

Series: Truth for All Time

Finding Our Way to Jehovah Shammah

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Loneliness. Even the very word brings pictures of desolation. This emotional state brings heaviness of heart and plays no favorites. It intrudes rudely, uninvited, yielding no mercy, knowing no time limit. One cannot make a deal with it. It lingers when standing in a crowd. It stalks us like a silent killer. It brings groans to the spirit and pain into the cavity of the soul.

A consuming anguish, loneliness comes to the teen, the college student, to the prison inmate, to the business person, to the single, to the homemaker, to children, to the rich, to the poor, to any and to all. In the mind runs yesterday's song and today's disappointment. The dull pain, the undetermined ache, the listlessness, and the inability to enjoy life bring the sense of feeling cut off, shut out, empty, isolated. Everything is tasteless.

With greater isolation, increasing mobility, cosmopolitan perspectives, people can not only feel lonely when actually alone by themselves, but even when in a crowd, at the family reunion, at work, in church, in their own home. **Epidemic in our society, loneliness permeates even art in every form. Along with anxiety, it is a most devastating malady in our age. Too many of us know it well, especially since COVID-19 lockdowns.**

God has created us in His image as social creatures. He created us to enjoy a personal relationship with Him, our Creator. We were not made to be independent, co-dependent, or merely dependent on other human beings. We were made to be dependent upon God as Source and Sustainer of life and live interdependently with others. **Loneliness, then, comes from deficiency in relationship...first to God and secondly to people.**

Loneliness comes as we engage the reality that the umbilical cord was cut, leaving the soul screaming silently unto death as one attempt after another to connect to the life source fails. Sin severs our relationship with God. Sin brings alienation from God restored only through the person and work of Jesus Christ. The heart's vacuum can only be filled by God as one comes in repentance and faith to receive forgiveness of sin and new life through Christ.

But one who has received Christ can also feel lonely and find life tasteless. Yet God has given us great and precious promises (2 Peter 1:3, 4).

2 Peter 1 3, 4 - ³His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to^c his own glory and excellence, ⁴by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. ESV

God promises to be our constant companion. (John 14:26-28) His presence is everywhere, and God is near. Many, however, refuse this, not truly believing in the goodness of God. I find that many fear the presence of the Holy Spirit, shrink back from the manifestation of God's glory, fear vital spiritual union with Christ, and have little desire for the strength of the bond of fellowship created in the covenant of grace. Some prefer to stay religious, seeking to control the relationship. Some give little care to grieving the Holy Spirit, shunning His companionship and comfort.

The Living and True God is a Person...with characteristics, or attributes. God is good and good continually. He loves us and we can truly trust Him. He never harms us, for love does no harm. We talk a lot about God and talk to Him, but do we expect to hear from Him? Do we really want Him to show up? Do we really want Him to manifest His Presence?

Abraham was the friend of God. Moses spoke to God face to face. Jesus, the Infinite God-Man, Son of God, God the Son, declares to us the Father. **Jesus Christ sent the Holy Spirit as did the Father. The Holy Spirit is given that we might have a Paraclete, one who goes alongside, a Comforter. Incredible.**

Are we alone in the universe? No, but we may feel like we are. **Psalm 102** describes the lament of someone **“like a desert owl, like an owl among the ruins, like a bird alone on a roof.”** The Psalm speaks of one broken, of one feeling thrown aside. Yet God responds to the plea of the destitute. He hears the groans of the prisoners. He hears the silent scream of our anguished soul. When our cries, deafened by the busyness of paltry nothings, go ignored, God our Maker, our Creator, does not change. God is good, and it is not good that man should be alone.

Loneliness comes as darkness descends and the glory of God departs. Let's not ignore God, and He will not ignore us; not that He does, but if we ignore Him, we may never know otherwise.

Psalm 103 describes a soul blessing God for all His benefits: the forgiveness of sins, the healing of diseases, the redeeming of a life from the pit, the crowning of the head with love and compassion, the satisfying of desires with good things which bring renewal. God's goodness benefits us. In His love and compassion, He remembers we are but dust. The angels of the heavenly host do God's bidding, His will. We are to give Him the awe, reverence, and worship due His Name and to obey His precepts. He is to be the acknowledged ruler whose throne is in heaven and whose kingdom rules over all.

