

LONELY AMONG FRIENDS
 Apologetics and Counseling
 Ružomberok, 15th March 2014

0. INTRO: SOLITUDE AND LONELINESS

0.1. A MODERN PROBLEM?

It was not until the 1970S, however, that research on loneliness began to flourish, stimulated by the publication in 1973 of Robert Weiss's seminal book, *Loneliness: The Experience of Emotional and Social Isolation*, and by the development of psychometrically sound measures to assess loneliness.... Two influential proponents of the cognitive approach, Anne Peplau and Daniel Perlman, define loneliness as the unpleasant experience that results from a perceived discrepancy between a person's desired and actual social relationships¹

The **chatter** has no more meaning for him than the **swarming of insects** or the chirping, on every note, of millions of birds in a tropical forest. The human wasteland of the big city or the highway is even more disquieting and oppressive because new questions without number come to the lips of modern man and arise in his heart. There is no one to give him an answer. How can he talk with a computer?²

0.2. THE PLAGUE OF LONELINESS

- hidden causes of loneliness: physical exhaustion; emotional hurts; false expectations (significance); addictions

0.3. LONELINESS IN POPULAR SONGS

- (1) Elan ("I'm not able to be alone... In a city I don't want to be alone"), (2) Sting ("just a castaway... a message in a bottle, S.O.S.") (3) Mercury ("I get so lonely, lonely, lonely") (4) Akon ("I am so lonely, Mr. Lonely") (5) Springsteen ("Your smile girl brings the morning light into my eyes", "Everybody's got a hungry heart")

0.4. LONELINESS VS. ALONENESS

Existential theorists, in contrast, regard loneliness as an inevitable aspect of the human condition and an experience that, even if painful, has *the potential to contribute to increased self-awareness and renewal*.

Definitions of loneliness vary. Some theorists, such as Sullivan and Weiss, define loneliness as the emotional distress that results when *inherent* needs for intimacy and companionship are not met. Other theorists emphasize cognitive processes rather than inherent social needs.

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- It's very important to learn how to be alone
- One can't be with people if he's not able to be alone
- We need to learn how to use aloneness for prayer and meditation

1. SYMPTOMS OF LONELINESS

- intense desire – for touch, talk, eye on eye contact

¹ *Encyclopedia of Psychology*,

² ELLUL, J. *The New Demons*, p. 131

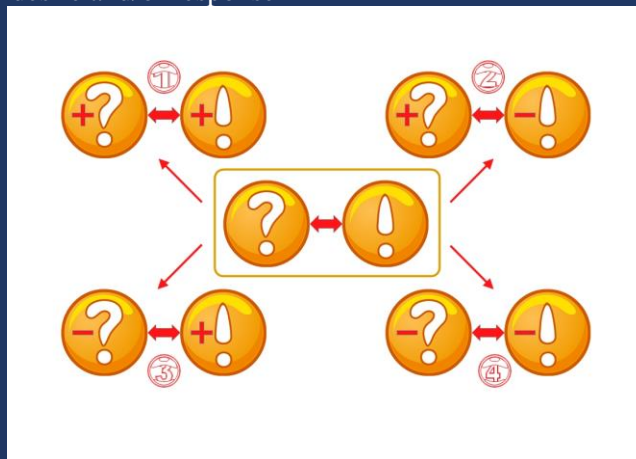
LONELY AMONG FRIENDS

- sense of weakness, insufficiency
- distress – depression, despair,
- search for sth. unknown – escape, boredom, meaninglessness (! We can only have meaning of life when we sacrifice for the others – it's more blessed to give than to receive)
- dreaming – idolizing sex, friendship, community
- hurting – regret
- unfaithfulness – looking for new relationship
- paradox – everyone is lonely but does not understand sb else who is lonely as well

2. CAUSES OF LONELINESS

- Question mark: Desire = Imagination + Communication
- Exclamation mark: Response = Attitude + Communication

- Our interaction with others is always characterized by our imagination/expectations, the way we communicate and by their response to us
- + means positive desire and/or response
- - means negative desire and/or response



Many factors may contribute to the difficulties that some people experience in establishing and maintaining satisfying social relationships. Social inhibition, deficient social skills, or negative social schemas may underlie loneliness for some people. For others, loneliness may be the result of insufficient resources needed to facilitate social interaction or environmental factors that limit opportunities to interact with compatible people. For some people, loneliness arises from a combination of personal vulnerabilities and environmental obstacles.³

Communication:

lonely college students experience difficulty making **self-disclosures** to their interaction partners, ask fewer questions of their partners, talk more about themselves, change the topic of **conversation** arbitrarily, and fail to reciprocate eye contact reliably. Lonely older adults have been found to be relatively unskilled at encoding others' expressive nonverbal communications. Jones summarized this evidence as indicating that lonely individuals, compared to nonlonely individuals, tend to be more self-absorbed and less responsive in their interactions with others.

