

"Never Alone"

Living alone presents many emotional and spiritual challenges to adults today. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders. This is a Bible study, "In SEARCH of the Lord's Way." Today we're exploring what God desires for those who live alone. Stay with us.

Welcome to In Search of the Lord's Way; we're here to search the Scriptures for the Lord's Way. And this is God's instruction book for everyone, in every stage of life, and in every circumstance. Whatever struggle or heartache you face, God has some comfort and help for you in the Bible. He's not forgotten or abandoned you. He knows and cares about you. Thanks for studying with us today. We want to be part of your life each week.

Many years ago, I did a funeral for an elderly man who had no family at all. Three funeral directors and I carried his casket to the graveside service; two ladies from the nursing home and I sang some hymns. And no one else attended. Six people, no family, no friends. This man was utterly alone and buried by strangers.

Loneliness is a growing problem in our society. More than 53 percent of all adults in the United States are unmarried; that's over 110 million people. A study by the American Council of Life Insurance reported that the loneliest group in America are college students. The survey next listed divorced people, welfare recipients, single mothers, rural students, housewives, and the elderly. Loneliness is a widespread problem; in fact, one in four people complain about feeling lonely frequently. Persistent loneliness can harm our mental and physical health.

The LORD God said to Adam in Genesis 2:18, "It's not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him." Living without a spouse is difficult, whether you've never married, have lost your spouse, or have been divorced. Loneliness is painful and can confuse you into thinking that you are a loser or an outcast, but that's not necessarily so.

If you want to study more about this topic, we offer the information on this program free. If you'd like a printed copy of our study and live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. Now if you live outside the United States, we have materials free online, and you can stream this program on our website at www.searchtv.org.

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from Psalm 139, verses 1 to 5, and we'll see how we are never alone.

Our reading today is a Psalm of David, Psalm 139, verses 1 to 5, which remind us of our close relationship with God. "O LORD, You have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You understand my thought from afar.

You scrutinize my path and my lying down, And are intimately acquainted with all my ways. Even before there is a word on my tongue, Behold, O LORD, You know it all.

You have enclosed me behind and before, And laid Your hand upon me." Oh, I'm thankful for the closeness of God.

Let's pray together. "Father we're thankful that You love us and that You watch over us every day of our lives, and that You are so close. We're grateful Father for Your promises and for Your blessings. Help us to love You and to serve You always. In Jesus name, Amen."

Loneliness makes people feel sad and empty, cut off from others and needing companionship. Loneliness typically includes anxiety because people need to connect with family. We all need a

companion who shares our lives and dreams, who walks through life with us, who experiences our joys and sorrows, and who shares our responsibilities and decisions. Connecting with another is more than living in the same house. One can feel lonely even when surrounded by other people.

The Bible tells of several people who lived lonely lives. Joseph, the son of Jacob, grew up in a large family; but his half-brothers hated him so much they sold him into slavery. At a young age, he lived as a stranger in a foreign land. His master's wife tried repeatedly to seduce him. And when he refused her advances, she falsely accused him. And he spent years in prison, separated from home and family. I can only imagine how Joseph must have felt. However, Genesis 39:21 says, "But the Lord was with Joseph and extended kindness to him, and gave him favor in the sight of the chief jailer." Whatever Joseph endured, the Lord was with him. The Lord protected and provided for him and the things that he needed, even if his family was far away. Joseph was able to endure his hardships and keep his faith, because he knew the Lord was with him.

Jesus walked alone much of his life. He never had a wife and children but gave Himself completely to His mission of saving people from sin. Jesus had people around Him all His life. He grew up in a household with several brothers and sisters. He chose and trained twelve disciples who accompanied Him in His ministry. Jesus often stayed in the home of friends like Lazarus, Mary and Martha. Multitudes followed Him wherever He went. And in spite of all this, Jesus faced much of life alone and did what no other person could do. He went to the cross alone. While praying at Gethsemane, His disciples fell asleep and left Him praying alone. His familiar friend, Judas, betrayed Him; Peter denied Him three times; and the rest scattered.

