

## Lonely in the Crowd? Reach out and touch somebody....

Written by U.S Immigration News  
Tuesday, 03 January 2012 01:28 -

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There is so much happening in the world and so much to do that it is often amazing to find that many people are very, very lonely. Loneliness can mean: unhappiness as a result of being without the companionship of others or a place or life that is isolated, unfrequented or desolate. We must, however, not confuse loneliness with solitude. Loneliness is what gnaws at us when connections fail. But solo time is essential, it can help us think clearly, breathe calmly, and even feel content. According to this quote in the book, "Facing Loneliness" by J. Oswald Sanders, "It is nothing new to be lonely. It comes to all of us sooner or later..... If we try to retreat from it, we end in darker hell. But if we face it, if we remember that there are a million others like us, if we reach out and try to comfort them and not ourselves, we find in the end that we are lonely no longer" (*Morris West, The devil's Advocate*)

What makes us happiest in life? Some people may point to fabulous fame and fortune. But, surveys show that friends and family is the real prize. Yet even though our need to connect is innate, some of us always go home alone. It is possible to feel lonely in a bustling corporate office. Talent, financial success and or fame offer no protection from the experience. You may have people around you throughout the day or you may even be in a lifelong marriage, yet you may feel a deep down loneliness. Not surprisingly, isolation can affect one's mental and physical health adversely.

Drawing from the Bible, we can see several instances where devotion to God and getting involved with helping others has given many lives the meaning they desperately seek. The feeling of loneliness can make one to be very unsettled. God wants us to be settled and to have rest all around. This means that each one must find out their purpose for living. It is disheartening to see teenagers commit suicide because they feel alone. If they can define their purpose early enough, much heartache later in life will be avoided. Several situations like divorce or separation, broken relationships, death of a loved one or just plain low self-esteem can bring about a considerable level of loneliness. We can do something about it by focusing on the need of others instead of constantly thinking only of ourselves. Apostle Paul when speaking to the Church at Ephesus said, "Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, **that he may have something to give to him who has need**"

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Feeling lonely also makes us fall victim to our own eagerness to please. Social connection does not involve superhuman strength. Committing to doing too many things for too many people in an effort to open ourselves to connection can instead make us feel overworked, stressed out, and faltering. The whole point is to be merely human, available to the common bond of humanity. Feelings of loneliness many times originate from the mind when an individual assesses the situation around him / her and feels disconnected from everyone. The disconnection is sometimes a conscious decision that backfires, so we have a part to play in reaching out to embrace new relationships.

### *Easing Your Way Out of Loneliness.*

There was a certain woman in the Bible in Acts of the Apostles chapter 16 verses 13-15 called Lydia. She was a business woman from the city of Thyatira, who worshipped God. She met Paul and Silas while they were conducting prayer and she opened her heart to the teachings of Paul and also opened her home to them. She begged them saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay" I believe that this opened her up to a lot of possibilities that would have enriched her life from that point on. Many people are so closed in because of one fear or the other that they miss out on some relationships that would have added value to their lives. We must, therefore, **extend** ourselves. You might just be pleasantly surprised at what you will find when you do.

Have an **action** plan. Thinking about how to help others or even seeking help can be very invigorating. Being creative about the things that we need to do will energize our minds so much so that loneliness disappears.

The next thing we need to do is to be **selective** in forming relationships. You need quality, not quantity. Relationships must be satisfying and so we do not need to embrace the first person that smile's at us. Lastly, **expect** the best. Fear binds. If you find yourself constantly afraid concerning this area of your life, it is time to pray. Prayer always works. Happy New Year! May you connect with people who you will lift up and who will also lift you up in Jesus Name (Amen).

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