

Fil-Am Community Church
Pastor Rolly Estabillo
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No More Fear -- Part 9 OF 10
Key Verse: Exodus 33:14

“Overcoming the Fear of Loneliness”

Song – Mr. Lonely

I used to be Mr. Lonely until I met my wife. Now, I'm Mr. Happy and Contented. She's a good cook. Seriously, no one wants to be lonely. Do you? Sociologists tell us that the most common emotional pain in our society is loneliness. People do various things to ease the pain of loneliness. They go to Disney World, they go out with friends, they drink, they smoke, they date, and people do different things to not feel lonely. The fact is we do need each other. God's made us to need each other. We don't need to be alone.

What does God have to say about loneliness? Genesis 2:18 *"It isn't good for man to be alone."* God had put Adam in the Garden of Eden where everything was perfect, everything he could possibly want was there. There were no problems, no sin, no heartaches, no suffering. Yet the first thing God said wasn't good, was loneliness. Even in Eden, He said, it's not good for man to be alone. To relieve loneliness, God gives us people to live with.

And so, He gave Adam someone to live with and he gave him children as well. Psalm 68:6 says *"God sets the lonely in families."* If you're a believer you

have family. The church is the family of God. It is to be an extended family. Part of the purpose of Fil-Am church is to provide you relationship opportunities. We have lots of opportunities to develop close friends, not acquaintances, but close friends so that when you go through the inevitable crises of life somebody's there to help you out and lend a hand. The church provides these but you've got to take the step and take advantage of these. Join the small group, make friendships, not just attend but get involved.

But there's a resource I want us to focus on this morning. Much more important than earthly families. HE GIVES US HIS PRESENCE TO LIVE IN. Your family can leave you, can disown you, but God never will. When Moses was feeling lonely being the leader of the unruly Israelites in the desert, what did God say? "*My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.*" (Ex. 33:14) That was his promise to Moses and his promise to every child of his. What else did he say in Heb. 13:5? He said "*I will never leave you nor forsake you.*" God's always with me, I just need to recognize it.

How do I recognize God's presence in my life so I can take advantage of the benefits of it? And what are those benefits? Why should I learn to realize that God's with me all the time?

When you tune into God you realize the benefits of God's presence. Let me share these with you this morning. First, because God is with me

1. HE WILL HELP ME OUT.

Isaiah 41:10 *"Don't worry because I am with you. Don't be afraid because I am your God. I will make you strong and help you. I will support you."*

He's saying you're not alone in this world. No matter what you face you don't have to face it alone. There is a difference between being alone and being lonely. If God is with you and you sense His presence, you may be alone but you'll never be lonely.

A lot of times loneliness comes not at our bidding; it's unasked for. People get lonely because of a death of a loved one. Some of you can relate to that. People get lonely because of a divorce. People get lonely through desertion. Maybe you were abandoned by some people you thought were your friends or a business partner or a marriage partner or maybe even your parents.

What do you do when you go through the seasons of life where loneliness is forced on you and you don't want it? Remember that God says, I will never abandon you.

Ps. 27:10 *"If my mother and father leave me the Lord will take me in."* 2 Cor. 4:9 *"God never abandons us."* If everybody in my life walks out on me, God is never going to walk out on me. If I realize that He's with me, He will help me out.

The second benefit of God's presence in my life is that

2. HE WILL CALM ME DOWN.

God is the great stress reliever, the great stabilizer in the crises of life that inevitably come. What do you do when they come? You recognize God's presence in your life and realize He can calm you down.

When is loneliness the most difficult? What time of day? At night. Nobody wants to go to bed at night alone. That's why some people leave the radio or TV on they get in bed with somebody. When you're alone at night your fears tend to exaggerate. Creaks in the house sound worse when you're all alone. You start imagining the shower scene from Psycho. Your mind goes into overdrive when you're alone. Being alone can drive you crazy.

God says if you'll sense His presence He'll calm you down. Ps. 4:8 *"I will lie down in peace and sleep for though I am alone, O Lord, You will keep me safe."* That might be a good verse to put over your bedpost.