Like Joseph Jesus found strength in His relationship with His Father in heaven. Jesus said in John 16:32, "Behold, an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to his own home, and to leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me." Jesus found the strength He needed in the Father, and so can you. Peter revealed how Jesus dealt with lonely suffering. 1 Peter 2:21 to 23 says, "For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in his mouth; and while being reviled, He didn't revile in return; and while suffering, He uttered no threats, but He kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously." When Jesus suffered most, He put His life and His soul into the hands of the heavenly Father. There He found comfort, there He found support.

Jesus began and ended His ordeal on the cross with prayer. Of course, He prayed for three hours while in the Garden of Gethsemane. The Lord Jesus prayed in Luke 22:42, "Father, if You're willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done." While Jesus wanted to escape the cross on one hand, He wanted to do the will of the Father on the other. And His desire to do the Father's will was greater than His desire to escape death. His true prayer to do the Father's will came from His love for the Father. Hebrews 5 and verse 7 says, "In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence." In His pain and sorrow, the Father heard His obedient prayer.

As they crucified the Lord Jesus, He was praying, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they're doing" (Luke 23:34). Instead of focusing on their cruelty and the pain of large nails going through His hands and feet, Jesus thought about their souls, praying for them to be forgiven. We often focus on the evil in life, but Jesus focused on saving people from their sins.

Matthew 27:46 says, "And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, ... 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'" Did you know these words are a quotation of Psalm 22,

verse 1. Psalm 22 is the most Messianic of David's psalms. It begins with a feeling of forsakenness, and speaks of wagging heads in verse 7, predicts the piercing of His hands and feet in verse 16, and speaks of the dividing of His garments in verse 18. But verse 27 speaks of all the nations turning to and worshiping the Lord. Could it be the Lord Jesus was reciting this Scripture to Himself and reassuring Himself that His death was not in vain?

Jesus kept entrusting Himself to the Father. Luke 23 and verse 46, "Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, 'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!' And having said this He breathed his last." From the beginning to the end of His excruciating ordeal, Jesus found His strength in prayer. His example will help us in our times of pain and loneliness. 1 Peter 4:19 says, "Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right." When you're lonely, entrust your soul to a Creator who won't let you down.

The apostle Paul provides another example for those who live as singles. While some may think he may have been married at some point, he says in his writings that he is unmarried. He says in 1 Corinthians 7 and verse 8, "To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to remain single as I am." He realized that not everyone had the gift to live the single life, and yet felt there were many advantages to living as a single. Paul knew having a family would get in the way of his ministry, and he wanted to be free of any responsibility except to Christ. Paul often faced great difficulties. They put Paul in prison five times, and he spent five years of his life incarcerated. Paul wrote in Philippians while he was imprisoned, but Paul wasn't depressed or defeated, even though he was imprisoned. But he spoke of the joy in that letter, the letter of Philippians, more than twenty times.

Paul learned the secret of being content in whatever circumstances he found himself. In context, Philippians 4 is speaking of Paul's financial wellbeing; but this is likely true of other circumstances of his life. He explains in Philippians 4:12 to 13, "I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I've learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me." Paul found God's grace was sufficient for him, even when he was suffering. Having God in his life made up for all the things that he didn't have.

Paul also understood what it's like to face death alone. God spared Paul's life the first time he appeared before Caesar. Paul said in 2 Timothy 4:16 to 18, "At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them. But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was rescued out of the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen."

When you're lonely, think on the promises of God. They'll reassure you. The Lord God said in Psalm 68:5 to 6, "A father of the fatherless and a judge for the widows, Is God in His holy habitation. God makes a home for the lonely; He leads out the prisoners into prosperity, Only the rebellious dwell in a parched land." If you have God with you, you have far more than many of the largest families. The Lord Jesus promised in Matthew 28:20, "and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." The Lord Jesus dwells with His people. I love the Lord's promise in John 14:23, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we'll come to him and make our home with him." The Father and the Lord Jesus make their home with those who love Him enough to obey Him.