Many factors lead to separations...career choices and demands, responsibilities, being home bound, isolation from public life, and even our fears. Satan loves such separations. Unlike being separated unto God, these isolate from what would provide community, support, networking, connecting, and companionship.

Tendencies to reject others, to cast aside the friendship of others, to live autonomously, to demand of others, all can bring deficiencies in relationships. Pride, hostility, fears, rigidity, selfishness, critical attitudes, insistence upon others yielding, envy, unforgiving attitudes, all these can isolate us and bring loneliness knocking. These reasons may have many different underlying causes, depending on how we have interpreted the events of our lives and chosen to respond to them. My little diagram:

EVENT + INTERPRETATION OF THE EVENT ---→ RESPONSE

We can get bitter or better, brought down or rise up...

People reject us sometimes, too. Nothing to me is more pitiful than seeing a child whose parent ignores him/her and the child walks away dejected and crushed in spirit. I see such cries for bonding, so many opportunities lost. Does man live by bread alone? For bread only?

Suffering from much constant rejection, being ignored or forgotten and neglected, becomes a breeding ground for loneliness. And yet, in such a trying time, we may come to see the hand of God leading us to Himself, leading us to maturity in Christ, leading us to taste and see that the Lord is good so that we will be salted with fire, purified and preserved with a passionate zeal forged in the furnace of affliction. Then we will have salt in ourselves, savoring the things of God.

I believe we can find Jehovah Shammah, the nearness and presence of the True and Living God, as we understand the ways of God and undertake specific actions.

- 1. Recognize that experiencing loneliness is a trial of faith. (James 1.2-5, Romans 5.3-5)** God uses loneliness to stimulate faith (**Psalm 142.4-6**), to encourage trust, obedience, and faithfulness (**Psalm 31**), to cause us to examine ourselves (**Matthew 7.1, 2, Galatians 6.7**), and to develop compassion and patience (**2 Corinthians 1.3-6**).
- 2. Welcome the Holy Spirit, seeking the Word as to what pleases and displeases the Lord. (1 Thessalonians 4. 1, 2; 1 John 3.22)**
- 3. Find relationship with God deepening** as the old Adamic nature is given up to judgment, denied, and put off and we begin to be an imitator of God as His child and constant companion. (**Ephesians 4.17-5.21**)
- 4. Identify and seek to eliminate those qualities, actions, practices, and attitudes that promote loneliness**, for we are to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and our neighbor as our self. (**Matthew 22.37-40**)
- 5. Develop actions, practices, and attitudes that promote deep and intimate relationships, beginning with God first. (Matthew 6.33)** Ask Jesus to do this work, sanctifying through the Word and by His Spirit.
- 6. Learn to be helpful to other people** by practicing intercession, giving, witnessing, comforting, hospitality, serving, providing practical assistance, assisting in projects, etc. Start with one act/action and take small steps of obedience at the first. (**Romans 12**)
- 7. Ask, trust, and seek the Holy Spirit for fruit that remains. (Galatians 5.22, 23)**
- 8. Relate to others as we would like others to relate to us, in sincerity and with genuine interest.**

9. **Appreciate other people, not comparing and envying in selfish ambition, but knowing that what good God has done for others He can do in our lives. (1 Peter 1.22, 23; James 3.13-18)** A good way to start is to acknowledge, appreciate, bless, and delight in the Godhead.

1 Peter 1:22, 23 - ²²Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, ²³since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; ESV

10. **Be a better listener. (Proverbs 1.33)**

11. Promote God and others, being a cheerleader and taking pleasure in the lives and experiences of those around us, learning from them, taking interest in them. **(Philippians 2)**

12. Volunteer, taking the first step to become vitally involved in your local church, a church which believes and preaches the Word of God. **(Ephesians 4.7-16)**

13. Involve yourself in praise and worship, service and fellowship. **(Psalm 150)**

14. Practice “one anothering.” **(Romans 12, 14, 15, 1 Peter 5, Ephesians 4.32, 1 Thessalonians 4.18, 5.11, 15, e.g.)**

The LORD is near. For the person in Christ, He dwells within. Let us come near to Him, and He will come near to us. Amen.

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