



Dealing with Loneliness

LifeCare Memos® Messages of Compassion

“Can I ask you a question?” asked a resident as she wheeled herself into my office.

“You sure can Martha. Come in and let’s talk.”

“How old am I going to be?” she asked with a sense of anticipation.

“Well, that depends on when you were born,” I replied. After discovering the date of her birthday I told her how old she would be.

“I thought so,” she said.

Apparently Martha and her family were having a disagreement over her age. She went on to express concerns she had about the infrequent visits of her family and the fact that she cannot hear or see very well.

Then she said, *“You know, it really is lonely.”* Martha went on to tell how her husband had passed away 37 years ago. She concluded, *“People just don’t understand how lonely it gets.”*

Plagues

Loneliness has been described by the Eden Alternative as one of three plagues of people in long term care facilities—the others being boredom and helplessness.

Loneliness

Among other things, loneliness is described as *“being cut off from others and not frequented by them.”* The result is sadness, unhappiness and a feeling of desolation. J.Oswald Sanders says,

“Ultimately, loneliness stems from mankind’s alienation from God, so no remedy that does not take this factor in account will afford more than superficial and temporary relief.” (*Facing Loneliness*, p. 7)

As we attempt to address the need of loneliness we must realize that although loneliness is predominately spiritual in nature, it also has some psychological and social elements. People were created for fellowship with God and with each other.

“We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ...But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin” (I John 1:3, 7).

When the spiritual and social needs of people are not satisfied the seeds of loneliness grow deeper. Why is it that individuals, surrounded by people, still feel lonely? It is because they are not properly connected to others. They have not established, developed or nurtured lasting and satisfying relationships.

Activities for Residents

These activities help residents connect with other people:

- Be open and honest with God. Tell Him that you are lonely.
- Reach out to another resident and develop a friendship with him or her.
- Get involved in the activities that the facility provides.
- Pursue a hobby or find something in which you can develop an interest.
- Do a kind deed for someone else—resident, someone in a local church, a friend, a former neighbor.
- Telephone someone, find out what they need and pray with them.
- Think positively. Fill your mind with good thoughts, not negative thoughts.
- Develop a prayer list and pray regularly for family, friends, residents, your Chaplain and your pastor.
- Focus on Scripture that helps address loneliness.

Activities for Family Members

Activities for family members to help loved ones get connected:

- Visit your loved one on a regular basis.
- During your visit take some “home made” goodies to share.
- Take your loved one for a drive. If possible, drive past old familiar places—the neighborhood where they lived, stores they frequented, the church they attended.
- Ask questions and let your loved one talk.
- Read mail for your loved one.
- Between your visits, call your loved one on the telephone.
- Read scripture to your loved one.
- Pray with your loved one.

Scriptures which Address Loneliness

The family plays an important part in addressing loneliness.

“God sets the lonely in families, he leads forth the prisoners with singing; but the rebellious live in a sun-scorched land” (Psalm 68:6).

God is our place of safety.

“I sought the LORD, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears...Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in him. Fear the LORD, you his saints, for those who fear him lack nothing” (Psalm 34:4, 8-9).

God is always with us.

“Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5).

During times of fear and loneliness God wants us to place our confidence in Him.

“When I am afraid, I will trust in you” (Psalm 56:3).

We can bring to God whatever concerns us and He provides rest and refreshment.

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-30).

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When experiencing the stresses of life, people need support. The Psalmist needed that support and found it when he turned to God. He said, *“Look to my right and see; no one is concerned for me. I have no refuge; no one **cares for my life**. I cry to you, O LORD; I say, ‘You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living’” (Psalm 142:4-5).*

LifeCare Memos are designed as messages of compassion that integrate biblical guidelines for emotional and spiritual well-being. Topics focus on various life-care issues and address them from the perspective of Scripture.