



guidelines for living

a 5 minute message

December 8, 2017

BREAKING OUT OF THE PRISON OF LONELINESS

"A man who has friends must himself be friendly, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother" (Prov. 18:24, NKJV).

"Dear Dr. Sala," writes a friend, "I'm in my early 20's and find it very difficult to meet other people. I'm so lonely. What can I do?" Scores of people can identify with the feeling--parties, people, laughter, entertainment and perhaps even good food, yet you feel so inadequate that you ask yourself, "What am I doing here? I just don't fit."

There are a lot of things we can't do anything about. You can't choose your parents, or your looks. You can't change the weather or the circumstances of your birth, but when it comes to loneliness, there is a great deal which you can do to change the situation. Like what? Consider the following guidelines.

Guideline #1: Realize that loneliness is a choice. O.K.--you feel lonely. But you are confronted with a malady you can do something about, and your decision not to change the status is a conscious decision to be lonely! Medical authorities recognize that loneliness is a killer. Individuals who live with companions live longer, enjoy better health--emotionally and physically. With loneliness, the victim becomes both jailer and prisoner. You've got to break the cycle.

Guideline #2: Plan your escape. Nobody ever breaks out of prison without first thinking about it. In the book of 2 Kings, in the Old Testament, there is a story of four lepers who sat outside the gate of Samaria. They were not only lonely; they were hungry as well. Going into the city was in violation of social custom. There was the possibility of being stoned, yet starving to death wasn't a pleasant option either. Here's the text. "They said to each other, 'Why stay here until we die? If we say, "We'll go into the city"--the famine is there, and we die. And if we stay here, we will die. So let's go over to the camp of the Arameans and surrender. If they spare us, we live; if they kill us, then we die'" (2 Kings 7:3-4).

Like those four lepers, you have everything to gain and nothing to lose. Get outside the prison of loneliness. Go back to church. Join a youth group or a senior's group. Volunteer at your church, your school, your local hospital. Psychologist Dr. Joyce



guidelines for living

a 5 minute message

Brothers says that people who volunteer their time live longer. The important thing is to get out where there are people.

Guideline #3: Break out of your rut. When people are depressed or lonely, they forget something very simple, yet profound. Phone lines run two ways. They sit by the phone hoping it will ring. They even hope someone will misdial so they can hear another human voice. Forgotten is the fact that they can generate conversation and friendships.

Proverbs 18:24 says, "A man who has friends must himself be friendly, But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother" (NKJV).

Guideline #4: Start looking for someone who hurts more than you. Strangely enough, that usually is quite possible, and when you reach out to someone else, you get out of the prison which has trapped you. Near our home is a retirement community where over 20,000 retired people live. At a market near there, a grocery clerk wistfully said, "You know, most people come in here every day and buy a little something. I know they have the money to buy larger quantities, but I think they just want to talk to someone."

Guideline #5: Let Jesus be your friend. That "friend who sticks closer than a brother" is a veiled reference to the presence of Jesus Christ, who can be a friend and impart strength. Loneliness is not a communicable disease, but its cure is. And it is well worth treating.

Resource reading: Luke 24:13-35