
How to care for the lonely ones.

Loneliness is that negative feeling that arises when our social needs are unmet by the quantity or quality of our social relationships. [You do not have to be on your own to feel lonely](#), many people feel lonely in a relationship or while spending time with friends or family.

Most people who experience loneliness have feelings of sadness, anxiety, hopelessness, emptiness, and or are suffering from depression. It is also common for them to feel misunderstood, cut off, excluded, insecure, low self-esteem, and disconnected, or feeling they are not seen or heard, even when surrounded by people. Loneliness can be a feeling of, never belonging, there's something wrong with me, nobody likes me, it's hopeless, and even I don't want to live anymore.

[There is not any single cause for loneliness](#), but certain factors may increase your risk of becoming lonely. These may include but are not limited to:

- Living or working alone, being separated from family and friends, or lacking social support.
- Illness, disability, caring for someone that is unwell, or inability to leave home without help from others.
- Grieving the loss of a loved one, especially a spouse, parent, or child.
- Feeling a lack of purpose.
- Social anxiety/social phobias, fear of interacting or talking to others, or language barriers.
- Retiring from work, changing schools or jobs, being unemployed, or financial struggles.
- Buying a house and moving to a new area, having a baby, or planning a wedding or going through a separation, divorce or family break up.



**Clothe yourselves with
compassion, kindness, humility,
gentleness and patience.**

COLOSSIANS 3:12

Our responsibility is to care for the lonely.

As brethren and sisters, we need to treat each other as a genuine family, as when we are baptised, we become adopted family members (Galatians 4:5), God wants us to fellowship and care for each other, the ecclesia consists of God's chosen. Love for our brethren and sisters and their company is a commandment from Christ and is our calling. The apostle Paul encourages us to follow Jesus' example by showing compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience (Hebrews 10:24-25). [We also are commanded to love each other as I have loved you](#) (John 15:12). We are told to share one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2). We need to remember, whatever is done for one of His disciples is rewarded as being done for the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 25:40).

If you suspect someone you know is lonely, or you notice someone coming in late, leaving early or not attending the meetings, or a change in someone's behaviour or presentation, or if they are less cheerful or involved less in activities than normal, we need to reach out to them. [A handy way to make sure everyone is being cared for is to go through your ecclesia program regularly](#) and make sure you have checked on the ones that you may think may be lonely or that have been missing from ecclesial activities. We need to be aware, look out for people who may be out of social circles and on the fringe, and reach out to them and include them in our lives.

Ways to support and help those who are lonely.

- **Pray for one another** – We need to pray for them to find comfort and given the strength to face their journey. We also can pray for ourselves to be able to offer the help and support they need.
 - **Make time for one another:** Think about the brethren and sisters in your ecclesia who may be struggling and make time to check in with them. Show them that you care, and you are thinking of them, this could be a text, a card, tee up a walk, call them on the phone, write a letter, or drop by for a visit.
 - **Listen to one another:** One of the most helpful and comforting things is active listening. Let the person who is lonely or finding it hard, talk about their pain. Listen without judgement and let the person express themselves and feel heard. Be understanding and show compassion. Acknowledge what they are feeling. Don't make assumptions or judgments. Don't underestimate the importance of just 'being there' for them.
 - **Encourage one another:** Encourage them, offer your support and understanding that it must be hard, and encourage them to take small steps, remember even small steps in the right direction is success to become less lonely and move involved. Be supportive by checking in on them and including them in activities. Actions speak louder than words.
 - **Offer practical support to one another:** If someone isn't ready to talk, think about what practical support you can provide. Whether it is making a cuppa, helping with childcare or cooking a meal, small gestures can be comforting for those finding life difficult. Also, if talking in a group after meetings, try not to stand in a closed circle but leave space for others to come and join in
 - **Offer professional services:** Let them know help is available, to help them to navigate their feelings, and if they need an expert listener. They could talk to a counsellor or there are 24/7 helplines services available across Australia for them, such as Lifeline and Beyond Blue.
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- **Follow up with one another:** Don't give up on them, or let your support dwindle follow up with them and check in with them a few days later, contact only needs to be brief, just letting them know you care.

We can also reassure our brethren and sisters of the fact God knows their suffering, and He recognises their feelings and is concerned for them. (Psalm 86:15) and that God is full of compassion, and He is gracious, long suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.

Also, remind them of [God's promises to us](#):

- **God sees us** – We never walk alone; God is with us every step of our life. (Genesis 16:13)
- **God hears us** – God is always listening. Jonah called for help and God listened to his cry (Jonah 2:2).
- **God knows our suffering** – God recognises ways we are hurting and is concerned for us (Exodus 2:25)
- **God is with us** – God will be a refuge for us in our times of trouble or distress, we are never alone, God is always there and waits for our call (Psalm 23:4).
- **God is near to the broken-hearted** – God is the God of all comfort: who comfort's us in all our troubles (Psalm 34:18).
- **God receives us when we're overwhelmed** – For those that are weary and burdened, God will give them rest (Matthew 11:28).

Practical ideas and activities to help with loneliness

Encourage others that are feeling lonely to create a plan, which could involve them interacting with others through some of the activities below.

Encourage them to:

- **Meditate** – Spend time praying, journaling, reading scripture and meditating.
- **Virtual Ecclesia's** – It is possible to join regularly with other Brothers and Sisters using the internet.
- **Internet** – There is a very large selection of articles and recordings, they could even learn Hebrew online.
- **Social media** – There are Christadelphian social network groups that they can join.
- **Bible Schools / Seminars** – These are good to attend to meet others and get out and about.
- **Being involved** – Get involved in ecclesia life or helping others will help overcome their loneliness.
- **Contact others** - It's important to interact with others even though they will not feel like doing this. If they can't do this face-to-face you could encourage them to write letters, emails or make phone calls.
- **Get creative with different activities** - Making music, baking, doing crafts and jigsaws, going for walks, research their family tree, write their memoirs, put all their old photos in an album, or sort out things that could go to a charity shop.
- **Volunteering** - Like visiting an age care home or helping others, this can be a distraction, and allows them to make meaningful connections with others, while giving them a sense of purpose.

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- ***Spending time with animals*** – they can provide constant companionship and provide unconditional love, especially dogs, plus their need to be kept active which gets them out of the house for essential exercise when their feeling down.

Conclusion

Don't underestimate the value of little things, a kind word or small gesture. The greatest gift you can give someone that is lonely is your time, because when you give your time, you are giving a portion of your life.

We need to remember that in Colossians 3:12, we are told to show kindness and mercy to our brethren and sisters, while being kind and tender hearted to one another, and non-judgemental, but accepting of each other. Zechariah 7:9.

Let's do the best we can to minimise the effects of loneliness in our brothers and sisters as we travel together on this wilderness journey until our Lord returns, and we come to the promised land.

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