Ps. 31:20 *"You protect them by Your presence."* One plus God equals a majority. God says, I'll take care of you if you recognize My presence; if you sense it, it will calm you down.

In our neighborhood everybody's got these signs out front that say, "Protected by..." and gives some security system.

When I read this verse I thought I'd make up a sign for my house "Protected by God and Son, Inc. Guaranteed eternal security." You can't get better guarantee than God saying "I'll protect you, I'll help you out."

God will help me, he will calm me down, and he will also

3. HE WILL CHEER ME UP.

He says when you're going through tough times, I'll cheer you up if you'll recognize My presence. Ps. 16:8-9 *"I keep the Lord before me always. Because He's close by my side, I will not be hurt. So I rejoice and I'm glad. Even my body has hope."*

There's a book called Where Is God When It Hurts? That's a good question.

Where He's always been -- right by you. He never leaves you whether you feel it or not He's there. The issue is to recognize and realize and sense it.

Otherwise His presence is of no value to you. But He's there.

"I keep the Lord before me always." It's a conscience decision, a mental choice. The verse says I'm consciously choosing to keep God as my focus, to think on Him, to focus on Him.

When you are alone you have two choices: You can choose to focus on your loneliness and have a pity party -- "Poor me! Nobody loves me. Everybody hates me. I'm going to go eat worms". Or you can focus on the fact that God's never left you and that He's with you. That gives you the choice to

rejoice. It is your choice to rejoice. King David often felt the pain of loneliness. But in Ps. 16, he says. *"Your presence fills me with joy."*

How do you know when somebody's walking in the presence of God? They are full of joy. How do you know when somebody's not walking in God's presence? They're not full of joy.

God says I will take care of you, I will help you out, I will calm you down, I will cheer you up if you recognize that I'm never apart from you.

Some of you had a difficult week this last week. It was really a bummer. You're depressed. Have you ever had one of those weeks? those months? When everything doesn't seem to work out and the pieces of the puzzle don't fit? There are some people here that went through or are going through a trying time. Where is God when it hurts? He's with you! *"The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and He saves those who are crushed in spirit."* That's why it's so essential to be able to recognize and learn how to tune into Him so you can feel His presence. He's close to the brokenhearted. He'll cheer you up.

Finally, I can overcome loneliness because

4. HE WILL SEE ME THROUGH.

Isaiah 43 *"When you go through deep waters and great troubles, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown."* God is not

going to let you sink. He says I will help you and I will see you through. Even when you feel like "I can't go on another day. I can't put one foot in front of another. I'm crushed. I've lost it. I'm ready to throw in the towel." When you feel that, the good news is, God is with you. Tune in to Him. He'll help you out.

Psalm 118 *"The Lord stopped my tears and He kept me from defeat so [here's the answer] I walk in the presence of the Lord. I kept on believing even when I felt I'm completely crushed."* Christ can give you the strength to keep going.

Stress studies have discovered that the most stressful thing a person can go through is the death of a spouse. The second most stressful thing a person can experience in life is the divorce of a spouse. Most women outlast or outlive most men by nine years on the average. Those of you who are wives and mothers will spend a significant portion of your life, most likely, alone. I would suggest that you prepare for it. Become best friends with Jesus Christ so that when it happens God won't seem like a stranger to you.

Would you like to be able to face life with that kind of confidence, that kind of serenity? I don't know what the future holds but I know God holds the future.

You cannot always control what happens to you, but you can control your response. You will spend times in your life alone. That's unavoidable. But loneliness is avoidable if you tap into the resources of God's people and

God's presence and if you develop a friendship with God where you have an ongoing conversation with Him all the time. When those inevitable tough times come, you'll have Christ right there with you and you'll realize that He's there to help you out, and lift you up, cheer you up, calm you down, see you through.

