



CHRIST IS THE ANSWER INTERNATIONAL MINISTRIES **Cristo è La Risposta**

LONELINESS

Loneliness is a common feeling that God can use to bring very profound consequences in our lives. When we sink into the despair of loneliness, and suffer the grief it entails, we are able to see ourselves in a different light. This emotion can demonstrate how much we need a personal God who is a Friend, Counselor, and intimate Partner to walk close to us. If we permit loneliness to discipline us, we can walk through troubled times closer to God and more fulfilled in our inner man than we have ever been before.

God, from the beginning, dwelled in a state of total oneness with the Son and the Holy Spirit. We cannot imagine such a thing, but God, in His great power, also chose to have communion with man. The creation of the world wasn't complete without man because man was the object of God's creation. Was not communing with God man's part in the creation from the very beginning? It seems that God wanted to be with man and enjoy him in an intimate way. God found a friend in Abraham. He desired Enoch's love and presence and transported Him out of the earth. David was closer to God's heart than any Old Testament personality, and God expressed His great pleasure in communing with David. Moses had the opportunity of talking to God and hearing Him speak directly. We see Jesus who called men His friends. We see a God Who wants to gather around Himself a people that love Him for a reason. When we do not walk in the presence of God, we suffer from profound loneliness.

Many times we think that loneliness is just an emotion that comes and goes with the loss of someone, or that it is a momentary emptiness, but it is an insidious condition that kills spiritually and physically if we do not recognize it properly. It is an issue, a plague in our western society today. Loneliness is a subject that is crying out for attention all around us, but resolving its pain is being ignored. We have learned to click on the TV for company, or tap into a "reality", show that is far from reality. We can go on the internet and meet virtual people. We live in a lonely society, and the sad thing is, we have chosen it. The short existence we call a lifetime is determined by these choices we make. Loneliness is often the fruit of making wrong choices.

A sister recently told me she kept the TV on for company. Many people spend not just hours, but their lives in front of a computer, seeking companionship through an LCD screen. These are ominous signs of the issues that are crippling the church and destroying individuals and families. A teacher in business management just told me that many people are suffering with deadly brain cancers in offices and homes because of the exposure to radiation on computer screens. Certainly this is a physical health hazard, but it is also a hazard spiritually and emotionally. I just spoke with a sister whose husband had divorced her over her cyber affair that had turned into physical adultery. She was emotionally broken as she opened her heart to me. She has asked herself over and over why she has thrown her whole life away for nothing. After a moment of reflection, she admitted that she had been so lonely she had fallen into sin, a terrible sin that will affect her for the rest of her life. A pastor of a large church told me that he had to deal with this kind of situation almost daily and that it was destroying peoples' lives.

Loneliness can be deadly; it comes out of a feeling of hopelessness. Hope is the crucial ingredient to getting out of the pit of loneliness. Paul said that hope that is seen is not hope. Again it is written in Scripture that if we hope for what we do not have, we will receive the fruit of patience. Patience, hope and knowing the promises of God will take us to a new level of life. If our future holds only judgment for us, then the depression and loneliness will never cease, neither here nor in eternity. When will we understand that another day of life is before us and to be appreciated by us? Our loneliness will then turn into a time of hope and expectation for the things God has prepared for us.

The down trodden and lonely must go on hoping. After every disappointment and bout of loneliness, they must find a fresh reason to hope. Every brother and every sister must believe that the future won't be the same as the troubled present. Hope for any troubled believer is that the problem of loneliness will soon be only a distant memory.

Why is there so much loneliness? Why is suicide because of loneliness sky-rocketing in our society? A recent poll in the USA showed that middle aged divorced women were some of the most likely to suffer extreme loneliness and poverty which also leads to drug abuse, alcoholism and the diseases that go along with these vices. Secondary problems such as stress, sleeplessness, anxiety, depression, fear and cancer are common among sufferers. Heart trouble, migraines and digestive problems are rampant, but the real diagnosis for these cases is being ignored. Obesity and anorexia with ulcers are also on this list of disorders that come from loneliness. It has been noted that people age quicker and die younger when they suffer extreme bouts of loneliness. Now that we have seen some of the physical dangers connected to loneliness, we want to look at some other issues that are directly related.

