

SERIES: I'M NOT ANGRY
PART 6: ME, MYSELF AND I

In an age where you can reach out and touch someone almost anywhere in the world at anytime, loneliness is at an all time high. Loneliness has a profound impact on us spiritually, emotionally, relationally, and physically.

An article from the USA TODAY NETWORKS lead articles states, “Young Americans are the loneliest, surprising study from Cigna shows.” This report goes on to say that young people are far more likely than senior citizens to report being lonely and in poor health. Loneliness is becoming a major health problem. The study was sponsored by the global insurer and health services company of Cigna, which is concerned about loneliness as a societal problem but also because it's not just making us sad: It can literally make us sick. Loneliness actually has the same effect on mortality as smoking 15 cigarettes a day which makes it even more dangerous than obesity. In a Cigna survey of 20,000 Americans they discovered that 47% feel left out. 46% sometimes or always feel alone. 43% feel their relationships are not meaningful. 43% feel isolated from others. 27% say they rarely or never feel there are people who really understand them. 20% rarely or never feel close to people. 18% of people reported they don't have anyone they can talk to. It is very interesting to me that, not only are we a culture of loneliness, but we have also been called the Age of Rage. Why? Because loneliness impacts and influences our anger.

So in today's teaching, ME, MYSELF AND I, I want to focus on what the Bible has to say about loneliness and how we can as a CVCHURCH FAMILY and as individuals shape our lives around God's church and renew our minds to what God says is the antidote to loneliness as a key to how successfully we manage our own anger issues. Would you please read with me out loud Ephesians 4:25-27, let's begin, **“So stop telling lies. Let us tell our neighbors the truth, for we are all parts of the same body. ²⁶And ‘don't sin by letting anger control you.’ Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry, ²⁷for anger gives a foothold to the devil.”**

Anger is a tool that satan our enemy will use against us to get us to feel lonely. It is through anger, rage and hurt that many people cut themselves off from each other. This fuels a sense of loneliness. Lonely has been described as **“The painful awareness that we lack meaningful contact with others.”** This is why the Bible teaches us to never let the sun go down while you're still angry because it creates a wedge and a gap in our relationships. It creates a sense of emotional and relational distance. Loneliness feeds our anger and anger fuels our sense of being alone. **Loneliness is that feeling that no one really cares about you as a person.** But this was never God's intention for any of us here this morning (this afternoon).

Let's look at point #1:

I. We're created to be in relationships

Please read Genesis 2:18 out loud with me, **“And the Lord God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a companion who will help him.’”**

From the very beginning of time God has purposed for us to maintain close relationships with family and friends. I was in a meeting this week in which I asked the team I was leading to tell me the feelings they have when they were in conflict and it wasn't going well. Words like, I felt blocked, fearful, angry, isolated, worrisome, tension, and stressed were expressed. Then I asked them to share the feelings they experience when they successfully work through a conflict. They came up with the words joy, security, exuberant, effective, a sense of well being, and freedom.

We were not created to be alone forever. When we are alone too long it creates a sense of being upset and agitated. T.S. Eliot so aptly writes, **“What life have you if you have not life together? There is no life that is not in community, and no community not lived in praise of God.”**

We were created in God's image, and we all a need to feel connected to one another. The Bible reveals this reality from the book of Genesis to the end of the Bible in the book of Revelation.

Would you please read out loud with me Romans 12:4-5, **“Just as our bodies have many parts and each has a special function, so it is with Christ's body. We are all parts of His one body, and each of us has different work**

to do. And since we are all one body in Christ, we belong to each other, and each of us needs all the others.”

The Bible teaches us that when we surrender our lives to Jesus Christ it is an oxymoron to think I can live my life alone. That I don't need other brothers and sisters in Christ. Notice what Paul says, would you underline the words in your notes, **“we belong to each other,”** and circle the words, **“and each of us needs all the others.”**

Loved ones, this is God's design for us. That we live in Community Together. This is why we have what we call **THE LIFE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS** and we promote small groups like we do. As a church family, we must continue to discipline ourselves to learn what it means to live together as God's family and accomplish His goals in and through our lives.

