

When I Feel Isolated and Alone

On Sunday we continued our sermon series on “Managing Our Moods” by thinking about how we should respond in those times when we feel isolated and alone.

1. Warm-up Question: Who’s the longest lasting close friend you’ve ever had?
2. In Genesis 2:18, “The Lord God said, ‘It is not good for the *adam* to be alone.’ *Adam* is the Hebrew word for human. So the very first story in the Bible tells us that it’s not good for us humans to be alone. Harvard professor and psychiatrist George Vaillant says, “We are wired to connect. Neuroscience has discovered that our brain’s very design makes it sociable. [Studies show] that the only thing that really matters in life [when it comes to happiness] are your relationships with other people.”
 - a. Tell us about a time, place, or group in your life when you felt deep belonging.
 - b. Suppose an alien asked you, “What does belonging feel like?” How would you describe it?
 - c. Tell us about a time when you felt really lonely.
 - d. Suppose an alien asked you, “What does loneliness feel like?” How would you describe it?
3. The circle of people around us is like a cocoon that keeps us warm, the fabric of belonging. Unfortunately, there are numerous things that can tear that fabric – conflict, abuse, death, divorce, illness, geographic move, aging, self-destructive behavior, etc. At one time or another, all of us will experience seasons of loneliness. When that happens, how should we respond? On Sunday we looked at two key lessons – one from Jesus and one from King David. First, let’s review the lesson from Jesus. Read Mark 3:13-24 and 31-35.
 - a. This passage tells us that, early in Jesus’ ministry, religious leaders (i.e., scribes) began saying he was of the devil and people began saying, “He has gone out of his mind.” Upon hearing these things, how do you think Jesus’ felt?
 - b. When Jesus’ mother, brothers, and sisters heard what everyone was saying, they bought into it and went out to “restrain” him. How do you think that made Jesus feel?
 - c. How is it possible that Jesus’ mother – after all the prophecies she heard at his birth – felt she needed to restrain her son and bring him home?
 - d. When in your life has your family really hurt you?
4. The story Mark tells about Jesus’ family comes to a climax in verses 31-32. There, his mother, brothers, and sisters stand outside the house where he’s teaching and send

a message for him to come out to talk to them. Jesus responds by refusing. Instead, he looks at his followers gathered around him and says, “Here are my mother and my brothers!” From this we drew our first lesson: When Jesus’ family wouldn’t or couldn’t be there for him, he intentionally surrounded himself with a family of choice. He didn’t isolate or self-pity. He proactively built a new circle of belonging.

- a. Prov. 18:24 says, “Those who have friends must themselves be friendly.” What do you hear that verse saying?
 - b. The Bible teaches that we reap what we sow (Galatians 6:8-9). But sowing is not a onetime thing. Seasons come and seasons go. Circumstances are constantly changing. New crops have to be planted every year. If we want to keep reaping friendship, we have to keep sowing. What does your present circle of belonging look like? Is it full or thin? Do you feel you’re doing enough sowing? What are some practical ways to find new circles of belonging?
 - c. Most of us find our belonging in some combination of family of origin and family of choice. Tell us about someone whose part of your family of choice?
5. We drew our second lesson from the life of David. After David killed Goliath, King Saul became jealous of David’s popularity, grew suspicious David might become a rival to the throne, and attempted to kill him. David fled to the wilderness. There, from a cave, David wrote the following psalm. Read Psalm 142:1-7.
- a. When David felt that “no one cares for me” and “no one takes notice of me,” he responded by crying out to God, “You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living.” Psalm 142:3. In other words, when everyone else forsook David, God was still there, his ultimate friend. What does it mean to be a friend of God? How would you describe what a friendship with God looks like?
 - b. Verse 2 gives us a glimpse into David’s friendship with God. “I pour out my complaint before God; I tell my trouble to God. When my spirit is faint, you know my way.” To put it simply, David could tell God anything and everything. David doesn’t hold back – he shares the good, the bad, and the ugly parts of his life with God. Sometimes we view prayer as asking for things and nothing more. But friendship is more than just asking for things. Do you ever just talk to God about your day, your life, and how you’re feeling? Suppose someone said to you, “I don’t know how to talk to God.” What guidance would you offer them?
 - c. When you talk to God, do you let God get a word in edgewise? Do you make a habit of listening to God? If so, how? How does that work for you?
 - d. How would you describe your current relationship with God? Some options:

Acquaintance

Former friend

Someone I love dearly but don’t have much time for

Someone I turn to for guidance

On-again off-again friend

A familiar face

My best friend