The Lord God promised Joshua in Joshua 1 and verse 5, "No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you." This promise is repeated to Christians in Hebrews 13:5. David said in Psalm 37 and verse 25, "I've been young, and now am old, and yet I've not seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging for

bread." What's true in practical matters is also true in our relationship with the Lord. David said in Psalm 27:10, "For my father and my mother have forsaken me, But the LORD will take me up." When no one else was there for David, God was.

God said to the people of Jerusalem through the prophet Isaiah in chapter 49, verses 15 and 16, "Can a woman forget her nursing child, And have no compassion on the son of her womb? Well even these may forget, but I will not forget you. Behold, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hand; Your walls are continually before Me." God thinks continually of His children. He thinks of their physical welfare, their spiritual strength, and their emotional needs. The Lord Jesus reminds us in Matthew 6 and verse 8 that "your Father knows what you need before you ask Him." The Lord is a blessing to all of us.

David kept himself aware of the presence of God. And our reading today came from Psalm 139:1 to 5. Where he said, "O LORD, you've searched me and known me! You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O LORD, you know it, you know it altogether. You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me." David describes how intimately God knew him. God knew everything about him, how he acted, how he talked, even what he thought. David said in verse 6, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it."

Now God had known David from his conception in his mother's womb. In Psalm 139:13 to 14 David said, "For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well." Now no one knows us as intimately as God. He's watched over us every day of our lives, He's heard every prayer we've ever made, He has known every thought we've ever had, and provided every need. You can't go anywhere outside the presence of God.

Well, how does all this help? Because you too can say, "I'm not alone; the Lord is with me." You too can say that His grace is sufficient for you. You too can say that He will never leave you or forsake you. Of friend, give yourself to God, and He will be with you.

Let's pray together. "Heavenly Father we're thankful for Your loving presence that surrounds us at all times, that You hem us in before and behind, that You lay Your hand upon us. And Father, help us to be devoted to You and to Your will always. In Jesus name, Amen."

The outspoken atheist Madalyn Murray O'Hair, who went to court to take prayer out of the schools, clearly sensed something was missing from her life. She wrote in her diary in 1977 that she had failed as a wife, as a parent, and as a politician. In half a dozen places in her diaries O'Hair wrote, "Somebody, somewhere, love me." We all long to be loved and to love. There's one place in your heart and soul that no one can fill but God. The most lonely person in the world isn't the one who lacks family but the one who has rejected God.

Some let their love for God fade as years pass. The Lord Jesus said to the lukewarm church at Laodicea in Revelation 3 and verse 20, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; and if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him (or dine with him), and he with Me." The Lord Jesus wants to restore the warm and intimate fellowship that He once had with the church in Laodicea, and He wants to have that same intimacy with you. Do you have a close, loving, peaceful relationship with the Lord?

Draw close to God; make Him part of your life every day! Become a Christian by placing your faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. And He will never lie to you and He wants to save

you from your sins. And so, out of love, repent of your sins by forsaking them and by following the Lord. Confess Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, and be baptized into Christ, and united with Him. Oh, we're crucified with Christ in baptism so that our body of sin might be done away with according to Romans 6:3 to 7. And God washes away our sins in baptism according to Acts 22:16. Become a Christian today, and have God in your life.

We hope that today's study about loneliness has reassured you of God's love. Consider what we've studied. If you live in the United States and want a free printed copy of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633.

There's also a schedule of our programs and there's also a map with the location of churches that are in your area. Now you can watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube! We do ask that you subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry." And when you are watching the programs be sure to like them; because this helps spread the program, so that others can watch. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now don't worry, if you get a hold of us we're not asking for money. We're here to help you draw close to God.

We do ask that you focus on God, and do that by worshiping at church. Everybody needs a church family. And there's probably a church of Christ that's near you. If you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll gladly help you find one. Well we'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about this program. God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.