

# Reaching The Relationally Isolated

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## I. The World's First Bad Thing

As God created the physical world He declared everything He made was “good.”  
(Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25)

*“God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.”* **Genesis 1:31**

And then, for the first time, something is NOT good. Surprisingly, that first “not good” thing isn’t Satan, it isn’t deception, it isn’t sin, it isn’t death.

*The Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone.”* **Genesis 2:18**

As perfect as God’s creation is, it is not complete in the presence of loneliness.

### Small Group or Class Discussion

What does God’s pronouncement in Genesis 2:18 suggest about His character and values? about his design for society in general and the church specifically?

**Transition:** Loneliness was a problem in an otherwise perfectly created world. In a fallen world, it is a tragedy of epic proportion.

## II. Our Epidemic of Loneliness

Studies show:

10% of Americans experience loneliness every day

30% of young adults experience loneliness several times a week

39% of unmarried adults experience loneliness weekly

[American Psychiatric Association Poll 1/30/24]

25% of Americans report a lack of social and emotional support

[Centers For Disease Control 5/15/24]

Risk factors for this isolation include:

chronic disease

depression

disability

discrimination

lack of resources

divorce, unemployment, grief

### Small Group or Class Discussion

How much responsibility does someone bear for addressing their own loneliness? How much responsibility do we carry for other people’s loneliness? How do the risk factors for isolation impact your assessment of our responsibility to respond to loneliness?

**Transition:** Did Jesus address the issue of relational isolation?

### III. An Easily Overlooked Element of Jesus' Ministry

When we look at the longer, more detailed accounts of his interactions with people we see that Jesus actually had a wholistic approach to addressing people's needs - this included, in particular, restoring relational support.

Consider three case studies:

#### A. A Man Released from Demon Possession

**Luke 8:26-29** *They sailed to the region of the Gerasenes, which is across the lake from Galilee. When Jesus stepped ashore, he was met by a demon-possessed man from the town. For a long time this man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell at his feet, shouting at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don't torture me!" For Jesus had commanded the impure spirit to come out of the man. Many times it had seized him, and though he was chained hand and foot and kept under guard, he had broken his chains and had been driven by the demon into solitary places.*

~ when God declared loneliness as "not good," Satan adopted loneliness as a powerful strategy of war against the human spirit and the mission of the Church.

~ here's a man with a big problem: he is demon possessed and Jesus sets him free but also notice: he is "from town" yet living in "solitary places"

**Luke 8:38-39** *The man from whom the demons had gone out begged to go with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, "Return home and tell how much God has done for you." So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him.*

~ following Jesus is life's greatest endeavor  
yet Jesus sends him "home" to complete his healing, to also free him from his isolation

~ the word for "home" is "oikos" and it means his network of family, friends and neighbors (not a physical dwelling). Jesus knows that this man will need his new freedom to be supported and celebrated by his social network.

#### Small Group or Class Discussion

In what ways can an "oikos" or network of family, friends and neighbors support positive spiritual change in an individual's life?

## B. A Woman Healed from Chronic Illness

**Luke 8:42b-44** *As Jesus was on his way, the crowds almost crushed him. And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years, but no one could heal her. She came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak, and immediately her bleeding stopped.*

~ the woman came seeking physical healing from a chronic condition and Jesus healed but...

**Luke 8:45** *"Who touched me?" Jesus asked.*

~ did Jesus not know who it was? Yes, of course, but physical healing wasn't enough

**Luke 8:45-48** *When they all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the people are crowding and pressing against you." But Jesus said, "Someone touched me; I know that power has gone out from me." Then the woman, seeing that she could not go unnoticed, came trembling and fell at his feet. In the presence of all the people, she told why she had touched him and how she had been instantly healed. Then he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace."*

~ her bleeding disorder made her perpetually unclean in her culture. A secret healing would not have resolved the isolating aspects of her chronic condition.

~ Her community needed to know that she should be embraced back into society. That she was "clean" and should be welcomed into homes, and friendships and worship settings.

~ After 12 years as an outcast, her community is reminded that she is a "daughter."

### Small Group or Class Discussion

Physical healing is a wonderful gift from God. But when He doesn't, or hasn't yet provided healing, what do you think Jesus might ask us to do for a chronically ill person in the meantime?

## C. A Woman Freed From Past Choices

The famous story of meeting a Samaritan woman at a well includes foundational Biblical truths about worship, faith, salvation and Jesus' own identity. Each could rightly be the focus of a great study. But consider the story just from the woman's perspective.

**John 4:5-7** *So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?"*

~ it's widely believed going alone to the well in the middle of the day reflects on this woman's standing in the community as someone who is an outcast. She has not gone early in the day when others would have done so.

And this is confirmed following their discussion about "living water."

**John 4:15-18** *The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water." He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back." "I have no husband," she replied. Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true."*

~ Her midday water run combined with her relational history are highly suggestive of someone who has been culturally and relationally isolated due to her moral choices.

~ Yet Jesus offers her "living water" and does something he rarely did; identifies himself to her as Messiah. But he also offers her something else that is easily missed.

**John 4:28-30** *Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?" They came out of the town and made their way toward him.*

**John 4:39-42** *Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did." So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. And because of his words many more became believers. They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world."*

~ this outcast has not only established a relationship with Jesus, but has been restored to her community as a valued person who can be trusted. It's a remarkable transformation.

#### **Small Group or Class Discussion**

We can only speculate of course but what kinds of changes do you think might have happened in this woman's life following her encounter with "the Savior of the world?" What lessons might the disciples have drawn from these remarkable two days in Samaria?

**Transition:** It is clear from these encounters, and many more examples, that Jesus went out of his way to serve relationally isolated people. Loneliness was among the problems he came to conquer within the salvation he offered. And now, that calling belongs to us.

## IV. The One-Anothers

The “one-another” passages (of which these are only a few) form a good description of the expectation for relationships within the body of Christ.

**Romans 12:10** *Be devoted to one another in love.*

**II Corinthians 13:11** *Encourage one another.*

**Galatians 5:13** *Serve one another in love.*

**Ephesians 4:32** *Be kind and compassionate to one another.*

**Colossians 3:16** *Admonish one another with all wisdom.*

**Hebrews 10:24** *Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.*

**I Peter 4:9** *Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. (NIV)*

~ We are called to love those around us in many practical ways. But what about those we can't see? Those who have disappeared? Those who are relationally isolated? How do we offer the “one-another” gifts to them?

### Key Needs of A Relationally Isolated Person:

#### 1. Personal Attention

You can not possibly meet every need of an isolated individual, but what you do chose to do should be personal. Your approach should be tailored to their needs and situation.

#### 2. To Be Remembered

One of the most common experiences of an isolated person is to feel forgotten. So it proves to be a powerful experience when he or she receives any kind of evidence that someone remembers them. In the Bible to “remember” is an action word not just a cognitive exercise. When the disciples mention a desire to “remember the poor” they are calling people to do something. When the writers of the Psalms ask God to remember them, they are asking God to do something.

#### 3. Lasting Commitment

Again, you can't be continually present but one of the most powerful relational impacts you can have is commitment over time. Being remembered once is nice. Being remembered in even simple ways over the long haul is life sustaining.

#### Small Group or Class Discussion

Has God brought to mind someone in your life that has disappeared into relational isolation? How about someone in your midst that nevertheless feels lonely and isolated? How can you train yourself to be more aware and recognize the needs of someone feeling relationally isolated?

[For additional ideas and resources go to [arliftinghearts.com/helpingothers](http://arliftinghearts.com/helpingothers)]