There are radio and television waves going through the air all the time. You can't see them but it doesn't mean they're not there. You can't see God but He's here. Radio and TV waves are going through you right now. You don't feel it but they're there. But if you have the right mechanism you can tune in to either radio waves or television waves. All of a sudden they show up on a picture or on the radio and you can take advantage of it. It's there but you can't take advantage of it until you tune in.

Likewise, God is present in your life. He's all around you and if you're a believer, He's in you but you must tune into Him in order for Him to help you out, see you through, lift you up, calm you down.

How do you do that? How do you tune into God on a moment by moment basis? So, here's how to experience God's presence. Two things:

1. I must desire it.

I must desire a relationship with God. God doesn't just force himself into people's lives.

One of the reasons why you don't sense God's presence is because you're too busy, too distracted. You don't have time for God. You don't get to know Him. You must ask God, "I really want to know You. I want to sense You in my life. I'm earnest about it. I'm serious about this. It's the most important thing to me to get to know You." David said, "*The one thing I want from God, the thing I seek most of all is the privilege of living in His presence every day of my life...*" Tell God earnestly that you want to get to know Him. If you haven't already done so, invite His Son, Jesus Christ, to put His Spirit in your life.

2. I must develop the habit of praise.

It takes time to develop a relationship as a human being -- a friendship, a marriage, to get to know God. You must set aside time on a daily basis when you say, "God, I'm not going to turn the TV on. I'm not going to turn the radio on. I'm going to be quiet and listen to You. Is there anything You want to say to me. I'll read your word and talk to you what's on my heart in prayer so that when the crises come I'll already have a direct connection established. It's not something foreign to me, but I know You in a personal way."

The quickest way to tune into God's presence is to develop the habit of praise. The Bible says we should enter His gates with thanksgiving, His courts with praise. Try singing! It doesn't have to be in tune! Tune in to God

but you don't have to be in tune. The Bible says *"Make a joyful noise unto the Lord!"*

If God is everywhere, then I can praise Him anywhere. I don't have to be in church. I could be in my car, in the shower, laying down resting, taking out the garbage, at the beach, working, it doesn't matter where I am. God's with me all the time. You just start praising God. "Thank You for being my savior. Thank You that You're here to help me out. Thank You that You're here to cheer me up.

Thank You that You're here to see me through. Thank You for life itself. Thank You for my church family." You just start praising God. You'll realize you're not alone in this world. Get to know God.

Loneliness is a choice. You can reduce the pain of loneliness in your life if you will take advantage of the resources God has offered you. What are these resources?

First is his plan for you. So,

1. I commit my life to God and His plan for me. Why he made me. "God, I want to follow your plan for my life. I want to be what You want me to be." Focus on that and then you'll not have time for a pity party.

Second, is the church family?

2. Become a part of a church family, not just attending. Build some relationships so there are people who know you closely. Get involved. You need to be in a home group. Take the initiative. If you want to break the grip of loneliness in your life you have to stop building walls and start building bridges. I've met a lot of Christians who are lonely because they're sitting when they should be serving. The best way to get out of your own doldrums is to start doing something for somebody else. Get the focus off yourself. Find a ministry. Some of you need to be small group leaders. You could have a small group in your home.

Third is quiet time.

3. Develop a daily time with God. Get to know God. Talk to Him and let Him talk to you. Read the Bible and pray. A quiet time. It's a distresser, a decompression chamber from all the pressures of life.

Why do you feel lonely? What makes you feel alone? Like nobody cares? Why is it that you feel lonely even in a crowd? Can you be married and lonely? Yes. Can you be famous and lonely? Sure. A crowd is not company.

You need relationships. Judy Garland once said, "Why is it if I'm such a legend I'm so lonely?" You need relationships. Fame never takes the place of relationships.

Let me tell you the true story of Amy. This story I'm going to tell you is taken from a book by John Burke, pastor of Gateway Church in Austin, Texas.

"Let's just go for fun! We'll see how much we can push their buttons," Amy teased her girlfriend, who didn't like the idea of hanging around a bunch of Christians. "Come on," Amy insisted. "I hear their motto is 'Come as you are.' I just want to prove that they're 'come as you are' . . . unless you're gay."