There is a surge in frequenting chat lines on the computer that are creating new roads of access for marital infidelity. The church is suffering with a plague of destroyed families because of this sin. I was recently in Connecticut where I was having lunch with a pastor and he told me a very sad story.

A young couple with two small children attended his fellowship. They were a typical American family and seemed very happy. The husband was relatively successful and his wife stayed home taking care of the kids. She had a lot of free time and started talking via internet with a man in France. They opened up their personal lives and revealed how they both felt very lonely in their marriages. She ended up leaving her husband and kids and moving to France to be with this man. The husband suffered unbearable pain, and the great loneliness that followed, but the church surrounded him with moral and spiritual support, helped him take care of his kids, and most of all, stayed close to him. After two years, the wife returned and the church rejoiced. The husband forgave her, and a new purpose and commitment returned to their lives. I told the pastor what a wonderful testimony that was and that it really gave me hope in my present situation.

The pastor looked at me seriously and said, "Really, do you think so? Don't forget that there are some hard consequences to be faced. This woman passed two years living under conviction, stress, and the loneliness of living with a foreigner whom she barely understood, in a society that was incomprehensible for her, and without fellowship with believers. She thought about her small children continually and the reality of having abandoned her family pressed her into further depression and deeper loneliness, and the loneliness brought on by her own sin was extremely hard to bear. "I buried her not long ago," was the pastor's response.

What, how can that be! Yes, she had repented and had come back to the Lord, but shortly after her return home, she complained of some minor pains. A visit to the doctor revealed that she had cancer in many parts of her body. A short time later, at only twenty-seven years of age, she died. The husband, confiding later to the pastor, shared that the loneliness of death is easier to accept than the loneliness caused from adultery.

People will argue this point; nevertheless, the death of this woman can be contributed to loneliness and the sin it generates. High stress levels and deep depression will effect all our organs. A doctor told me that ninety percent of cancer cases were brought on by mental stress, depression and loneliness, and that if these ailments were cured, many hospitals would be empty. Brethren, this is a serious issue and we need to take it to heart refusing to accept the discipline of God will turn our loneliness into sin. Sin can only be taken away by the blood of Jesus as we repent and turn to Him for forgiveness and restoration.

Those who are consumed by the sin of loneliness have lost their sight of God, of who He is, and of His total control of everything in their lives. Until they can surrender their hearts and minds to Christ in obedience, they will stay in the dark depths of the soul. Our inner man is desperate for the presence of someone, and Someone is there to be closer than a friend. We were created to be loved and accepted. We can see this desire in our Creator. When we live as if we were unloved, our inner man pays a high price of being separated from God.

I spoke with a brother who has walked with the Lord and who has been in ministry for many years. He confided to me of the dark loneliness that had, at one time, gripped his soul. He was in a very backslidden condition and had more or less turned his back on what God had shown him, and he had fallen into sin. He tried to justify his sin and present a spiritual face to others while he continued to minister spiritual truths. But all that time he knew he was in sin, and he lived under the heavy conviction of the truth that he knew so well. As he looks back on that time in his life now, he understands how much of his life had been wasted.

While we were talking, he looked at the floor, and his eyes grew wide and he recalled the anxiety that would grab his soul daily as he waited for God's coming judgment. He felt empty. He would try to push off the conviction of sin, or reason it away, or work and play, anything to help distract him for a moment; but then, like a monster, the reality of his sin would raise its ugly head and destroy his peace. Once again, he would be fighting the guilt of having walked away from Jesus, Who he had so once loved and with Whom he had once had fellowship. The loneliness of his soul was so strong that he no longer felt the confirming Spirit of his salvation. He felt separated from God and the dread of eternity haunted him. Loneliness produced by sin is when we are far away from God. This brother repented of his sins, giving up those he thought he could never live without. God has restored him, and now he has a powerful ministry for the Lord. He said he never feels alone now because he can commune daily with his Savior.

