

Lonely for Others

Bible Study • Leader's Guide

Please provide a copy of this study, a Bible, and a hymnal for each participant.

Opening Prayer: It is awful to be lonely, Lord. Sometimes when I am in a crowded room, I still feel lonely. The world is full of lonely people sitting on park benches, in movie theaters, and even in family or work gatherings. Help me reach out and be more responsive to others. Grant me the strength to take the risk. The hurt cannot be worse than the loneliness. Help me, Lord. Amen. [Paraphrase of a prayer in *The Lutheran Prayer Book*, Vance E. Lichty, (St. Paul, Minnesota, Apostolic Publishing Company, 1994), 40–41.]

What is loneliness?

Have participants offer their own definitions and examples.

Definitions of “loneliness” include “cut off from others, sadness, bleakness, and desolation.”

What is the opposite of lonely?

Again, let the group offer ideas. If “relationship” is not offered as an answer, provide it as one idea before going on to the next question.

What is a relationship? “Relationship” can be defined in three ways for our discussion purposes:

1. A connection, association, or involvement;
2. Connection between persons by blood or marriage;
3. An emotional or other connection between people.

Using these three definitions, what do you think of your relationship status?

Have you felt isolated or cut off from others recently?

In the *AARP* article, “Is There a Medical Cure for Loneliness?” (Lynn Darling, *AARP* online article, December 11, 2019), the author states: “Loneliness and isolation increases the risk of heart disease, infection, depression, cognitive decline, and early death. Blood cells of lonely people appear to be in a state of high alert responding as they would to a bacterial infection.” The feeling of rejection, disconnection, and longing, some researchers believe, causes a pain as real as any caused by physical injury. Being lonely is not healthy.

Who are the people in our lives?

Examples: parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, teachers, pastors, doctors, employers, friends, co-workers, church members, acquaintances, neighbors, children, students, strangers.

To which people in your life are you closest? Why?

Prompt discussion by suggesting common genes, interests, age, gender, problems, goals

Are there any people you would like to get to know better? Why?

Describe the qualities of this biblical friendship:

1 Samuel 18:1–4 David and Jonathan. Their souls were *knit together*. (verse 1)

Jonathan made a *covenant* with David. (verse 3)

Jonathan gave *his robe, his armor, his sword, his bow, and his belt* to David.

What is the main hindrance to this relationship?

Saul

In these passages, it seems the friendship between Jonathan and David is a bit one sided. Jonathan gives and David takes. Maybe you have felt that way about some of your relationships. In fact, since Jonathan was in a position of prominence, he had more to give. Later, however, after Jonathan's death, David vowed to take care of Jonathan's crippled son, Mephibosheth, for the rest of his life (2 Samuel 9). All relationships should be reciprocal in nature.

Even with a great friendship like this, David suffered from loneliness. Read Psalm 102:7.

What is the purpose of friendship in these passages?

Genesis 2:18 *helper*

Proverbs 11:14 *counselor*

Proverbs 13:20 *wise companion*

Proverbs 17:17 *loves you during adversity*

Proverbs 18:24 *stick close*

Proverbs 27:5-6 *tells you the truth*

John 15:13 *gives up his life for you*

Assignment: Draw a relationship tree with you as the trunk. Think of ways to strengthen the relationship with those you already know in the close by branches. Think of ways to branch out.

What are some ways to make new friends?

Special interest groups, group service projects, social media groups, committees, and more

Once you have established a relationship with someone, what does Scripture say in the following passages about treating your loved ones?

1 Corinthians 13:4–7, paraphrased:

Be patient and kind; do not envy or boast; do not be arrogant or rude. Don't try to get your own way; do not be irritable or resentful; do not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoice with the truth. Bear all things, believe all things, hope all things, and endure all things.

Romans 12:9–13, paraphrased:

Be genuine. Hate evil; hold on to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be lazy, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

Being alone is not the same as being lonely. Jesus often cherished those times alone to meditate and pray. Read Matthew 14:23.

Be encouraged with Proverbs 22:11. We have a King as our friend at all times.

Suggested song: “What a Friend We Have in Jesus” (LSB 770).

Closing Prayer: Lord, even if I am surrounded by people, I can be lonely. I need a connection to You and to others. I long to receive the life-giving energy of shared experiences, knowledge, passions, values, and common goals. You know I need relationships. Thank You, Lord, for the relationship I have with You. Please deepen my relationships with others. Amen.

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