

Are You Lonely?
Presented by Mary Lowman
Air Dates: December 25 - 29, 2023

Day One

Merry Christmas! Perhaps you're gathering with family to open gifts and eat great food, or maybe it's a quiet day for you. However, you are celebrating today, the team here at The Christian Working Woman is here to wish you a blessed day. We just want to send you words of joy, reminding us of the miracle we are celebrating today.

I'll begin with this passage from Mary's Magnificat, the amazing words she spoke as she visited her cousin Elizabeth. Here she is, a very young woman who will bear the Son of God, and she said:

My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name (Luke 1:46-49).

Here's a familiar passage from the prophet Isaiah:

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this (Isaiah 9:5-7).

And the Apostle Paul said this:

Who, [Jesus Christ] being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:6-11).

Remember—you are deeply loved by the Savior of the world who came to sacrifice himself for our sake.

Let me close with this reminder that what we are truly celebrating today is that Jesus is our salvation:

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Merry Christmas!

Day Two

I know that at this time of year many people are especially lonely. Psalm 68:6 says, "*God sets the lonely in families, he leads out the prisoners with singing; but the rebellious live in a sun-scorched land.*" I have found this verse to be exactly true in my life. As I have allowed God to make a home for me and to accept his presence as sufficient in my life, I have been set free from the awful heaviness of loneliness.

That verse says only the rebellious dwell in a parched land. When we refuse to allow God to be our cure for loneliness, when we continue to try to do it our way and fill the empty void with people and activities, we'll continue to find loneliness our companion. Your feelings of loneliness may be because you are still rebelling against God's answers. You don't like the idea of learning to let him fill up your empty time and change your lonely feelings. As long as you continue to rebel, you will continue to live in that parched land of loneliness.

There's no doubt God created us for fellowship and companionship, and we need people in our lives, too. When Jesus was facing crucifixion, he took his three closest companions with him while he prayed. He needed God's presence, and he needed their presence and support. The Apostle Paul spoke of his need to be with his companions and his encouragers.

If you are lonely because you don't have a good friend or friends or they're not nearby, I would remind you that you have to reach out to others and be a friend in order to have friends. Ask yourself what you could do for someone else to be their friend and to meet their need, instead of waiting for someone to be your friend. We reap what we sow—that's a biblical principle. If you want friendships, sow friendships; become a friend to others.

Loneliness can be very crippling, and it is at epidemic levels these days, but you can take positive steps—by God's grace—to overcome those depressing feelings of loneliness. Of course, the most important step to take is to spend time developing your relationship with Jesus through Bible study and prayer. He is a friend who sticks closer than a brother, and believe me, he is capable of filling that lonely space inside of you.

Day Three

Have you ever said something like, "She just brings out the worst in me!"? It really is true certain people and certain circumstances seem to bring out the worst in us. Did you ever think that there might be a reason for that?

In Psalm 19:12, David wrote: *Who can discern his errors? Forgive my hidden faults.* Then he goes on to pray in verse 13: *Keep your servant also from willful sins...* We see David was dealing with two types of sin and error in his life: Ones hidden to him that he could not even see, and ones that were willful.

Of course, David's not the only one who has these two areas of sin in his life; we all do. We all understand the need to deal with the errors that are blatant; the ones we know about. But what about those hidden errors? Many times, these are things in our lives which never are changed because we just don't see them. "Who can discern his errors?" David asks. In other words, it's not easy to see them for yourself.

So, what does God do for us? He sends people into our lives that bring out the worst in us. Here's a person in your life that causes you to be angry every time that person is in your presence. It seems like you say something hateful or unkind to him or her all the time. The truth is no one is in your life by accident, and those people who bring out the worst in you are there to show you those hidden errors, so you are no longer blind to them.

Think about it: Who are the people that bring out the worst in you? Or perhaps it's a certain type of person that brings out the worst in you. Can you identify some of those people or types?