John Bunyan was imprisoned for his faith in England in the 1660. Left in a cell full of his own refuse and stench, he was eventually made an offer by his captors. "Deny your faith and we will let you return to the warm, loving arms of your wife and children." He responded, "Why would I deny the One who has always accepted me and Who has never done anything but good to me; One who is right here by me in this very stink hole. I would rather stay here and enjoy His presence than be anywhere else." He was released 12 years later. During his captivity, he used the depths of his loneliness in that cell to write one of the greatest pieces of Christian literature, PILGRIM'S PROGRESS. He was lifted from his loneliness through Christ's presence. Many of our fathers in the faith became great through suffering the loneliness of the soul.

As we get closer to our heavenly home day by day, we need to focus on eternal values and see what great treasure lies in store for us, like gold in a mine. Our loneliness can direct us to Christ, or it can take us to the depths of hell, torturing our selfish lives daily. If we put our trust in God, we can be set free from our loneliness and let the character and image of Christ be formed in our lives. We need to realize that loneliness can produce something worthwhile in us. A wise person will use these moments to look inward and examine the real condition of his heart before the Lord. In loneliness there is fear. In fact, fear thrives on loneliness, but Christ's presence destroys that fear; His perfect love casts out all fear.

"You deserted the Rock, who fathered you; you forgot the God who gave you birth." Deuteronomy 32:18 is the point of reference to the issue that I call "God loneliness". This passage is not an example of God who leaves us, but this is when we turn our backs on God and leave Him because of our rebellion, sin and disobedience to His Word.

God never leaves us, but our sin puts up a wall between Him and us. A spiritual emptiness and loneliness is the result. An example of this is in Deuteronomy 29: 24-25 where God says, "All the nations will ask: 'Why has the Lord done this to this land? Why this fierce, burning anger?' And the answer will be: 'It is because this people abandoned the covenant of the Lord, the God of their fathers, the covenant he made with them when he brought them out of Egypt.'" David longed for God in his loneliness after his long bout with sin. When he cried out for forgiveness in Psalm 51, he knew that no one in the kingdom of this earth, not even Bathsheba, could satisfy the loneliness of his soul. And so it is with us as well.

Passing through the depths of loneliness is not a sign that God is fighting against us. God is on our side, and Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 1:3, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles..." He emphasizes that God is the God of comfort, which is what we need most when we face loneliness, though we tend to ignore this fact. Loneliness is a great inner cry that screams, "I need someone."

There is no magic cure for loneliness. All of us need the presence of those who love us and who want to be with us. When this is not a reality, our need for love can produce a faithful commitment to God, Who by His presence, can pull us out of the darkness of loneliness. Then we can realize that there is nothing to be afraid of when our heart is pure before Him who has created us to enjoy all that is good. It is the fear of God that actually liberates us from loneliness as our hearts will be transformed to love and closeness to the creator.

God, unlike us, is more impressed with our character than our talents or position, and that is why He uses such unconventional things like solitude to mold us into His image. Moses, David and Abraham were men who were formed in the wilderness of loneliness. Each one was very gifted and they had no lack of talents, but each one had to suffer the consequences of his own weakness of character. God had to deal with their failures and humble each one before He could use them.

No characteristic is more central to God than humility for the salvation of our souls. He has to crush us to humble us. The school of loneliness is an instrument that forms greatness in those who submit and obey God through the test. During our times of trial, we can curse God and turn our backs on His righteousness, or we can fall at His feet and weep for mercy. His presence will fill the emptiness in our hearts, and then we will be in a position for Him to lead us out.

For those who choose humility, repentance and a tender heart, there will always be life and light in any situation they face. God will work for their good and the future will be blessed, even though this moment may bring turmoil and loneliness. Those who choose to live in pride, rebellion and an unrepentant heart will reap death and darkness, only to suffer loneliness that will last for an eternity. Those who choose to do the will of God will find that the answer to loneliness is not with people, but with having a purpose to live, because loneliness is not the absence of affection; it is rather a lack of direction.

I WROTE THIS BY THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF MY BELOVED SON WHO FELT I HAD LEARNED SOME THINGS IN THESE MONTHS THAT BURNED ON MY HEART TO SAY. I PRAY THIS WILL HELP THOSE SUFFERING. LOVE CLARK