



GUIDELINES DAILY COMMENTARY ON LIVING WITH DR. HAROLD J. SALA

Subject: Loneliness, Social Media, Relationships

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LONELINESS

Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." Hebrews 13:5

Mother Teresa once said, "Loneliness and the feeling of being unwanted is the most terrible poverty." Yes, and the worse malady mankind struggles with is on the rise. We are all becoming lonelier and social scientists say, it may be a result of replacing our flesh and blood relationships with the virtual "friendships" of social media. Replacing face to face relationships with Facebook friends or whatever, interacting with people that we may actually hardly know, real human social interaction has declined. In 1985, only 10 percent of Americans said they had no one with whom to discuss important matters, and 15 percent said they had only one such good friend. By 2004, 25 percent had nobody to talk to, and 20 percent had only one confidant.¹ Our relationships may stretch wider, but they are much more shallow. We can be reached 24/7 but our hearts are less touchable by another real person than ever before.

Yvette Vickers had been a Playboy bunny and B-grade movie star. But when she died, the better part of a year went by before her mummified body was found in her home. A neighbor had noticed overflowing junk mail in her mailbox. Vickers had faraway fans and friends on Internet sites. In fact, news of her unseemly death was the subject of 16,057 Facebook posts and 881 tweets. Yet she had no children. No church. No close friends. Her last phone calls were to distant fans of her movies. On her final day did she wonder, like the movie actress of a generation ago, Doris Day, "If so many people love me, how come I'm alone?"

It is not just famous celebrities who are lonely. Ask the single parent who puts the kids to bed and keeps the television on for company. Ask the businessman who is burned out and fearful of letting his boss know he needs help. Ask the teenage girl who is pregnant and fearful of telling her parents. Ask the child who is bullied on the playground for being different.

There are two things of which you can be sure: God knows your anguish and hurt, and He cares. He cares infinitely more deeply than you have any idea. Do you remember the loneliness that Jesus Christ faced as the disciples turned one by one and left Him? Remember the anguish as He cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34). Do you recall the long hours prior to the ordeal at Calvary when He struggled in prayer in the Garden and wrestled with the anguish which was before Him?

Do you remember how Jesus prayed, "If it be possible, may this cup be taken from me...?" (Mt. 26:39). Was He afraid of dying? Fearful of the nails which would be driven through His hands and feet? No, a thousand times no! What He was asking was that He not be separated from the presence of the Father. In other words He was praying that He might be spared the loneliness of separation from the Father's presence.

Jesus is a specialist when it comes to loneliness, and that's part of the reason that He provides a remedy for your hurt. Because He suffered the pain of loneliness as He was separated from the Father, you need never be separated from His presence. He promised those who follow him, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5). You may be alone but you need not be lonely.

Resource reading: Hebrews 13

¹ <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2012/05/is-facebook-making-us-lonely/308930/>. Accessed 5/16/16.