

## How God Can Redeem and Heal Our... #5 - Loneliness

*“A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling. God sets the lonely in families.”* – Psalm 68:5-6a (New International Version)

### The Loneliness Crisis

1. On May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023, the US Surgeon General issued an official advisory warning regarding “the public health crisis of loneliness, isolation, and lack of connection in our country.” Before the pandemic, nearly half of American adults were classified as lonely. Medically, “loneliness and isolation increase the risk for individuals to develop mental health challenges in their lives, and lacking connection can increase the risk for premature death to levels comparable to \_\_\_\_\_ daily.”
2. The pandemic \_\_\_\_\_ withdrawal from the primary avenues of social connection.
  - a. Church attendance has dropped significantly. There are two positives, however. The beneficial pruning of dead branches (John 15:1-2). Gen Z and Gen Alpha (all those under age 27; reared out of church) have shown an increased interest in Christianity. However, they seek an authentic, active faith offering a real \_\_\_\_\_ to societal problems.
  - b. Membership, volunteering, and financial donations have all declined for \_\_\_\_\_ organizations.
  - c. Most alarming is the falling rates of marriage and childbirth. Nearly \_\_\_\_% of US adults are single. Next year the population of high school students in the US will peak, followed by continual decline for the next generation.
3. While there are legitimate and understandable causes (people can be exhausting, political/ideological divisiveness, societal \_\_\_\_\_, social media disintegrating social skills, constant “connection” overloads our sensory and processing abilities, etc.), social disengagement and isolation have profound negative mental, emotional, and physical effects.

### Biblical Warnings about Loneliness

1. Increasing debt by \_\_\_\_\_ or “compensating accumulation.”

*“There was a man all alone; he had neither son nor brother. There was no end to his toil, yet his eyes were not content with his wealth.”*  
– Ecclesiastes 4:8 (NIV)
2. Incurring further \_\_\_\_\_ damage through immorality. Sex ≠ intimacy. See 1 Corinthians 6-17-20.

3. Immersing yourself in \_\_\_\_\_ to distract from spiritual and emotional needs (cf. Jeremiah 2:25).
4. Isolating yourself by self-pity or \_\_\_\_\_ relationships.

*“I am feeble and utterly crushed; I groan in anguish of heart. All my longings lie open before you, O Lord; my sighing is not hidden from you. My heart pounds, my strength fails me; even the light has gone from my eyes. My friends and companions avoid me because of my wounds; my neighbors stay far away.”* – Psalm 38:8-11 (NIV)

### God’s Word and Our Work to Address Loneliness

1. God created us to be \_\_\_\_\_ beings. Marriage and family are the #1 factor in happiness for adults and well-being for children.

*“Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.”* – Genesis 2:18 (English Standard Version)

*“Children are a heritage from the Lord, offspring a reward from him.”* – Psalm 127:3 (NIV)

2. Throughout the Scriptures, God affirms His special care for those who may not be married or parents. He is the “*father to the fatherless, a defender of widows*” (Psalm 68:5). There are “*eunuchs*” (celibate) for “*the sake of the kingdom of heaven*” (Matthew 19:12). The Apostle Paul was unmarried (1 Corinthians 7:8) and emphasized how unmarried men and women can devotedly serve the Lord (1 Corinthians 7:32-34). Philip’s four unmarried daughters had the gift of \_\_\_\_\_ (Acts 21:9).

3. The first solution to loneliness is \_\_\_\_\_ with the Lord.

*“The friendship of the Lord is for those who fear him, and he makes known to them his covenant... 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. Consider my affliction and my trouble, and forgive all my sins.”* – Psalm 25:14,16-18 (ESV)

4. Through faith in Christ, God places us into His \_\_\_\_\_, the Church. The Church consists of congregations where fellow believers & those exploring faith can form friendships, provide care, & learn to love better.

*“Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to Himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure.”*  
– Ephesians 1:4-5 (New Living Translation)

5. To fulfill God’s \_\_\_\_\_ calling for Oak Park and to capitalize on this cultural opportunity, our leadership has prayerfully, purposefully, and strategically stepped out in faith with the hiring of pastoral-level leadership to build and grow our ministry of small groups (excellent environments to develop relationships) and our ministries to children, youth, marriages, and parents.

6. If you are lonely, \_\_\_\_\_ relationship by joining a small group or ministry team. If you know (or suspect) someone is lonely, initiate contact and seek to be a friend. It may take some consistent effort.