



OCTOBER STUDY

# Praise Him In Loneliness

Mother Theresa once said,  
“The world’s greatest tragedy  
is unwantedness; the world’s  
greatest disease is loneliness.”

Loneliness is the feeling of isolation and is a derivative of the word 'alone' illustrating the idea for one to be lonely or to experience loneliness, they must be unhappy. There are, however, people who enjoy their time alone and use it to their advantage to accomplish a specific task. On the other hand many cannot tolerate being alone. People can feel alone in a crowd, a family, or a workplace environment.

Research reveals six basic types of loneliness. Loneliness can result from losing a mate or a loved one and is known as an *interpersonal loneliness*.

*Social loneliness* is when a person is actively excluded from a group. Missionaries experience *cultural loneliness* when transferred from their native culture to a new culture and have not had time to adapt to their new surroundings.

An *intellectual loneliness* exists when individuals feel they are intellectually or educationally out of sync with peers, family, or social group.

*Psychological loneliness* affects people who have experienced a traumatic, life altering situation. The last type is *existential loneliness* and is experienced by those facing imminent death from a terminal medical diagnosis. This study will deal with the types of loneliness that David may have faced.

## Distress of Loneliness

David experiences three types of loneliness in Psalm 142. He was *socially* unaccepted by King Saul and his men as they pursued him and wanted to kill him. The game of *Hide and Seek* surely affected him *psychologically* as he suffered from the trauma of being hunted down like an animal.

To some degree he must have felt he did not belong *culturally* due to the challenges of leaving his surroundings and the security of his home. It is believed David

wrote Psalm 142 during the time he was being chased by King Saul (1 Samuel 22-24) and had taken refuge in a cave for protection. David cried out to God because he was alone, and only God could hear him and help.

### Reflective Questions

Read Psalm 142:1-7: How many times did David use the pronoun 'I' in these verses? What action phrases did David use after the 'I' in each verse?

Did David feel like any man cared for his soul in verse 4?

What words did David use to express this conclusion?

## *Despair of Loneliness*

The amazing lesson David learned during his loneliness in the cave was the realization he could not depend on any man. This drove him to his knees to pray and as he cried out to God, he learned he had the strength to praise God during this difficult time in his life. Apparently, caves make great prayer rooms, and David was able to give his fears to God, knowing He would bring him out of his prison in the end.

Many times, we put ourselves into a 'cave' of loneliness, which becomes our prison. David's cave did not have the typical bars we associate with prisons, or the guards, doors, or locks preventing him from escaping. It may have been a large space versus a confined area. We know from Scripture the cave would have been large enough to hide many of David's men (400) who were with him.

Our 'caves' of loneliness can be a solitary room, our home, the workplace, or even the outdoors. The prison of loneliness we experience can exist within our own mind. We are the ones who determine where the prison of loneliness and despair is located.

During his moments of severe loneliness, David focused on the positives and praised God for not forsaking him. He began to focus on how God would reward his

families." *The Holman Christian Study Bible* states, "widows and orphans represented the weakest and most vulnerable members of society who were often the most oppressed. Yahweh (God) Himself took on the role as their defender."

Many of us have witnessed a senior lose a spouse to death and then pass away a short time later from loneliness and grief.

All of these difficult situations bring different phases of loneliness. The widow or divorced

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as I sit alone and wait for life's shut gate."

—Helen Keller

time of anguish with bountiful blessings, and he put his confidence in the Lord to deal with his false accusers (Psalm 142:7). Even as David expressed his feelings of abandonment, he looked forward to the fellowship of God and His people.

Those losing a loved one to death or from divorce experience *interpersonal loneliness*. Isolation accompanying the death of a spouse or loved one can be crippling to the ones left to continue their journey on earth alone.

God addresses this loneliness in Psalm 68:5-6: "A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in His holy habitation. God setteth the solitary in

person feels disconnected from life as they once knew it. Couples losing a mate through death or divorce experience the feeling of being an intrusion or 'fifth wheel' in their crowd of friends. Divorced couples are reminded of the marriage bond they once enjoyed before their marriage traveled down a wrong road. Many divorced individuals have expressed the severe pain of loneliness after an unwanted divorce.

The caregiver of a spouse or family member suffering from Alzheimer's or a terminal disease may experience feelings of living in a 'cave' of solitary confinement. God promises to be our "family" and help us during the journey.

## JULY STUDY

As Christians, we need to be mindful of those suffering around us and make every effort to reach out and help bring relief during difficult times. Helen Keller once said, "A sense of isolation enfolds me like a cold mist as I sit alone and wait for life's shut gate. Beyond there is light, and music, and sweet companionship, but I may not enter."

### Reflective Questions

Describe a time when someone you depended on let you down. What lessons did you learn?

What cave of loneliness have you experienced?

What did (can) you do to combat the loneliness?

## Deliverance From Loneliness

My dad always told me there were two things we have to do on this earth: pay taxes and die. *Existential* loneliness directly affects someone facing death.

Believers need to consider death as 'Graduation Day to Glory,' not a time of deep despair; unfortunately, this is easier said than done. Psalm 23:4 is the cloak that covers the Christian transitioning from earth to Heaven. God does not leave us alone in the valley of death but walks through it with us.

As believers, must cling to the fact that when it is our time to be absent from this physical body, we will immediately be present with the Lord. The shadow in Psalm 23:4 exists because a light shines in the valley, and that light is our Heavenly Father.

The valley represents a place of peace and quiet. Without Christ there is no peace in dying. *The Treasury of David* by C.H. Spurgeon states, "death is not the house but the porch, not the goal but the passage to it."

The latter part of verse 4 states, "thy rod and thy staff they comfort me," which refers to God's sovereignty and follows the phrase, "thou art with me." We can trust in the fact that

regardless of how lonely our days may be, God has complete control, even in the valley of death. We have perfect comfort in knowing He will be with us.

*South Carolina Senior Magazine Guide* stated, "Loneliness is one of the most common and serious problems in our society." The article encouraged the reader to understand people all around us are lonely and need someone to be their friend. Ministering to the lonely is an amazing mission field in our own backyard.

Margaret Clarkson, a prolific hymn writer once wrote, "Loneliness is one of the hardest of pain's companions to learn to live with, but it is always present in sorrow or sickness. No one else can know our loss or our heartache, sympathize as they will. Suffering is essentially within myself, to suffer is to be alone—utterly, completely alone. But there is One who can enter into our pain—the solitary Man who was despised and rejected by man, a man of sorrows who was acquainted with grief."

David trusted God for deliverance out of his cave of loneliness in Psalm 142, and we can trust God to deliver us out of ours.

## Reflective Questions

How many times did David use the term *cry* or *cried* in Psalms 142:1-7?

Explain the difference between “refuge” in Psalm 142:4 and “refuge” in verse 5.

What type of witnesses are we to the world if they observe us putting more of our trust in earthly refuges (physical shelters, things, relatives, friends, etc.) rather than the eternal refuge of a living God?

How would you respond to the various types of loneliness? How should we encourage someone walking a path of loneliness?

Identify any similarities from David’s time of despair in Psalm 142 to the despair Jesus experienced during His last days on earth. (Matthew 26-28).

**About the Writer:** Pam Hackett attended Welch College and has been a teacher for almost 30 years. Pam is coordinator for South Carolina WAC and Beaver Creek District WAC, and serves as missions study chairman in her local group. She has been a member of the WNAC board since 2009. Pam is a member of Fairview Free Will Baptist Church where her husband Tim pastors. She is mother of three and “Nana” to five grandchildren.