



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

Subject: Loneliness

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### ALONE!

*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. Matthew 28:19-20*

*Alone!* is the title of Admiral William Byrd's autobiography. It's the story of his life as this celebrated explorer tells about his experience in a little hut in the Antarctic near the South Pole. Byrd tells how the isolation of seeing no other human being day after day began working on his mind and emotions as he spent the long winter alone, separated from friends and loved ones, even separated from friendly animals which might have offered some companionship or comfort. "Alone!" None would deny it, but a person does not have to spend a long arctic night in a little hut near the pole to know what it is to experience feelings of isolation and loneliness.

I am thinking of the young mother of four who wrote telling how they had moved from one city to another when her husband was promised a new job. She was eight months pregnant in a city without friends or relatives, when her husband disappeared, leaving a note behind that he no longer loved her and that she must make out the best she could. Could any person ever feel more alone and dejected than did this woman?

Many women today know what it is to feel alone and to be alone. As well as infidelity, death leaves a lot of women shrouded in loneliness. Three out of four women outlive their husbands by an average of more than seven years. Although the average age of widows the world over is 56, one of every six women over age 21 is widowed. The very word "widow" comes from the Sanskrit which means "empty." Loneliness is emptiness.

Logic would decree that single individuals would wrestle with loneliness, but what about those who are part of a group? Are they immune? Today there is another group battling the isolation and depression of loneliness, a group which seemingly should not be there, nonetheless, is. It is the vast number of young men and women between the ages of 15 and 24 who feel separated and estranged from their families and society in general.

Years ago, Gertrude Stein called them "a generation without a cause!" Today, they have become a vast army of students and potential suicides, who rub shoulders with many, many individuals, yet have empty lives without relationships that cement them to reality. Recognizing the malady is one thing; knowing how to remedy the situation is quite another matter.

My qualified optimism does not stem from an unbridled faith in wishful thinking, but from the certainty that to be alone does not necessarily mean you must be lonely. It is during periods of loneliness that our faith is challenged. It is also when we can discover the guiding hand of God and learn that Christ's presence is a reality, not simply a facet of theology. Is God real? Can I experience the actual presence of Jesus Christ in such a way that I can have active fellowship with Him? Can I learn that Christ is not just an historical reality, but a friend who stays closer than a brother? If the answer is positive, then being alone does not have to be synonymous with loneliness.

Friend, because God's words are true when He said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5, KJV), I can be assured of His companionship in a spiritual yet very real sense. Matthew records the words of Jesus spoken immediately before He returned to heaven as He said, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20, KJV). His promise brings the confidence that God cares and that He will never allow you to be estranged from His presence. Discovering this great truth will mean you need never be totally alone again—ever again.

Resource reading: Joshua 1:1-5