

“Un-loneliness”

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Scripture: Acts 2:42-47

42 ‘The believers studied what the apostles taught. They shared life together. They broke bread and ate together. And they prayed.

43 Everyone felt that God was near. The apostles did many wonders and miraculous signs.

44 All the believers were together. They shared everything they had.

45 They sold what they owned. They gave each other everything they needed.

46 Every day they met together in the temple courtyard. In their homes they broke bread and ate together. Their hearts were glad and honest and true.

47 They praised God. They were respected by all the people. Every day the Lord added to their group those who were being saved’ (NirV).

Our focus this morning, is on verse 42, ‘The believers studied what the apostles taught. They shared life together. They broke bread and ate together. And they prayed.’

Introduction

Do you see yourself as one of many islands in the sea?

Just like every island is unique, so are you. There is no other you. There has never been a ‘you’ and there will never be another ‘you.’ And ‘you’ are actually soul (incl. spirit) and body. Which logically places everyone else on your outside.

But is this by design, or by choice?

Not that we should confuse loneliness, solitude and boundaries with each other, but there are times though, when you may even feel separated from yourself. In other words, lonely. Loneliness is a state of mind; meaning that you can experience a very painful loneliness – being cut off and without company – even when in the presence of family and friends.

In reality though, islands are connected by both earth and sea.

Connectedness is the Absence of Separation

So the two real questions are, (1) 'What is separation' and (2) 'Are you absolutely or partially separated?' Separation by definition leans strongly towards division. So perhaps it would make more sense to broadly mention what 'division' is. Division is where a whole is broken into parts on the basis of a disagreement or by choice. Christ is not divided nor is His kingdom.

As God-created humans, we are designed to be part of the Body of Christ and to stand in fellowship with that body, i.e. connected and united. Belonging is our natural place to where people always gravitate.

You might have heard the word '*koinonia*' before. '*Koinonia*' is mentioned 20 times in the Bible. It simply means fellowship or sharing and is a key concept in communion. As Christians, our connectedness is *koinonia*.

Koinonia

Let's read Acts 2:42 again, which is the first example of *koinonia*, 'The believers studied what the apostles taught. They shared life together. They broke bread and ate together. And they prayed.' The early church, in Christ, came together in love, faith and encouragement.

The early church was in agreement with one another, they were united in their purpose, they served alongside one another and served each other. This is an important awareness because our connectedness (the absence of loneliness) is based on our common communion with Christ. Connectedness is not so much about being connected to another person, as it is about being connected to others through Christ because you are in Christ.

If we are connected (*koinonia*) then we are with one another, because of Jesus. Our connectedness, therefore, implies devotion, honour, living, acceptance, service, kindness, compassion, reprimand, encouragement, love and hospitality.

Two things stand out, (1) a worldly connection is found wanting and (2) there is no realistic motivation to choose loneliness over connectedness. Loneliness is a

damaging emotion–state of mind–without a single and common cause. Life does not have to be this way ... with emptiness, unwantedness and alone.

In Conversation With Connectedness

With *koinonia* in mind, we agree with one another that connectedness speaks to three areas of your life: (1) empathy, (2) being and (3) knowing. Empathy speaks to comprehending what others are feeling and experiencing, being speaks to belonging and existing and knowing speaks to safety and security. All three are desirable, so let's find out how to move toward connectedness.

I am willing to suggest that the more emotionally and spiritually healthy you are, the better the quality your connectedness will be. If you are lonely, it does not imply that you are necessarily unwell, it means something needs to change.

Although there is no singular common cause, in reality, loneliness can actually be reduced to any combination of: physical isolation, perceived spiritual isolation, a change in relationship status (e.g. death or divorce), a low self-esteem, feelings of unworthiness, a lack of confidence in oneself, emotional pain or depression.

In all cases, you have the ability, resources and opportunity to work toward connectedness, not necessarily by replacing a loss with something, but by first and foremost growing as person in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Achieving (*koinonia*) connectedness from loneliness suggests that it is a journey best undertaken with the help of the Body of Christ, a professional (e.g. a qualified and registered pastor or Christian psychologist).

Towards 'Un-loneliness'

Having said this, here is a plan of action in that may work for you; work with it and do make it your own:

- Appreciate that loneliness, in contrast to connectedness, can unfavourably affect your physical and mental health.
- A conscious effort is needed to pursue connectedness which is a courageous and necessary step forward.

- Balance your expectations. Although you might fear rejection and will probably encounter some rejection, acknowledge that you also have the ability to focus on what is positive, meaningful and valuable. So balance rejection with what you stand to gain and focus on the gains.
- Progressively reach out into (not only 'to') your local church as well as a community organization or cause. Go meet people, interact with them and form friendships. A good number of people there will share your attitudes, interests and values. This, in Christ, is the basis of a quality (*koinonia*) relationship.
- As we have suggested, get professional help. Some of life's journeys will include therapy, which is a clear sign of inner strength and a desire to move forward with a renewed sense of Godly purpose.

Conclusion

Since you are not spiritually or physically confined, you do not exist as an island, you don't desire to live separately and you are part of the Body of Christ then you are not alone!

What matters is commitment, endurance and perseverance. These three will be your checkpoints. And in these three, your desire to replace loneliness with connectedness will show. You have the ability and desire to commit to un-loneliness; i.e. connectedness.

- Commitment requires you to make a deliberate decision in your best interest.
- Endurance demands of you: stamina and persistence.
- Persistence on the other hand, is going to ask you to overcome discouragement, failure and opposition.

Achieving un-loneliness is not a journey that you have to walk alone. Get connected.

Live life in *koinonia* and to the fullest and to the glory of God.