

A Prayer for the Lonely . . .

After gathering up torn ribbon and piles of ripped Christmas wrapping, the young mother carried trash out to a back alley. Their traditional Christmas morning had been cut short when her three children said, "Hurry up, Mom! We have to be at Dad's by 10:00 this morning." At the beep of his horn, all three raced out the door to repeat the gift-giving scene with their father, his new wife, and her two children. They would be there all day and then leave on a trip for the holidays. Suddenly, both house and heart felt alone and desolate. She sat on the warm hearth of the fireplace allowing tears of emotion to run free. Then with an overwhelming sense of loneliness, she cried out to God.

*"Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear to my cry;
hold not your peace at my tears!"*
(Psalm 39:12)

Q: "Why does God seem so distant when I'm lonely?"

To feel deep loneliness when you experience a difficult loss or change in your life is natural. But if you indulge in self-pity and become angry at God for your circumstances, you will begin to feel estranged from Him and will fail to receive His loving comfort.

*"Turn to me and be gracious to me,
for I am lonely and afflicted."*
(Psalm 25:16)

*"He has said, 'I will never leave you
nor forsake you.'"*
(Hebrews 13:5)

Q: "When is loneliness most likely to occur?"

Loneliness occurs most often when a major change in life occurs. Loss of both the comforting support of loved ones and the security of the old and familiar is resisted by most of us.

*"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Why are you so far from saving me,
from the words of my groaning?"*
(Psalm 22:1)

The Meaning of “Alone”

- The Old Testament Hebrew word translated “alone” is *badad*, which means “all by oneself.”¹
- The New Testament Greek word *monos* denotes “single, alone, solitary.”²
- To be alone is the state of being solitary, separated from others.³
- Jesus often sought solitude. He separated Himself from others in order to commune alone with the Father.

“After he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone.”
(Matthew 14:23)

The Difference between “Alone” and “Lonely”⁴

- Loneliness refers to the *emotional* . . . the state of feeling rejected and desolate.
- Aloneness refers to the *physical* . . . the state of being separated from others.
- Loneliness is usually a *negative* experience . . . accompanied by feelings of hopelessness.
- Aloneness is meant to be a *positive* experience . . . a time of creativity and communion with the Lord.

Situational Causes of Loneliness

Circumstances—singleness, divorce, death of a loved one, empty nest, loss of job

Holidays—unfulfilled expectations, not with family or friends, loss of spouse

Affliction—physical handicap, chronic or terminal illness, getting older

Naivety—exposure to responsibilities previously done by another

Guilt—fear of intimacy, escape by becoming a workaholic

Estrangement—absence of intimacy, being rejected or rejecting others, removal from customary environment

Key Verses to Memorize

*“Where shall I go from your Spirit?
Or where shall I flee from your presence?
If I ascend to heaven, you are there!
If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!”*
(Psalm 139:7–8)

Key Passage to Read and Reread

Psalm 63:1–8

Become a Bridge Builder

Berid of bitterness. (Hebrews 12:15)

Understand the pain of others. (2 Timothy 1:3–4)

Initiate invitations. (Luke 14:12–14)

Look for ways to express love to others. (John 15:13)

Don't demand that others change. (Psalm 62:5)

Begin to attend a group Bible study. (Hebrews 10:25)

Read about Christian role models.
(1 Thessalonians 1:6–7)

Immerse yourself in inspirational music. (Psalm 57:7)

Decide to diversify your activities and goals.
(Psalm 33:3)

Go to God's Word. (Psalm 107:19–20)

Expect God to do a new thing. (Isaiah 43:18–19)

Surrender yourself to the Savior. (Psalm 62:5)

Questions about Loneliness

Q: “My life is active and full. Why do I get lonely?”

Activity alone is no cure for loneliness. Involvement in activities can be an attempt to numb the longing in your heart for God. (Psalm 62:5–6)

Q: “My mate is gone. What are the hardest times I will face?”

The most emotional times will be holidays, birthdays, and anniversaries. Expect a period of grief. (Ecclesiastes 3:4)

Q: “How can I make it through the holidays?”

Make plans to be with others on sentimental, special days. (Ecclesiastes 4:9–10)

Related Topics . . .

- Depression:
Walking from Darkness into the Dawn
- Divorce:
A New Beginning from Brokenness
- Grief Recovery:
Living at Peace with Loss
- Singleness:
Single and Satisfied
- Single Parenting:
Success with God as Your Partner
- Widowhood:
Wisdom in a Wilderness

HOPE FOR THE HEART's *Biblical Counseling Library Quick Reference* provides immediate, concise, biblical truths for today's problems.

For more comprehensive help, refer to our *Biblical Counseling Keys . . .*

Loneliness:

How to Be Alone but Not Lonely.

If you would like more information, call 1-800-488-HOPE (4673) or visit www.hopefortheheart.org.

For prayer encouragement and biblical counsel call 1-866-570-HOPE (4673).

1. See Spiros Zodhiates, *The Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible: New International Version* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG, 1996), 1912.
2. W. E. Vine, *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, electronic ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996), s.v. "alone."
3. *Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary* (2001); <http://www.m-w.com>, s.v. "alone."
4. For this section see J. Oswald Sanders, *Facing Loneliness: The Starting Point of a New Journey* (Grand Rapids: Discovery House, 1990), 23–27.



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