We were created to be in relationships, and because this is true...

A. We have the need to feel connected

Research has identified that we as human being have the need for much more face to face communication, human touch and the need to be heard, understood and loved. This is why I have modeled and demonstrated how to give a word, a look and an appropriate touch to each other when we see each other. I ask you to please acknowledge each other this way and never allow yourself or someone else to walk passed you

or you walk passed them without a word, a look and a touch. Research has also shown our life expectancy is shortened when we do not live life in community with others. Look at letter B with me...

B. We understand who we are in community

If you want to know what God's purposes and plans are for your life, you only need to get involved with people so that they can get to know you so that you can love them and they can love you. You can listen to them and they can listen to you. You can understand them and they can understand you. Please read with me out loud Genesis 2:23a & 24, **“At last! Adam exclaimed. ‘She is part of my own flesh and bone!’... This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.”**

After God has fashioned Eve out of one of Adam's ribs and presented her to Him, He shouts out loud as soon as he saw her, “You are a part of me! I now better understand who I am and who God made me to be by seeing, listening and interacting with you.”

If being connected to other people and living in community with each other is God's plan, then why do we all experience loneliness at times in our lives?

II. Identify habits that create loneliness in your life

A. Discover how loneliness influences your life

As is true in any area that affects our lives, discovering how something influences or impacts your life is critical to the process of being able to do something about it. There are two significant ways that loneliness affects every one of our lives.

1) Loneliness makes you vulnerable to anger

Because every one of us have the need to feel connected, close and that we belong to people who love, care and value us, when we don't have those feelings there is something that cries out within us that says, I don't like being alone. I want someone to pay attention to me. I need someone to let me know that they care for me and want me in their life.

I first really came in contact with this need to belong and to know others in the summer of 1972. I was really excited to go to college and be out on my own. Before I went to Eugene, where I would start my college career at Eugene Bible College, I went to our Church Family Camp at Lake Arrowhead in the San Bernardino Mountains. From there I went to Paradise, CA, to see my girlfriend. I had met her at the church my parents pastored and I was aching to see her one more time before I left for college. There was a forest behind the cabin where she was staying and we decided to go for a hike. We had a great time. I spent a day there and then I went to Antioch, CA, to visit a pastor friend of my dad and mom. It was there that I realized that I had contacted poison oak. It was horrendous. Please believe me when I tell you, my

entire body was covered with poison oak. It was so bad, that my eyes had swollen shut. I stayed there for about four days until my eyes at least opened enough so I could see and I made the trip all the way to Eugene, Oregon. When I got to my sister's home, they were away on vacation. So I stayed at their house by myself for about a week. Here I was, 18 years old, 1,000 miles away from home, and I had to stay inside the house until the poison oak left. I had never experienced such aloneness and isolation up to that time in my life. I was so lonely I physically ached. I could hardly wait to go meet my new friends at school. When I was finally able to go outside and start to relate to people I felt like I had been released from prison.

There is something about feeling lonely that makes you vulnerable to the feelings of anger. It is easy to begin to think that people don't care for you and love you. You can begin to think that those who are closest to you are neglecting you and that they don't value you anymore. Last week we discovered that anger is the emotion of self-preservation. When you feel angry that is a signal that somehow you are feeling threatened or under attack. The three areas that we discussed that anger seems to be involved in is when we feel that either our **SELF-WORTH**, or our **BASIC NEEDS** or our **ESSENTIAL BELIEFS** are being challenged or attacked somehow.

You can see how feeling lonely can easily slip into a feeling that those around me are not loving me like I need to be loved or not caring for me or valuing me like I think they should,

and before you know it, your self-worth or basic needs feel like they are being attacked by being overlooked.

