



The following notes are from the sermon given by
Wayne Flowers at Smythe Street Church
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You Are Not Alone Sunday Nov. 4th, 2018

You Are Not Alone!

How True Friendship Changes Our Lives

Today...Loneliness and social isolation.

Why it is a serious problem and what we can do about it.

For fun...how many songs in popular culture talk about loneliness?

Only the Lonely (Roy Orbison)

Are you Lonesome Tonight? (Elvis Presley)

All by Myself (Celine Dion)

I So Lonesome I Could Cry (Hank Williams)

Alone Again - Naturally (Gilbert O'Sullivan)

We do not need popular artists telling us about loneliness!

The first problem God encountered with man was loneliness!

**And the Lord God said, "It is not good that man should be alone;
I will make him a helper comparable to him." Gen. 2:18**

This is not say that marriage is the only cure for loneliness.

There are various relationships of great value in our lives.

Healthy friendships outside the marriage – whether known to just one spouse or both – will actually enhance and strengthen a marriage.

Loneliness and social isolation are huge problems.

How ironic is it that in a world where we have never been so “connected” and so accessible, we are quite possibly the most lonely generation that ever lived.

Over and over you will find headlines like:

“Loneliness at epidemic proportions.”

Two theories about the growing trend towards social isolation...

1. Loneliness is contagious.

It spreads. If I have been “bitten” by loneliness, and I approach you with symptoms of awkwardness and hesitation, you, who may also be struggling with loneliness and isolation see my symptoms as a sign of rejection. So you pull back, and then I pull back, and loneliness is perpetuated.

2. Social media can create social stress.

Social media has a place in our culture when it comes to connection and communication, but it is extremely limited and often shallow.

But, it is like a drug that gives us a temporary social high and the illusion of connection. When we come down from the high, we are more lonely than ever. And on and on the cycle goes.

Isolation!! How do we get there and why is it so dangerous?

1. We have failed to see the value in cultivating good friendships.

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labour: if either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. Eccl. 4:9,10

Two things:

We can get more done with the help of a good friend.

Illustration:

Have you ever solicited someone's help and were sorry you did?

You could have got more done by yourself.

They just talked or criticized everything you were doing!

Contrast: Someone who just digs in and helps you get the job done.

Oh how valuable!!

Pity the lone ranger.

Secondly: You will fall! Maybe not in a catastrophic way (maybe), but there will be times you will need someone to pick you up.

A friend "picks you up."

A true friend makes you want to be a better person.

They make you want to have a **better marriage**.

They make you want to be a **better Christian**.

The phrase "one another" occurs 100 times in the New Testament.

The original meaning is no surprise...mutual, each other, reciprocal.

Encourage, love, support, honour, build up, serve, forgive, be kind to...

ONE ANOTHER!!

These are Bible commands!

This enhances our witness to the world!

2. We fail to develop our lives in ways that will invite others in.

A man who has friends must himself be friendly, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother. Prov. 18:24

A common complaint...

I have no friends.

What if you:

Did less talking and tried to listen more?

Stopped being so opinionated?

Eliminated those cynical and critical undertones?

Toned down your defensiveness when someone confronts you?

Put your best self out there!

Kind, listening, mindful, sincere, caring, well groomed.

You will never lack for friends.

3. We intentionally push people away.

Where is your Joab?

You are living in isolation if. . .

...you are never confronted. * Ex: David & Joab. Sent him away!

A life without confrontation is a life without growth.

...you are never uncomfortable.

You have surrounded yourself only with people who are just like you.

...you never hear the word "No."

...you never have grace extended to you.

...you don't give yourself to community.

Encouraging, serving, forgiving, and praying for others.

...you never weep for others.

You weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice.

Are people actually touching your heart?

Conclusion:

You Are Not Alone!

This may run contrary to the reality you sense and feel right now!

This can change. You do not have to be alone.

You may...

Feel like Elijah. He was running from those who were against him and he was feeling like he was the only one who was trying to do right.

We pick up on Elijah's story when he is fleeing from the threats of Jezebel and he is hiding in a cave.

The Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice. So it was, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. Suddenly a voice came to him, and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" And he said, "I have been very zealous for the Lord God of hosts; because the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life." Then the Lord said to him: "Go, return on your way to the Wilderness of Damascus; and when you arrive, anoint Hazael as king over Syria, anoint Jehu as king over Israel, and Elisha you shall anoint as prophet in your place. 1st Kings 19:11-16

A cave seems like the natural place to go when you are fearful and feeling alone!!

Here is perhaps one of the most things for you to hear today...
Feelings of loneliness do not mean you are alone.

What we learn:

1. Fear and loneliness will drive us into our caves.
2. God knows where to find us.
3. We can and need to hear from God during those times.
4. God spoke the following things into Elijah's life...
 - Probed his heart...What are you doing here Elijah?
 - Reminded him he was not alone. 7,000 - not kissed up to Baal!
 - Gave him purpose in the people he was to connect with.
(Hazael, Jehu and Elisha)