



Pause With Purpose

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...to refresh

...to grow

Loneliness

Emerson once said, "The ornaments of a house are the friends who frequent it." Given the traditional ornaments of the holiday season, Emerson offers us an alternative perspective on what brings brightness and color to our homes. Indeed, there are homes this Christmas season alive with the bright energy and hearty laughter of friends spending time together. Families gather and couples carve out time just to be together.

Yet, there are homes and apartments that enjoy few, if any, "relationship ornaments". Though these residences are occupied, the warmth of friendship seldom crosses their thresholds or blossoms within their walls. The reasons for this are as varied as the people involved, but the result is the same - aloneness, often leading to the sad isolation of loneliness.

Now there are those of us who are alone and clearly prefer to be alone. But for the vast majority of us, the lack of meaningful relational connection leaves us desiring something more, something beyond our self. Ever since our Creator noted that it is not good for mankind to be alone, we have sought fellowship, support, and enrichment through friendly relationships.

And yet, for some of us, these

relationships are lacking. Some of us have been alone most of our life, though we wish it were different. Some of us have moved, leaving family and friends far behind. Others of us have felt the sting of death or divorce and are left to carry on life in a strange new world. And still others of us share relationships void of the intimacy, energy, or togetherness once present. And loneliness grows.

Sometimes we experience the hollow ache of our loneliness and try to fill it with whatever is at hand. We lose our self in our job, or rush from activity to activity until we nearly collapse. We turn to our preferred addiction (food, TV, alcohol, romance, etc) and try to hide somewhere within it. And yet, behind the noise and the clutter, the loneliness remains.

What can we do, then, when we experience a season of loneliness in our life? Consider the following suggestions:

1) Rather than running from loneliness, face it, call it by name, and own it. Loneliness can never be outrun or ignored permanently.

2) Resist the temptation to rush into any available relationship. Instead, let's spend some time with our self (uncomfortable as that may initially be), discovering what makes

us unique and valuable. It could be the start of a beautiful relationship ... with our self.

3) Let's not forget or neglect our spiritual nature and the resources available to us here. Our relationship with our Creator offers us the secure spiritual intimacy that is the model for the "skin-covered" relationships we desire.

4) Reconsider ... repair ... reconnect. What relationships have we lost due to our own neglect, stubbornness, misunderstanding, or pride? Which of them call to our heart and hold potential for health and renewal? Making the first contact may require courage and humility, but it may also bring new life to a relationship worth keeping.

5) Step out, be available, be responsive, and even initiate contact with others. Sure it's risky, but the relationships that can dissolve our loneliness seldom fall into our lap. Groups, clubs, churches, and other gatherings offer opportunities to connect in settings that are a bit less intense and intimidating.

6) Be friendly. Be willing to be a friend. Show genuine interest in and appreciation for others, while respecting their privacy. Although consistently offering such warmth doesn't guarantee relationships, it does increase the likelihood that others will be drawn to us. And that's a start.



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CONTACT INFORMATION

Your thoughts and comments are warmly welcomed. I would also be happy to share with you more about life coaching and how it can assist you through the challenges and transitions of life.

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Time To Reach Out

In this season of joy and merriment, there are those among us who, at best, watch from the sidelines, caught in a world of isolation and loneliness. They may live across the hall from us, or down the street, or on the other side of town. They may work next to us, or even share our church pew. Can we see them?

Sometimes their loneliness is obvious. More often it is well hidden. But their pain is real.

Although we care about them, the challenge we often face is how to translate that caring into action that makes a difference. To this end, the following suggestions are offered.

1) "*Share the small with all.*"
- Give away your smiles freely, and offer words of kindness to all who share your path.

2) "*Invite one to share your fun.*" - Include a guest, who would otherwise be alone, in your dinner or party plans. Your dinner table will likely not notice the difference, but your guest will. At least make the offer! It's time to reach out!



"You can never do a kindness too soon, for you never know how soon it will be too late."

-Ralph Waldo Emerson