



The Wicked Elf Of Loneliness

Icebreaker:

Share a time in your life when you felt genuine loneliness.

The Study:

Loneliness pervades the Bible's Christmas story. Mary's unwed pregnancy brought shame, so she was whisked off to a relative. Angels appeared to lonely shepherds in a field. Simeon and Anna were two elderly saints wanting to go home to heaven, waiting for one more errand to be fulfilled. The parents of the Bethlehem massacre were left bereft and in grief.

How do we cope with this wicked elf of Christmas? Thankfully, God's Word is not silent about it.



The Types Of Loneliness We May Feel

We can identify more than a half-dozen causes of loneliness.

1. The Loneliness of Loss. Read Matthew 2:16-18.

2. The Loneliness of Friendlessness. Read Psalm 55:12-13.

3. The Loneliness of Isolation. Read 2 Timothy 4:9-11.

4. The Loneliness of Sickness. Read Job 2:7-9.

5. The Loneliness of Rejection. Psalm 27:10.

6. Moral Loneliness. Psalm 12:1.

7. Divine Loneliness. Psalm 22:1-2.

Put a star or checkmark beside each of these types of loneliness that you have experienced in your life.

What are some things we learn from these verses?

What Can The Church Do About Loneliness?

8. Psalm 68:6 (NIV) says, *"God sets the lonely in families."*

Among the many things a "church" is meant to be, a "family" is certainly high on the list. We worship a God who calls himself our "Father". We worship alongside of those Scripture calls our "brothers" and "sisters".

So if Bridgeway is truly a "family", then list a half-dozen things that will be true of us:

9. Thom Rainer in his book *Becoming A Welcoming Church*, writes:
"The problem with most churches is that they perceive they are a friendly church because the members are friendly to one another. But they don't think about walking in the shoes of first-time guests. They don't look at their facilities, their parking, their website, or their friendliness from a guest perspective."

So how friendly do you think we really are? What could we stand to improve on?

What Can The Lonely Do About Loneliness?

Discuss the following quotes from the sermon. What are some lessons?

10. To have more friends, we must push ourselves to...

- *...share space with others.*

"The first rule of advancing your life is: just show up."

"Studies show that it takes about 90 hours of time with someone before you can consider them a real friend."

- *...share experiences with others.*

"Friendship is born the minute one person says to another, "What! You too? I thought I was the only one." ~ C.S. Lewis

"On paper at least, marriages should deepen over time, simply because of all that a husband and wife have shared together. One vet locks eyes with another and at once there's a bond that few could understand."

- *...share our souls with others.*

"Men seem to struggle the most with this. And often it's made worse by our culture, because the moment two guys start getting close, then the whispers start. Some have suggested that David and Jonathan must be gay because of their closeness. Because, ya know, a man must be tough, aloof and without emotion."

Why do men struggle with this?

What are some ways to fix this?

Another Powerful Place For The Lonely To Find Relief Is By Developing Friendship With God

11. How do I grow in friendship with God? For each of the three points below, ask: *Am I doing this? How can I grow at this?*

- The friendship of God is for those who seek him. (Exodus 33:7-11)
- The friendship of God is for those who honor him. (Psalm 25:14)
- The friendship of God is for those who love and obey him. (John 14:15; 15:10, 14)

➤ *...share our souls with others.*

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