

FRIDAY 5.17.19 Psalm 139:1-12

Have you ever had moment when you feared God had given up on you? Or maybe had a time when you tried to run away from God? The psalmist said that, no matter where we go, God goes there with us. But this sweeping poem didn't merely assert God's presence - it also told believers that God's presence is a good thing, because God will always guide, strengthen and support us. What helps you experience God's presence? What spiritual difference does that make for you?

Prayer: Dear Jesus, at my worst, I feel like hiding from you. At my best, I want you to stay with me all the time - and that's exactly what you've promised to do. Amen.

SATURDAY 5.18.19 1 Psalm 27:7-10, 68:3-6, John 16:32

Every time we baptize a child, the pastor tells the parents that God's design is that they model God's love and goodness for their child. In this broken world, in Bible times and still today, human parents, friends and spouses sometimes fall sadly short of living out God's design. But Scripture said that, even if our human relationships let us down, we do not need to fear being alone and friendless. We can always depend, if we will, on God's loving presence with us.

Prayer: O God, the psalmist said you are "Father of orphans and defender of widows." Thank you for always being with me. Give me eyes to see others who are hurting, and use me to bless them with your love and caring. Amen.

Family Activity: At times, everyone fears feeling alone or unloved. As a family, share ideas about how you can work with God to bring comfort and care to others. Discuss each person's unique gifts and abilities. How can those be used to comfort others? How can those same gifts be combined with those of other family members to care and help? Use construction paper to create the symbol of a heart. On it, write or draw the gifts of each person. Also write or draw about how they can be used to comfort people who are sad or lonely. Pray together, asking God to help guide you to use your ideas and gifts. Thank God for giving them to you. Display your family's "hear" as a reminder to comfort others this year.



5/12/19 Unafraid - Living with Courage & Hope: "Friendless and Alone"

Scripture: Genesis 2:15, 18 and John 13:31-35

- ⇒ **Genesis 2:15, 18** - The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. ¹⁸Then the Lord God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.'
- ⇒ **John 13:34-35** - ³⁴I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. ³⁵By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.'

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- ⇒ Loneliness in the Bible and in life
 - Genesis - loneliness (2:18) is the first thing not good (John Milton)
 - Created imago dei (image of God - 1:27) means wired for community
 - Loneliness - normal at times of deep loss or change; chronic loneliness comes when we catastrophize - *"I'll never be happy again"*
- ⇒ Factors that contribute to feeling friendless and alone in today's world
 - Mobility - only 24% of us live our entire lives in our hometown
 - Job changes - multiple jobs leads to loss of work relationships
 - Divorce - 40% of 1st marriages end in divorce; family, friends change
 - Technology - social media connects us, yet can lead to *"I wish I had a family/friends like them"*
 - Retirement - #1 indicator of happiness - meaningful relationships
- ⇒ Wisdom from therapists - what can be done?
 - negative tapes from the past play in your head, hold you back from friendships, become a filter that interprets others actions
 - Putting yourself out there - find a group, call someone to visit with
- ⇒ What is God's answer to our times of feeling friendless and alone?
 - People - groups or individuals to spend time with, serve alongside
 - A daily relationship with Jesus through prayer, devotion, worship

Notes: _____

MONDAY 5.13.19 Matthew 14:23, Mark 1:35, John 6:15

Jesus loved people, yet he regularly sought solitude as a way to refocus and cultivate his walk with God. For some of us, a fear of being alone can grow so strong that we nearly panic if we find ourselves alone.

We may almost fixatedly seek to be with others, perhaps even in settings or situations that do not match our stated values. It's a useful spiritual practice to learn to value solitude, intentional or unintentional, and grow stronger through it.

The gospel passages often associated prayer with Jesus' times of solitude. Of course he also prayed when around people. But we see that he often found solitude conducive to prayer. In what ways do you find prayer different when you are alone than when you are with others? What strengths can you see in each kind of prayer setting?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, help me not to shun times of solitude, or to waste them in wishing I were not alone. Teach me how to use those moments, whether minutes or days, into times to draw closer to you. Amen.

TUESDAY 5.14.19 Exodus 18:14-18

Task: lead a throng of ex-slaves safely through the Sinai desert. They hadn't learned to work out even minor conflicts - their slave masters had run everything. Few of them had developed even basic leadership skills, or had reason to give leadership any thought. Moses found himself trying in person to iron out every little problem the people had. But his father-in-law wisely told him, "What you are doing isn't good...You can't do it alone."

It was good that Moses took his role as leader seriously. "The people come to me to inquire of God," he said. But his father-in-law was God's instrument to remind him that he wasn't called to be a solo act, handling everything himself. What tasks do you carry alone right now? Look prayerfully at what parts of them you could share with others.

Prayer: God, I can't do your job. Deliver me from the temptation to try to be what you, and only you, can be - the ruler of the universe. Remind me not to try to "do it all alone." Amen.

WEDNESDAY 5.15.19 Genesis 2:18, Ecclesiastes 4:7-12, John 14:18-19

News reports, and mission partners in various parts of Africa, have showed us the plight of more than 100 million orphans and vulnerable children due to the AIDS epidemic. Genesis 2 stated a human truth: it isn't good for us to be all alone. And Jesus, in a land where poor health and Roman violence left many children orphaned, used that image to promise his followers that, whatever befell their human connections, he would never leave them as orphans. Through the Holy Spirit, he would always be with them.

Sometimes seen as bitter and cynical, the wisdom teacher of Ecclesiastes warmly valued human friendship. "Two are better than one," he wrote. They "can help each other, can keep each other warm and safe." In what ways have you found value in doing things with another person or two, rather than all alone?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for keeping your promise not to leave me as an orphan. Teach me how to claim you as my Companion and Comforter, even when my circumstances seem the hardest. Amen.

THURSDAY 5.16.19 James 1:26-27

True devotion to God, James said, doesn't show itself in grand words, whether they are lofty or angry. Our devotion shows most truly as we actively care for and help those who have to face the world alone. That can be as simple as extending friendship and human warmth to those who circumstances leave them alone, or as demanding as becoming foster or adoptive parents.

Orphans and widows in the Old Testament symbolize the most unfortunate members of society. If James were writing today, who might he list in his letter as among the most unfortunate members of society? As you think about those people, is your heart moved with compassion, or do you find it uncomfortable and try to put them out of your mind?

Prayer: Lord God, I'm devoted to you - after all, I read the GPS. Give me the insight and the courage to find tangible ways to live out that devotion, serving you by serving other who are alone and hurting. Amen.