

4. When Alone (2Q 2019—Family Seasons)

Biblical material: Eccles. 4:9–12; Phil. 4:11–13; 1 Cor. 7:25–34; Matt. 19:8; Gen. 37:34; Isa. 54:5; Genesis 2:18.

Quotes

- We are all born alone and die alone. The loneliness is definitely part of the journey of life. *Jenova Chen*
- Suffering, failure, loneliness, sorrow, discouragement, and death will be part of your journey, but the Kingdom of God will conquer all these horrors. No evil can resist grace forever. *Brennan Manning*
- Look for yourself, and you will find in the long run only hatred, loneliness, despair, rage, ruin, and decay. But look for Christ, and you will find Him, and with Him everything else thrown in. *C. S. Lewis*
- Pray that your loneliness may spur you into finding something to live for, great enough to die for. *Dag Hammarskjold*
- Walking with a friend in the dark is better than walking alone in the light. *Helen Keller*
- The soul that sees beauty may sometimes walk alone. *Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*

Questions

What’s the difference between loneliness and solitude? How do we support single people and not make them feel that they are not following the ideal? How can we improve our social relationships while still maintaining time for ourselves? In what ways can we profit from being alone?

Bible summary

Eccles. 4:9–12 indicates that we were meant to support one another, and that “two are better than one.” In Phil. 4:11–13 Paul writes that he is accustomed to every situation. He also discusses the pros and cons of marriage in 1 Cor. 7:25–34. In Matt. 19:8 Jesus makes it clear that divorce was “not from the beginning.” The devastation of loss is demonstrated in Jacob’s grief over Joseph (Gen. 37:34). God is identified as husband (Isa. 54:5). It is good to have “a suitable helper.” (Genesis 2:18).

Comment

The danger in this lesson is that to be alone is in some way a denial of God’s plan for human beings. Too many believers have become convinced they have failed by not being married. So the first comment to make is that being single is fine! In fact, in our world, marriage has been damaged. In addition, not all have the opportunity or desire for marriage. So while it is clear from the Biblical record that marriage was God’s original plan, we cannot say that marriage is the great ideal for all. For various reasons it just doesn’t work out that way, and single people must not feel excluded or discriminated. Being single is OK too, and has some good scriptural backing, particularly in Paul’s advice! Not to marry and to remain single must not be viewed in the context here as being “incomplete” or “unfulfilled.”

God made us as individuals, and relates to us in that way. Many singles have the opportunity to show and receive love and affection with family and friends, and live totally happy lives.

We are, generally, social beings. For that reason spending time with good, supportive Christian friends can be very helpful. However, being alone is not the tragedy this world makes it out to be. In fact, we all need time alone to think deeply, to process our experiences, and most of all to spend time with God. While we recognize the blessings of communal worship, even small groups, we also must listen to God's voice when he tells us, "Be still, and know that I am God." Psalm 46:10.

Those quiet times on our own can be the most fulfilling as we seek to grow in God's grace. As we think deeply of God, of the conflict raging in this world, of the issues in the Great Controversy, we can come to a greater realization of the plan of salvation and of God's amazing gift to us.

Before our world was created the argument raged in the heavens—God is unjust, he is hostile, he is cruel. Lucifer, the great Deceiver, accused God and set himself up as the great "Liberator" from the divine tyrant. The controversy could not be settled by charge and counter-charge like two adversaries in a battle of words. The only way God could clearly show what he was really like was through his actions.

Knowing what God is truly like and wanting to trust this wonderful Person is the key to salvation. All other aspects of what we believe have their origin in this central truth: "Eternal life is this: to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you sent." (John 17:3 FBV). We know that the Devil has been 'a liar from the beginning.' We know that God's true character of love has been defamed: 'an enemy has done this.' And we know that only as the real face of God is shown to the world will the great controversy be settled.

At the heart of all we want to say about God is this conviction: God truly is good, kind, loving. He is the complete opposite of the awesome green-faced ogre. He is not out to terrify us. Our privilege is to call God "Friend."

Ellen White Comments

If we surrender our lives to His service, we can never be placed in a position for which God has not made provision. Whatever may be our situation, we have a Guide to direct our way; whatever our perplexities, we have a sure Counselor; whatever our sorrow, bereavement, or loneliness, we have a sympathizing Friend. {COL 173.1}

We are homeward bound. He that loveth us so much as to die for us hath builded for us a city. The New Jerusalem is our place of rest. There will be no sadness in the City of God. No wail of sadness. No dirge of crushed hopes and buried affection shall ever more be heard. God bless you, my dear much-respected sister.--Letter 37, 1893. {DG 224.1}

The loneliness of Christ, separated from the heavenly courts, living the life of humanity, was never understood or appreciated by the disciples as it should have been. He was often grieved because His disciples did not give Him that which He should have received from them. He knew that if they were under the influence of the heavenly angels that accompanied Him, they too would think no offering of sufficient value to declare the heart's spiritual affection. {DA 565.1}