



## Parkway Fellowship

Won't You Be My Neighbor? • Don't Let Make Believe Become Reality •

Deuteronomy 31:6; Psalm 25:16-21; 91:15; 1 Corinthians 12:26-27 • 09/30/2018

### Main Point

In our loneliness, we must not let wrong perceptions keep us from experiencing God's great care for us and the kind of friendships He intends for us to have.

### Introduction

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**Have you ever had a first impression of a person that turned out to be wrong? What happened?**

**What about an event—have you ever dreaded going somewhere because you thought you would hate it and then ended up having a great time? Describe the circumstance.**

What we think about certain people and situations doesn't always turn out to be right. This is especially true when we are lonely. Our perceptions are often wrong, fed by lies we believe about God, ourselves, and other people. Today's session will challenge us to recognize what "make believe" things we are prone to believe when we are lonely, and will encourage us with what God says is reality.

# Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| Ask a volunteer to read Deuteronomy 31:6.

**What fear was Moses addressing in these words to Israel? Why do even God's people sometimes fear they are all alone?**

**Put this verse in your own words. Look at verses 1-5. Is the "you" in verse 6 singular or plural? For believers, in what way is it true that you are never alone?**

**Share a relational situation where you need to remember the truth of this verse.**

Moses knew what it felt like to be afraid. He was 120 years old now, and he had experienced numerous lonely and fearful situations as he answered God's call and led His people out of Egypt and into the promised land. What he had learned was that when you think you're alone, you're not. God is with you, and others are willing to be.

| Ask a couple volunteers to read 1 John 1:8 and 1 Corinthians 12:26-27.

**Based on these two passages, how would you answer someone who avoids Christian community by saying, "No one understands what I'm going through"?**

**What does it mean that in the body of Christ, "if one part suffers, every part suffers with it"?  
When has membership in the body of Christ helped you get through something difficult?**

**Based on 1 John 1:8, how can you know that other believers should understand any struggle you face on some level?**

The idea that our struggle and situation is "too much" for other people is contrary to biblical truth. Paul went straight to the source of the issue—all of us share the same problem of sin. Ultimately, that problem of sin is the issue behind every struggle and difficulty we face. Further, we are members of one body. Just as the hand can't say it doesn't need the foot, it also cannot say it doesn't understand what the foot is going through. If one part of the body suffers, the whole body suffers.

| Ask a volunteer to read Psalm 91:15.

**What are some reasons people think God doesn't care?**

**What does the phrase, "I will be with him" tell you about how God demonstrates His care for you in times of difficulty?**

## **How has God used friendship with other believers to deliver you and honor you?**

God doesn't always answer us in the ways we want Him to, but He always answers, and His answers are always right. One of the ways He shows us He will never abandon us is through Christian community. It is often in our relationships with other members of His body that we see how much God loves and cares for us.

| Ask a volunteer to read Psalm 25:16-21.

**What words and phrases give you insight into David's situation and state of mind when he wrote this psalm?**

**Would you characterize David as faithful or faithless here? Explain.**

**How is it that you can be faithful and still feel lonely and afflicted?**

Many great people of faith have felt lonely. In this week's sermon, we heard specifically about the loneliness of David, Job, Jeremiah, Nehemiah, and Peter. It is clear that they had faith. Here in Psalm 25, we find David in a state of loneliness and affliction, yet he demonstrated great faith in the midst of it all. Some people think they wouldn't feel the way that they do if they had enough faith. Loneliness doesn't happen because of your lack of faith. Loneliness is a product of living in a world where sin's curse touches us all.

## Application

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**Which of the four misconceptions do you tend to struggle with most: I am alone, no one understands, God doesn't care, or I don't have enough faith? What is God teaching you about that misconception?**

**How can we as a group help each other not let "make believe" (our perceptions) become reality?**

**As a group, take some time to memorize 1 Peter 5:7: Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you. How might recalling this verse help you when you feel lonely?**

## Pray

Thank God for the truth of His Word and the reality that He has always cared about you. Ask Him to help you confront your wrong perceptions about Him, yourself, and other people with truth and courage so that you might better engage in Christian friendship and community.

## Commentary

## Deuteronomy 31:6

Instead of being afraid or terrified because of the warlike Canaanites, Israel had to turn their eyes on the Lord, who would be with them throughout the process. His presence would make all the difference, and they need not fear that he would ever leave or forsake them (cp. Heb. 13:5).

## Psalm 25:16-21

25:17 The Hebrew text of this verse is difficult, reading literally “ the distresses of my heart, they make wide.” Although the form for “make wide” usually refers to relief from distress (4:2; 18:37), it can also express the meaning of “enlarge,” which would be a figurative expression for increase. This idea is related to numerous enemies who surrounded the psalmist (v. 19).

25:20 Put to shame is similar to “disgrace.”

25:21 Integrity and what is right are personified in a similar way as Yahweh’s attributes were personified in 23:6. These characteristics will protect those who remain in God’s will (37:37).

## Psalm 91:15

Those who know God’s name are in covenant relationship with Him. The Lord delivers, protects, answers, honors, satisfies, and reveals His salvation through the preservation and blessing of Israel (95:7-11).

## 1 Corinthians 12:26-27

Paul contended that God himself had given greater honor to the members of the body that lacked obvious honor. He did this for the purpose of making sure that there would be no division in the body and that all parts should have equal concern for each other. The interdependence of all parts evidences this design. If one part suffers from pain or disease, then every part suffers with it. Most people have experienced how things as small as toothaches and ingrown toenails can wreak havoc on their bodies. The appendix may be small and have no apparent function, but when it suffers, it jeopardizes the life of the entire body.

## 1 John 1:8

In both Scripture and church history, people have excused their wrongful deeds by claiming to be right with God. John diagnosed an ancient and recurrent human tendency. Confessing our sins does not mean a shallow reciting of misdeeds. It means owning up to wrongdoing and bringing our lives into line with God's goodness and commands. God can forgive and cleanse us from terrible transgressions.