2) Loneliness is a signal that you feel disconnected

Drs. Carter and Minirth in their tremendously helpful book called, ‘**THE ANGER WORKBOOK,**’ write, “**Loneliness is more than just a measure of your social skills. It is the emotion of isolation.**” In other words it is that empty feeling that wafts over us when we feel that either our spouse, or children or close friend is having a hard time understanding and relating to our feelings and perceptions. Loneliness is that painful feeling we experience when we come to the realization that our relationships have gaps and holes in them. Loneliness can begin when your family doesn’t seem to understand your perspective and take on things, and you feel they don’t care or you feel disconnected. Or there becomes a most uncomfortable moment when you just don’t know how to respond to a hurting friend, or when there are serious misunderstandings between you and your spouse, or children, or friends, and loneliness sets in. You feel disconnected. There’s no bonding or sense of togetherness.

B. Determine what causes your loneliness

There are three main causes of loneliness:

1) Our sinful tendencies

Please read with me Romans 3:23, lets begin, **“For all have sinned; all fall short of God’s glorious standard.”** The Bible says that we all are born with sinful natures and that we can’t help but fall short of God’s goals, objectives and expectations for our lives.

Please read with me Romans 6:23a, let’s begin, **“For the wages of sin is death.”** The word death means separation. Disconnection. This is exactly what happened with Adam and Eve when they rebelled against God in the garden. After they ate of the forbidden fruit, what happened? Their spiritual eyes were open, and the Bible says that they went and hid because they were afraid. Because of fear Adam hid from God and from his wife. He was ashamed to reveal himself fully. Looking for ways to cover up his vulnerabilities, he became evasive and phony. The moment sin touched the lives of the human family, separation, disconnection and loneliness took over.

It is our own pride, selfishness, ambition, envy, jealousy, and laziness that keep us locked up in the prison of loneliness. Our tendency toward sinfulness is one of the causes of loneliness.

2) Our neglect of relationships

Please read with me Philippians 2:3-4, let’s read out loud together, **“Don’t be selfish; don’t live to make a good impression on others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourself. Don’t think only about your own**

affairs, but be interested in others, too, and what they are doing.”

We can become so busy with work and activities that we put way too little emphasis on the more important things of life, like spending time with our family and friends and being there for each other, being authentic and genuine in our conversations, caring for each other when times get tough. Have you noticed that it really does take work to have intimate, healthy, growing relationships?

David Smith in his book, “MEN WITHOUT FRIENDS,” lists six characteristics of men which prove to be barriers to friendships. **1) Men have an aversion to showing emotions.** Expressing feelings is generally taboo for males. An aversion to showing and sharing feelings with each other makes deep relationships difficult, thus men find it difficult to make and keep friendships. **2) Men seemingly have an inherent inability to fellowship or just be together.** If someone suggests lunch, it is often followed by the response, “Sure, what’s up?” To get together around a project or sporting event is not bad, but they seldom get beyond work or sports to deeper levels. **3) Men have inadequate role models.** The male macho image prevents strong friendships since a mask of aggressiveness and strength keeps men from knowing themselves and others. A fourth barrier is **4) Male competition.** Men are inordinately competitive. This competitive spirit is frequently a barrier to friendship. **5) An inability to ask for help.** Men rarely ask for help because they perceive it as a sign of weakness. Male attempts at self-

sufficiency rob them of fulfilling relationships. A final barrier is **6) Incorrect priorities.** Men often have a distorted order of priorities in which physical things are more important than relationships. Success and status is determined by material wealth rather than by the number of close friends.” Our neglect of relationships are a cause of loneliness.

3) Failure in communicating our needs

Anger that is based in loneliness usually arises when we realize that others care very little about our needs. How many times have you possibly said to yourself, “Why can’t people just understand who I am?” Or, “Why can’t my parent, spouse, friend, pastor, or others figure out what I need and meet that need?” The problem with this kind of thinking is that we expect people to meet our needs when they don’t even know what they are. This is a skill that is incredibly important for each one of us to learn. We must become experts in learning how to communicate our needs to those we care about and those we want to care about us.

