

HELP!

GOD'S HOPE FOR THE HURTING

Help, I feel
alone!

INTRODUCTION

Psalm 102:1-7, 17-22

Do you ever think of Jesus as lonely? Certainly, his moments in Gethsemane and on Calvary were uniquely and terribly lonely, but what about the rest of his life?

In some sense, he may have been the loneliest human in history.

Loneliness is what we feel when we're isolated from others. Loneliness often has less to do with others' physical absence and more to do with feeling disconnected or alienated from them. Or misunderstood by them. In fact, these are far more painful species than mere absence, because we feel the isolation of being despised and rejected.

Which is precisely how Isaiah prophetically described Jesus: "He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" (Isaiah 53:3). Given who Jesus was, this experience would have begun decades before his public ministry even began. Which means Jesus is able to sympathize with your loneliness far more than you might have previously thought (Hebrews 4:15).¹

OPEN IT

1. **Growing up, how close was your home to your neighbor's house? Now that you're older, do you prefer city life, living in a neighborhood, or living on a country road?**

READ IT

Psalm 102

¹Bloom, John. <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/jesus-understands-your-loneliness>

STUDY IT

2. **What does the author of this Psalm still want to see even in a time of distress?**

3. **What image is described for us in verses 6 and 7?**

4. **How does God respond to our prayers according to verses 17-22?**

APPLY IT

How prevalent is loneliness?

While everyone may feel lonely some of the time, for a large number of people loneliness is a chronic condition of life. About two in five Americans report that they sometimes or always feel their social relationships are not meaningful, and one in five say they feel lonely or socially isolated.

Groups found to be at particular risk of loneliness include women, being either younger (e.g., aged younger than 25 years) or older (e.g., aged older than 65 years), those who live alone, those who have low socio-economic status, and persons with poor mental and physical health.²

5. **What do you think is the difference between being alone and being lonely?**

² Carter, Joe. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-faqs-what-christians-should-know-about-loneliness>

6. Why do you think it's a painful experience when people are lonely?

Is loneliness discussed in the Bible?

Because loneliness is part of the human condition, it is not surprising that several persons in the Bible experienced loneliness. In 1 Kings 19 the prophet Elijah appears to have suffered from a sense of social isolation that made him almost suicidal. Paul likely experienced loneliness, as when he tells Timothy, "At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me" (1 Tim. 4:16). Jesus also appears to have been experiencing loneliness in the garden of Gethsemane on the night before his crucifixion (Matt. 26:36-46) and while on the cross (Matt. 27:46).

David also expressed his feelings of loneliness in the Psalms. In Psalm 25:16 he says, "Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted," and in Psalm 142:4 he says, "Look and see, there is no one at my right hand; no one is concerned for me. I have no refuge; no one cares for my life."

7. Can you recall a time in the last year when you felt most alone? What led you to that experience?

8. What are some clues that help you notice if you're struggling with loneliness?

Remember God's Truth

Emotions are a good gift that should be tested, not automatically trusted. So when you feel lonely, remind yourself of what is true. For example:

- Although you feel alone, you're not. God is with you. He will never leave or forsake you (Deut. 31:6).
- God knows exactly how you feel, and he has felt the pain of loneliness too. Nowhere is that exemplified more than when Jesus hung on the cross (Matt. 27:46; cf. Isa. 53:3).
- You know the God of all comfort (2 Cor. 1:3–4). If you turn to him with your pain, he will comfort you. He is near to the brokenhearted, to the crushed in spirit (Ps. 34:18).
- God has a mighty and marvelous purpose for your situation and pain (Rom. 8:28). It won't be wasted.

To remind yourself of truth you must first know the truth, and this only happens through studying God's Word. So read it, ponder it, memorize it, and preach it to yourself.³

9. Look up each of the verses mentioned in the paragraph above. Write out the one that brings the most encouragement to you and make a mental note of this verse so you can return to it in lonely times.

³ Chesnut, Ashley. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/3-unhealthy-responses-loneliness>

What can Christians do about loneliness?

Remember you have a friend in Jesus.

In Ephesians 2:14-17 Paul says, “For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.” Never forget that you have a friend in Jesus (John 15:15), and that the Spirit dwells within you to give you strength to handle this season of loneliness.

“It would be cruel to suggest that human friendship is irrelevant once one has been befriended by Christ,” Dane Ortlund writes in *Gentle and Lowly*. “God has made us for fellowship, for union in heart, with other people. Everyone gets lonely—including introverts.”

“But Christ’s heart for us means that he will be our never-failing friend no matter what friends we do or do not enjoy on earth,” Ortlund adds. “He offers us friendship that gets underneath the pain of our loneliness. While that pain does not go away, its sting is made fully bearable by the far deeper friendship of Jesus.”

Find your family.

Psalms 68:6 tells us, “God sets the lonely in families” (NIV). If you’re a follower of Christ, God has set you “with God’s people and also members of his household” (Eph. 2:19). Because of your union with Christ, you are spiritually connected to a family of brothers and sisters who will love you and be with you for all eternity. Find your family by embedding yourself in a community of believers.

Reach out.

If you feel lonely, reach out to those around you and let them know. If you suspect someone you know is lonely, reach out to them and let them know you want to help. Don’t put it off or make excuses about why you don’t have the time, ability, or attention. When people are in need, Christians should be rushing to help for we are called by Jesus to love our neighbor.⁴

10. Christian community should be a place God brings human connection and camaraderie. Write down a time you found fellow believers were a help during or after a time of loneliness.

⁴ Carter, Joe. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-faqs-what-christians-should-know-about-loneliness>

11. As you enter a new season in the months ahead, what are some ways you'd like to see Christian community be a blessing to you, your family, or those in your small group?