Amy had been in a nine-year lesbian relationship that had broken up, leaving her wondering why her deepest longings could never be satisfied. She and Rachel had just started hanging out when they decided to attend one Sunday morning.

"I came on a mission to shock people," Amy admits. "Rachel and I would hold hands in front of people, but instead of the disgusted looks of contempt we expected, people met eyes with us and treated us like real people. So we started coming to church weekly. We kept moving closer to the front each week, trying to get a reaction so that we'd be rejected sooner rather than later. When we couldn't shock people, we stopped trying and started learning.

"Not long after that, Rachel and I stopped seeing each other, but I kept coming to church because I was searching for something," Amy admits. "I definitely wasn't looking to change. It wasn't my lesbian lifestyle that I was

bringing to God, but I wondered if God had answers to my deeper longings. Problem was, I didn't trust God at all!

“The more I listened and learned about the teachings of Jesus, the more I started to actually believe that God really did love me.

I heard more and more about being his Masterpiece, and in time, I actually started to believe it. The more I believed God actually could see something of value in me, the more I trusted him.”

Over time, Amy slowly opened her heart and struggles to Christ. “It took several years, but as I moved closer and closer to Christ, he gently took me on a very surprising journey. First, I found out my father had nine affairs while I was growing up—a secret that rocked my world. Jesus began to show me how the roots of my sexual issues tie together with my dad's—I was just like him, using people to find comfort, life, and love outside of God.”

Amy continued to grow in her knowledge of the Scriptures, falling more and more in love with the Lord. The following year, God had another surprise for her: “I went to the seminar called ‘To Be Told,’ hosted at Gateway. I wanted to see how God could put closure to my brokenness, but what he showed me shocked me,” Amy recalls.

“As Dan Allender was telling a story of a bully, I suddenly had a flashback of getting off the school bus. I lived down the street from Jimmy, a boy who had

bullied me all year. But this particular day, Jimmy acted nice to me as I got off the bus,” Amy recalls.

“He apologized for being so mean, and he invited me to come to his house.”

That day in the seminar, all else faded to black as this vivid nightmare crept back to life. Amy saw herself walking through Jimmy’s front door, noticing all the shades pulled down. Startled, she spied two teenage boys eyeing her with a ravenous look as the door slammed shut. Her screams never escaped the evil darkness that enveloped that house. They pinned her down and raped her.

She was only nine!

Amy swam in a pool of tears as the seminar continued. Others were oblivious to her divine epiphany. She realized the Lord had been drawing her near to strengthen her for this revelation—to show her the source of so much sexual struggle hidden for years beneath layers of protective mud.

“After that, I realized God knows more about me than I know about myself,” Amy recalls, “and he wants to bring healing to these wounds, so I fully gave him my heart and body—everything. As I continued to seek intimacy with him, the lesbian struggles fell away. I’m not saying that’s how God works with everyone, but it’s how he’s healing me. The more I focus on God’s

intimate love for me and try to see his Masterpiece emerge, the less I want anything to get in the way of his work in me.”

Seven years later, Amy leads our ministry to help people find healing and wholeness from all kinds of sexual and relational struggles. She’s helping others become God’s restored Masterpiece.”

Folks, that’s a woman who was healed and transformed by the power of God’s grace and presence in her life. Her journey must be unusual to many of us but the same God works in each and every one of our lives. His presence is real.

Regardless of the source of your loneliness, God is with you. There has never been a moment in your life when He wasn't with you. You just haven't been tuned in to Him. He's waiting to help you out, cheer you up, calm you down and see you through as He's promised in His word. No matter where you find yourself this next week -- you may be in a business meeting with eight people and they're all competing for the same account. They're all ignoring God but God's in that room. You can say, "The Lord's in this place and I'm the only one who recognizes it. I'm asking for Your help." He will. There is no place you will go where God isn't.