III. Three keys to dealing with loneliness

A. Accept the reality of your loneliness

Because of our sin nature the feelings of loneliness and isolation are inevitable for each one of us. From the earliest days of childhood to the last years of our lives, we will experience some form of loneliness. You might say, “But,

Scott, it's a negative thought to think I must accept that I will feel lonely at times." To that I would say, "I agree." But the biblical principle is two-fold; if you choose to accept its inevitability you won't feel so surprised when you have lonely experiences. It's when you think you can either avoid or you're entitled to not have feelings of loneliness that it becomes unbearable. Second, the Bible says that you are never truly ever alone because Father God is always with you. Isaiah 41:10 says, **"Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Don't be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with My victorious right hand."** Hebrews 13:5-6 says, **"Don't love money; be satisfied with what you have. For God has said, 'I will never fail you. I will never abandon you.'"** ⁶So we can say with confidence, **"The Lord is my helper, so I will have no fear. What can mere people do to me?"** What is it, loved one, that you must just accept in your life and thank God He is with you and for you? You have two choices. You can complain about your loss and you will increase your awareness of your pain, or you can confess God's presence and purpose in your life and know the pain won't completely control you.

B. Address how you are neglecting your relationships

1) Are you involved in too much empty activity?

Have you noticed that you can get so involved with the busy aspects of your life, like work and other activities, that you put way too little focus on the more important aspect of your

relationships like developing empathy for others, being authentic and genuine, and being available to be there for other people's problems. As you make yourself available to other people you will find that your loneliness and your anger will begin to lessen.

2) Decide to invest the energy it takes to maintain healthy relationships

Here are some things to ask yourself to see if you are digging your own hole of loneliness and anger:

- 1) At times I try to avoid people because I don't want to be hassled**
- 2) I am sometimes reluctant to let friends and family know about my personal struggles**
- 3) When someone expresses his or her feelings, I'd rather talk about the solutions than hearing more about what causes those feelings**
- 4) I have many pressing activities that constantly keep me from feeling at ease**
- 5) It's been too long since I last sat down with friend to share personal problems**
- 6) I know I should carve out more time for close friendships, but I seem to procrastinate**

C. Adjust how you communicate your needs

- 1) Communicate your needs lovingly and clearly**

Too often when we try to communicate our needs instead of stating clearly and lovingly what we want we either use too much salesmanship when we speak, or we try to justify our needs too strongly when they are questioned. In other words when you try too hard to persuade others that your needs are legitimate, and when you defend your position too powerfully, your listeners get the idea that you lack confidence in what you are saying. The end result is they don't take your needs seriously, and this leaves you feeling frustrated, angry, unheard, and misunderstood. Getting angry and attacking people with facts only leads them to become more defensive with you. The Bible is full of admonitions on how we are to relate to each other. Galatians 5:13-14 says, **“Don't use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature. Instead, use your freedom to serve one another in love.¹⁴ For the whole law can be summed up in this one command: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”**

2) Take responsibility for getting your needs met

One of the best ways to do this is to protect yourself from thinking you should always be treated fairly. People can be grossly unfair. Would you agree? By wishing it to be different is to fail to accept reality. The result is frustrated emotions that lead to loneliness and anger. Instead you can minimize your anger by taking the initiative to make sure you do what you need to get your needs met in a loving, respectful, caring way to others and to yourself. Here is how you can do that. Immediately meet the need you have that others ignore. Do it without a lot of fanfare. Just get the need

met. Accept the fact that at times there will be distance and frustration in some of your closest relationships.

3) Keep people informed of what's going on in your life

Once you have let people know what is going on in your life, if they choose to get involved they can. If they don't, you do not complain, you simply take responsibility for what you need to have done to meet your needs, and you do it. When you keep the people who are involved in your life up to date, they will be able to offer their help to meet your needs. But you cannot keep silent and just expect the other person to know what you need, even if it's your husband, wife, son, daughter, or best friend.