



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

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LET LONELINESS DO ITS JOB

But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God." Ruth 1:16

Back when the world's population was less than 250 million, a mere fraction of what it is today, the prophet Isaiah wrote, "Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth!" (Isaiah 5:8, KJV). I wonder how he would feel today when skyscrapers puncture the skyline of almost every major city on earth, yet one of the ironic contradictions of our day is that there are more people alive today than have died since creation, and furthermore, there is more loneliness than ever before. Strange, isn't it? You would think that with more people, there would be less estrangement and loneliness. But it just does not work that way.

A lot of factors contribute to this disease of human relations we call loneliness: the break-down of the family unit, the mobility of families who are moving from place to place in unprecedented numbers, the fragmentation of human relationships as people who have been hurt by others withdraw rather than reach out to each other. The results are estrangement, separation and ultimately loneliness--the devastating kind of loneliness that makes a person question his existence and reason for occupying two square feet of space on planet Earth. Sooner or later, every man faces the struggle with loneliness, and how you face it and what you do with it can either spell your destruction or help to be your making.

What can loneliness do? Plenty! First, it can give you an awareness of God's presence which you might never find in the rush and bother of life. Scores of men have discovered the presence of God during hours of loneliness. Moses knew loneliness as he herded sheep in the desert of the Negev. David knew its sinister presence as he spent seven long years in the wilderness area around En Gedi, as he fled from the soldiers of King Saul. Jesus knew what loneliness was as He prayed in the Garden and watched His trusted followers fall asleep one by one. "Could you men not watch with me for one hour?" He chided Peter (Matthew 26:40).

No one eagerly looks forward to the battle with loneliness, but when you are there, friend, you will discover that God is there and that His Son will never leave nor forsake you (Hebrews 13:5).

The second contribution that loneliness can make is to help you discover yourself, which, of course, may be alarming. Yet it can provide the time for you to develop some of your own hobbies or interests. It can give you the time you need to become a student of the Word and devour some of those books you have been thinking about reading.

A third contribution that it can make to your life is to force you to bridge the estranging sea of loneliness by forging some friendships with other lonely people who need your companionship as badly as you need theirs.

If you are a Christian you are not a isolated and alone. You belong to the family of God, which means we are brothers and sisters who are vitally related to each other through Jesus Christ. We are a fellowship of believers, part of a vast company of men and women from all walks of life, from every country on the face of planet Earth. "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together..." wrote the author of the book of Hebrews (Hebrews 10:25, KJV). It was Christ who brought together the first body of disciples, and it is He who still binds our lives together in a fellowship that leaves no room for loneliness and isolation.

A closing word: Don't wallow in the slough of loneliness and despair. Move towards the center, and the closer you get to Jesus Christ, the closer you will find yourself to a growing body of men and women who are searching for fellowship as you are. Loneliness is a social tragedy that need not ensnare those who walk in Jesus' footsteps today.

Resource reading: James 4:1-10



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