Inept and dense people bring out the worst in me. I tend to have very judgmental attitudes toward them. When I analyze that, I realize it's the sin of pride, thinking I'm better than someone else. Wow, those hidden errors! Underneath them we'll discover all kinds of wrong attitudes that need to be changed.

One of my regular prayers is to ask God to show me my hidden errors. It's a good prayer, so I encourage you to pray the same. And then every time you're around someone who brings out the worst in you, stop and realize God is answering your prayer and showing you your hidden errors, so that you can become more Christ-like.

Day Four

We are examining the people who tend to bring out the worst in us. One reason God allows those people in our lives is to help us see our hidden errors for the purpose of changing us. But the other side of this coin is to ask ourselves if we bring out the worst in others. That is not the kind of person I want to be, how about you? I want to be someone who brings out the best in others.

Now, think about it, does your presence in a situation tend to soothe matters, or do you often just make things worse? Jesus tells us we should be peacemakers, bringing peace into the small wars that go on between people every day. Do you do that? For instance, if there's an argument on your job between two other people, do you try to make peace in a helpful way?

Often, we can bring out the best in others by giving deserved compliments or recognition, focusing on the positive in them rather than the negative. So often others will improve their performance or their attitude if someone just gives them a little recognition or praise. You can bring out the best in others by commending them when you can.

In Proverbs 15, we see that a cheerful look brings joy to the heart. You can bring out the best in others by something as simple as a smile. You can help them cope better or feel better by the look on your face.

Proverbs 12:18 says *reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing*. And Proverbs 15:1 tells us that a *gentle answer turns away wrath*. It's easy to see that the words you speak can either bring out the worst or best in people.

If you respond to someone with sharp and uncaring words, in a rushed or hasty manner, it can easily cause them to respond back to you in a poor way. But by choosing your words carefully, it's amazing how you can change that other person and bring out the best in them.

When you're dealing with someone who is angry or upset, your goal should be to bring out the best in that person, to help him or her calm down. You can do that by being empathetic and sympathetic: "I'm so sorry you've had a problem." Or "I can certainly understand how you feel." You can help to calm someone down by controlling the tone of your voice, keeping it calm and kind. You can bring out the best in this angry person sometimes by simply listening and caring about the problem. Those are little things that bring out the best in people.

Don't you think we could impact our world for Jesus Christ if we more and more became people who bring out the best in others? Ask God to make you that kind of Christian.

Day Five

You know, everybody needs encouragement and help at times, don't they? As I read 2 Corinthians 7, I realized that even the great Apostle Paul had his bad times when he needed other people. We read in verse 5 that Paul says: *For when we came into Macedonia, this body of ours had no rest, but we were harassed at every turn—conflicts on the outside, fears within.*

Doesn't that describe the way you feel at times? Conflicts without, fears within? But this is the spiritual giant, Paul, and it surprises us to realize he would have these same feelings. Well, we really need to remember that positions of prominence do not isolate anyone from being human. Paul was tired and fearful. He needed help.

Where did his help come from? He goes on to say, "But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus." He needed a friend at his side to comfort him, and so, Titus came along. We could say to Paul, "But wasn't it enough to have the Lord there?" And Paul would respond, "The Lord was there in the person of Titus. He comforted me by sending Titus."

Yes indeed, that's how the body of Christ should function. God wants to use us in each other's lives as messengers of comfort and encouragement, to pick each other up at those weary and frightened moments of our lives. God has given us each other for that purpose.

Paul goes on to say that he was comforted by the good report Titus brought to him of the concern for his welfare by his friends in Corinth. Paul needed to know that they cared, that they hadn't forgotten him, that they still loved him.

How often do we miss these opportunities to be God's comfort in the lives of others? How often do we need to be by a friend's side when they're experiencing dark days? Or send a message to them—by email, on the phone—just to say, I care.

Hallmark Cards has coined the phrase, "When you care enough to send the very best." When we as Christians care enough about each other, we can send our very best, which is the comfort of God pouring through us to those who need it.

Is there someone in your life today that needs a Titus? Ask God to show you and allow him to use you as his agent of comfort and encouragement.