneliness is “an emotional feeling of sadness and dejection because of a lack of companionship or separation from others.”

Loneliness is a sickening feeling of being “left out”, rejected, and unwanted. It is a feeling of being removed and “cut off” from others, whether real or imagined. It is a painful awareness that we lack meaningful contact with other people.

It is a sense of inner emptiness accompanied by an intense longing to be needed and wanted by someone else.

HOW DOES LONELINESS AFFECT PEOPLE?

Whether loneliness lasts for a few moments or persists for a lifetime, it affects us in some common ways. Feelings of rejection, isolation, hopelessness, despair, and anxiety often characterize loneliness. Loneliness commonly manifests itself in a sad countenance or dejected look.

One of the predominant characteristics is a tendency to withdraw from others. Lonely people often retreat into a state of self-centeredness, discouragement, and self-pity. They often carry a “poor me” attitude which fosters a feeling that no one really cares or understands.

Occasionally, lonely people attempt to conceal their loneliness by escaping into drugs, alcohol, and other diversions.

HOW COMMON IS LONELINESS?

Loneliness is such a common problem that it periodically afflicts everyone. It has been called one of the most universal causes of human suffering.

Loneliness has no favorites. It strikes both young and old, men and women, rich and poor, educated and uneducated, healthy and unhealthy, godly and ungodly.

It is so widespread that it has reached epidemic proportions. It is estimated that **75 to 95% of all Americans suffer from chronic loneliness.** It is a major source of unhappiness and pain in today's world.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

Though the word “loneliness” is not mentioned in the Bible, the scriptures refer to many incidents of loneliness in the lives of godly men.

- **Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Job, David, Elijah, Jeremiah, Nehemiah, and Paul all had to deal with periods of loneliness.**
- **David** spoke of his loneliness: *“I lie awake, and am like a sparrow ALONE on the housetop”* (Psalms 102:7).
- **Paul** coped with loneliness in his imprisonment: *“At my first defense no one stood with me, BUT ALL FORSOOK ME”* (II Tim. 4:16).

COMMON CAUSES OF LONELINESS

One of the most significant, underlying causes of loneliness is the present condition of the world.

Our fast-paced, ever-changing, materialistic world tends to breed loneliness. **The de-humanizing spirit of this age actually isolates people from close, meaningful contact.** It disrupts relationships, severs friendships, breaks up families, destroys a neighborhood and community spirit, and causes people to avoid close relationships which could eventually end in painful separation.

The characteristics of this age tend to force relationships into shallow, short-lived experiences which often result in inevitable loneliness.

LOW SELF-ESTEEM

Lonely people often have a negative opinion of themselves. Poor self-esteem or feelings of worthlessness can be both a symptom and a cause of loneliness.

Poor self-esteem produces a destructive feeling of uselessness and inadequacy. These individuals have little self-confidence. They conclude that since they are unwanted and unloved, they are not worth anything.

When we embrace these feelings, it makes it difficult to build relationships. Low self-esteem makes people feel intimidated, weak, and shy. **These attitudes only alienate us further by causing us to withdraw from people, thus reinforcing our sense of isolation and loneliness.**

NEGATIVE ATTITUDES

Some people harbor self-defeating attitudes which create loneliness. Attitudes of self-pity, self-centeredness, anger, or fear actually drive people away and deepen the feelings of being isolated and unloved.

1. Self-pity — Self-pity contributes to loneliness. Some people nurse a “poor-little-me” attitude which ministers constant self-doubt and criticism. They frequently remind themselves that no one really cares or understands them. This negative confession only deepens the “cycle of loneliness”, and creates a negative attitude in a person’s life which others are reluctant to fellowship with.

2. Self-centeredness — Some people are so ambitious, pushy, competitive, egotistical, or critical and intolerant of others that they repel people. This conceited pride is only concerned with self. It is a quick “turn-off” to others. It soon destroys any potential relationships.

3. Anger — Some individuals cannot build relationships because of their underlying attitude of antagonism and hostility. This “uptight” characteristic intimidates others and quickly drives them away.

4. Fear — Many people are insecure, intimidated, and fearful. Fear of intimacy, rejection, or being hurt can erect barriers which prevent a person from reaching out to others and breaking the deadlock of loneliness.

SITUATIONAL CAUSES

There are certain circumstances which tend to contribute to a state of isolation and loneliness. **We all face situations which increase the potential for loneliness.**

When we are single, living alone, widowed, elderly, or grieving, we are particularly susceptible to loneliness. For example, we've all experienced homesickness and loneliness when separated from loved ones by time and distance.

Those who are in leadership positions, wealthy, exceptionally talented, newcomers to an area, foreigners, handicapped, or suffering from deformities and disease are especially subject to loneliness.

SPIRITUAL CAUSES

One of the underlying factors in loneliness is an individual's lack of vital relationship with God. Often, a deficiency in this area of the human experience will be a significant contributing factor to loneliness.

Man was created to have a meaningful relationship with God. We were destined to find our ultimate fulfillment through an intimate fellowship with our Creator. Because of man's rebellion and sin, that relationship was severed. When this divine purpose is disrupted or unrealized, men experience a spiritual emptiness which often results in loneliness.

People in the world experience a great deal of inner frustration and loneliness because of a non-existent or inadequate relationship with God.

IS THERE HOPE?

Yes! Loneliness is not a dead end. It is not a hopeless situation. **God understands the problem intimately and offers the keys to victory.**

Even Jesus endured loneliness. He tasted the ultimate agony of loneliness when He cried out on the cross, “*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?*” (Matthew 27:46).

There is genuine comfort in knowing that Christ is truly “*touched with the feeling of our infirmities*” (Heb. 4:15, KJV).