- JUDGMENTAL and REJECTING behaviour
- **Desire** = Imagination + Communication
- **Response** = Attitude + Communication
 1. $D+ \leftrightarrow R+$
 - Gn 2 („It is not good...“)
 - Marriage (Eden); koinonia (eschat.)
 - Right expectations and response: marriage – before the fall, koinonia/fellowship in the Spirit –

³ *Encyclopedia of Psychology* “Loneliness”

the real fulfillment in heaven

2. D+ ↔ R-

- + help; friendship; belonging; loss (eg. by death) (I desire to belong etc.)
- - rejection; unfaithfulness; silence (I meet with rejection)

3. D- ↔ R+

- idolization; affectation; exceptionalism⁴ („authenticity“); addiction; stubborn insistence on the form of relationship... (tendency towards manipulation – I feel I need someone, I receive a positive response and I tend to hold on to that person in an unhealthy dependent way)
 - arts (literature, music) aesthetics (*impersonal* beauty)...
 - honesty (sincerity); independence; truthfulness...
 -

4. D- ↔ R-

- maybe „POSITIVE“(!) outcome (both sides communicate in an unhealthy way and we're both “satisfied” with it)
- „normally“ total chaos in relationships

3. THE (BIBLICAL) WAY OUT

3.1. LEARN TO BE ALONE (THE DISCIPLINE OF SOLITUDE)

- **Mat 6:6** But when you pray, go into your private room, shut your door, and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.
- Solitude ≠ Loneliness
- learn to be alone → your real potential (“authenticity”)

3.2. BE SELF-CRITICAL

- **Tit 3:3** For we too were once foolish, disobedient, deceived, captives of various passions and pleasures (νόητοι, ἀπειθεῖς, πλανώμενοι, δουλεύοντες ἐπιθυμίαις καὶ ἡδοναῖς ποικίλαις), living in malice and envy, hateful, detesting one another. (ἐν κακίᾳ καὶ φθόνῳ διάγοντες, στυγητοί, μισοῦντες ἀλλήλους.)
- **Gal 5:15** But if you bite and devour one another, watch out, or you will be consumed by one another.
- do not dream/idolize/be sentimental about relationships
- learn to communicate truthfully what you think and feel

3.3. ACCEPT/ENJOY WHAT YOU CAN HAVE

- **1 Thes 5:23** And may your spirit, soul, and body be kept sound and blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. = a true friendship can't exist only on one or two levels
- Respect CREATION – the spiritual basis of companionship – respect biblical anthropology (trichotomy) and hamartology (spiritual death) = respect desire for partnership but need to talk about it with God
- Human intimacy (Eden → marriage; sin → fear; loneliness. separation)
- **1 Peter 1:18** ...you were redeemed from your empty way of life (ἐκ τῆς ματαίας ὑμῶν ἀναστροφῆς) inherited from the fathers...
- **Friendship with Jesus**

3.4. LEARN TO ENJOY GOD AND THE CHURCH

- Delight yourself in the LORD” (Ps 37:4). → Westminster Catechism
- **1 John 4:19** We love because He first loved us.
- Desire God! – **Ps 42:2** I thirst for God, the living God. When can I come and appear before God?
- **1 Cor 6:17** But anyone joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.

⁴ Mójmu životu patrí fame, je to láska, nenávisť, strata súkromia. (Rytmus “Sám”)

- Mystical union with Christ
- **2 Cor 13:13** ...the *fellowship of the Holy Spirit* (ἡ κοινωνία τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος) be with all of you.
- **Philem 1:6** your participation in the faith may become effective through knowing every good thing that is in us for *the glory of Christ*. = in others, look for what is of God
- be realistic (Philemon) **Matthew 18:22** Jesus said to him, "but 70 times seven. = if you can't forgive you're 'doomed' to be lonely
- be filled with the Holy Spirit!

3.5. CHANGE FROM "GETTING" MODE INTO "GIVING" MODE

- **Acts 20:35** ...Lord Jesus, for He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive
- **Eph 4:15** But speaking the truth in love, let us grow in every way into Him who is the head--Christ.
- Move from GETTING to GIVING
- He loved us first
- try to "feel in" with others (empathy)

3.6. FOLLOW CHRIST AND CARRY THE CROSS!

- **2Tim 4:16-17** At my first defense, no one came to my assistance, but everyone deserted me. May it not be counted against them. ¹⁷ But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me...
- **Ps 142:4** Look to the right and see: no one stands up for me; there is no refuge for me; no one cares about me.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- Learn to distinguish between solitude and loneliness! Learn to *use* solitude to your advantage!
- Be realistic about your expectations and possibilities of human fellowship.
- Let yourself be loved by God in Christ so you can give love without getting lonely when you are not appreciated.