



SERMON NOTES

From In Touch With Dr. Charles Stanley

WHEN WE ARE LONELY

KEY PASSAGE: Hebrews 13:5 | **SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES:** Genesis 1:26; 2:18 | Joshua 1:9 | Psalm 25:16-17
Matthew 26:40; 27:46 | John 14:18, 27 | 2 Corinthians 5:17-18 | 2 Timothy 4:16 | Hebrews 4:16

► SUMMARY

As those who have been created in the image of God, we're social beings just as He is.

We're made for fellowship with the Lord and others, and when that need is not met, we experience loneliness. It's a feeling that most of us will experience at some point, but for believers in Jesus Christ we are never truly alone because the Lord has made us this promise: "I will never desert you, nor will I ever abandon you" (Heb. 13:5). Knowing this truth is the source of our strength whenever we're lonely.

► SERMON POINTS

Loneliness is brought about by a feeling of disconnectedness. It can be caused by being rejected, feeling ostracized from a group, being separated from loved ones, or being far from home. But a sense of isolation can also be present even when we're surrounded by people. That's because it's caused by external circumstances or internal feelings of separation from others, whether real or imagined. Occasional loneliness is common to everyone, but when it persists for years, it feels overwhelming and devastating.

What's the difference between loneliness and solitude?

It's important to distinguish between loneliness and solitude. Loneliness is something unwanted that happens to us, whereas solitude is a choice to be alone.

Loneliness drains us, leaving us feeling empty and cut off from others. It's a painful experience because we're created as relational beings. We need other people for

support and companionship. So, when these are missing, we feel isolated, empty, and sad.

In contrast, solitude was essential for Jesus. That's why He'd withdraw from people early in the morning or late at night to be alone with His Father. If He needed this, we certainly do as well. It's a time of refreshment when the demands and pressures of life are softened.

Time we spend alone in the Lord's Word and prayer is the most precious, productive, and fruitful part of our day.

Loneliness is universal.

Loneliness permeates our society at every age and stage of life, and Christians are not immune. Each transition brings the prospect of loneliness, and those in positions of ministry (like pastors and missionaries) may feel isolated because of their positions and responsibilities.

Isolation can benefit or harm us.

Loneliness will either drive us to destructive habits, or it will drive us to God. If we don't turn to the Lord, we may try to deaden the feelings with drugs or alcohol, or find temporary relief in sexual affairs, rash decisions, or excessive work. Some even try to escape loneliness with suicide, which only intensifies the problem if they haven't trusted Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Turning to sin won't solve an unbeliever's loneliness because it only increases alienation with God.

How can you walk victoriously through seasons of isolation?

1. Confess that you're lonely. Let the Lord know how you

feel and realize that it's not a sin. Consider those in the Bible who knew and loved the Lord yet experienced loneliness.

David: "Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted. The troubles of my heart are enlarged; bring me out of my distresses" (Ps. 25:16-17).

Paul: "At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them" (2 Tim. 4:16).

Jesus: "So, you men could not keep watch with Me for one hour?" (Matt. 26:40); "My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matt. 27:46).

2. Enter into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ,

if you haven't already. God created us to be in a relationship with Him. When Adam and Eve sinned, the perfect union they'd had with the Lord was broken. As their descendants, we too are born in a state of separation from God.

The only way for Holy God to be reconciled with fallen humanity was for His Son to come to earth in human flesh, bear the punishment for our sins on the cross, and die in our place. Now, all who acknowledge and confess their sins, trust in Christ's death and resurrection on their behalf, and receive Him as Savior and Lord will be reconciled with the Father and become new creations in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17-18).

Without this restored relationship, you'll never have the fellowship with the Father that you were created to have. Furthermore, the loneliness you experience in your human relationships on earth will be infinitely multiplied after death when you're eternally separated from the Lord.

3. Develop godly friendships. The goal isn't simply to acquire friends. You must be discerning in your choice of companions. The wrong kind will only lead you into sinful choices and a deeper sense of loneliness. But

godly friends will encourage you to draw near to God in times of loneliness.

Look for friends with the following qualities:

- Someone you can laugh with.
- Somebody you can pray with.
- Someone who understands you.
- Someone with whom you can share secrets.
- Somebody you can trust.
- Someone who is an extension of God in your life, who points you to the Lord and reminds you of His Word and promises.
- Someone who sticks with you through good times and bad times.

4. Anchor your soul to passages of Scripture. When the winds of loneliness assail you, God's Word will be your anchor. Whenever you feel lonely, call out to Him and remind yourself of His truths and promises. He will never leave or forsake you.

When responded to properly, loneliness will drive you into a more intimate and rewarding relationship with God, and you'll become richer in your understanding of His ways and love. So when you're lonely, cry out to Him. He'll anchor you with His Word, enable you to find a godly friend, and strengthen you to endure the pain of isolation until He lifts you out of your despair.

► RESPONSE

- Which direction does loneliness drive you? Inward into desolation? Outward into activities that numb the pain? Or upward to God, seeking your comfort in Him?
- Do you have faithful, godly friends to help you through the dark times of loneliness?
- What passages of Scripture are your steadfast anchor in loneliness? If you don't have any, read through the Psalms. The writers often confessed to the Lord how alone they felt, but when they remembered Him, their spirits were lifted.

To purchase this message on CD or DVD, please visit store.intouch.org or call 1-800-789-1473.
To download these Sermon Notes, visit intouch.org/sermonnotes.