The reality that He, too, suffered the pains of loneliness assures us that He understands our hurt and can minister the divine healing and compassion which we long for.

HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND?

We must respond according to God's prescription. **There are many "quick fix" remedies which cannot adequately cure the problem.** Many suggestions have been given to help people deal with loneliness, but they usually fall short: change a job, travel, take up a hobby, read a book, go to the movies, join a club, watch television, listen to the radio, renew goals, have fun, get married, become aggressive, never be alone, etc.

These all may offer temporary relief for the pain of loneliness, but they do not deal with the problem at its deepest level, or produce the desired results.

On the following pages we will examine some important keys for successfully treating the problem of loneliness.

1. CORRECT NEGATIVE ATTITUDES

Before loneliness can be alleviated, we must go to the root. **We must challenge those destructive, self-defeating attitudes which are hindering relationships with others.**

If we have erected barriers instead of bridges, we need to make some adjustments. **We may be unconsciously manifesting negative character traits which are driving people away and reinforcing our sense of alienation and loneliness.**

We must openly deal with a self-centered, angry, or self-pitying spirit by confessing our sins to the Lord and sincerely asking Him to cleanse our hearts and help us to correct these destructive tendencies.

2. DEVELOP A GODLY SELF-IMAGE

We must forcefully challenge the sin of self-pity and self-criticism, and **correct any false perspective which tends to view ourselves as worthless, inferior, and useless.**

The Word teaches us that we have worth and dignity in Christ (1 Cor. 12:14-27). **One of Satan's greatest lies is that we have no value.** He seeks to promote this deception in order to destroy godly self-esteem and cause us to withdraw from life and drown in loneliness. If he can instill a sense of worthlessness and inferiority, he can suppress our participation in the kingdom, and hinder the work of God in our lives. **We must reject this falsehood by standing on the reality of who we really are as new creatures in Christ.**

3. WE MUST CHALLENGE OUR FEARS

We often contribute to our own loneliness by failing to bridge the self-imposed barriers of fear. **Fear only reinforces loneliness.**

Fear comes in many forms: the fear of rejection, of being hurt, of intimidation, of intimacy, and of faces and people. **If we dwell upon our fears, we will avoid forming relationships and withdraw further into a barren life of loneliness.**

We must challenge our fears by seeking a release through Christ and His Word: *“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind”* (II Tim. 1 :7).

4. WE MUST REACH OUT TO OTHERS

The popular jingle, "Reach out, reach out and touch someone" contains an important key for overcoming loneliness. **We must take the initiative to reach out to others.**

In order to build relationships, we must work towards this end. **Relationships don't happen spontaneously. They take time and effort to develop them.** Meaningful relationships are never a one way road. We must cooperate with others to build them.

Loneliness is often the result of simply failing to cultivate relationships. Even the scriptures admonish us that **"a man that hath friends MUST SHOW HIMSELF FRIENDLY"** (Prov. 18:24, KJV).

5. FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

People need people to help avoid loneliness, but ultimately, **without a meaningful relationship with Christ, loneliness will never completely disappear.**

This is no less true for Christians! It is sad to say, but many Christians still suffer loneliness simply because they have based their ultimate happiness and fulfillment in people, rather than in Christ.

We cannot ignore or minimize the God-given need for meaningful human contact, but without a fulfilling relationship with Jesus Christ, we can never be really healed of loneliness.

God earnestly desires a deeper communion with us. In Revelation 3:20 Jesus says: *“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.”*

We need not suffer loneliness if we will allow Him into our hearts and actively cultivate a vital relationship with Him. Here are some simple keys for accomplishing this:

1. **By reading and meditating upon His word**, we are brought into closer communion with Jesus (Psalms 1 :2).
2. **Through prayer**, we learn to talk with Jesus and share every area of our life with Him (Psalms 61 :1-4).
3. **Through worship and praise**, we are ushered into intimate fellowship with the very presence of God (Psalms 22:3).

6. CHRISTIAN INVOLVEMENT

“So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart” (Acts 2:46).

As Christians, God has provided the best possible environment for overcoming loneliness. He has birthed us into a spiritual family called the church.

If we draw back and live a passive, non-committed Christian life, we can remain lonely strangers even in the body of Christ. However, **if we will avail ourselves of the fellowship of the saints and actively participate in the many areas of Christian service and involvement, we will begin to build vital relationships and a sense of belonging.**

CONCLUSION

We have briefly examined the subject of loneliness. We have reviewed the significant causes and cures for loneliness. We have seen that a growing relationship with God and man forms the basis for overcoming this painful area in our life.

We need to thoughtfully consider each of the points of response covered in this booklet, and commit ourselves to making the necessary adjustments in our life. **Without an active response, the problem of loneliness will only deepen and linger.**

We would recommend that you review the counseling booklets on "Building Self-Esteem" and "Overcoming Condemnation" for further insight into this problem area.

For a brief review of the main points in this booklet, please re-read the words in bold print on each page.



CAMPUS LOCATIONS

PORTLAND CAMPUS

9200 NE Fremont St
Portland, Oregon 97220

TIGARD CAMPUS

12244 SW Garden Pl
Tigard, Oregon 97223

MILL PLAIN CAMPUS

14311 SE Mill Plain Boulevard
Vancouver, Washington 98684

EUGENE CAMPUS

89780 N Game Farm Road
Eugene, Oregon 97408

ONLINE SERVICE

[live.mannahouse.church](https://www.live.mannahouse.church)
Youtube and Facebook

WWW.MANNAHOUSE.CHURCH 503.255.2224



SCAN FOR SUNDAY
SERVICE TIMES

WRITTEN BY: WILLIAM R. KIMBALL

COPYRIGHT © 1997 CHRISTIAN EQUIPPERS INTERNATIONAL | WWW.EQUPPER.COM