LONELINESS (BROKEN AND SHATTERED RELATIONSHIPS)

For more research on loneliness go to www.josh.org/mentalhealth/loneliness

The following research addresses the loneliness issue outside as well as within the Church environment. The affects are tremendous both among believers and non-believers and need to be addressed at this crucial time.

The growth of social media and waning person-to-person contact [caused] former Surgeon General Vivek Murthy: “loneliness is a worldwide epidemic” … “it could be lethal.”


“…a survey of 20,000 U.S. adults by Cigna, the loneliest members of Generation Z (people roughly between ages 7 and 22) are evenly split between those who use social media and those who don’t.”


• “If loneliness is a disease, it’s one that’s reached pandemic proportions.”

• “A 2016 survey by the American College Health Association of Canadian cohort of 44,000 postsecondary students revealed that two-thirds of them reported feeling ‘very lonely’ at some point in the previous 12 months.”

• “The New York Daily News (August 3, 2019) reports: More than 20% of millennials surveyed in a YouGov poll released this week claimed that they don’t have a single friend.”
• “A lack of substantive community is a source of great pain for many in modern American culture.”

• “According to a survey in 2017 by the Royal Society for Public Health, Britons aged 14-24 believe that Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and Twitter have detrimental effects on their wellbeing. On average, they reported that these social networks gave them extra scope for self-expression and community-building. But they also said that the platforms exacerbated anxiety and depression, deprived them of sleep, exposed them to bullying and created worries about their body image and ‘FOMO’ (‘fear of missing out’). Academic studies have found that these problems tend to be particularly severe among frequent users.”

• “…people under the age 20 registering as the loneliest of all, according to the Cigna poll.”

• “Nearly three in 10 people who are unhappy with their family life report feeling lonely, pointing once again to the importance of relationship quality. Neuroscientist Stephanie Cacioppo, Ph.D., of the University of Chicago, is an ardent proponent of exercising, relying on deep friendships, and practicing gratitude.”

• “A 2018 survey of 55,000 British citizens conducted for the BBC found that a third of respondents often feel lonely.”

• “In a 2018 national health survey by Cigna, girls reported the highest levels of loneliness on record.”
Julianne Holt-Lunstad, a professor of psychology at Brigham Young University, has discovered in her research that loneliness reduces people's life spans by the equivalent of smoking 15 cigarettes a day. (Chris Weller, “5 Things That Are Almost as Deadly as Smoking, According to Science”, Science Alert, July 24, 2018, https://www.sciencealert.com/5-little-known-things-that-are-deadly-as-smoking-lonely-sitting-tanning-science)

"Why loneliness is so dangerous to your health: Studies show that “nearly half of Americans say that they are lonely some or all the time. Social isolation has been linked to higher risks of death and diseases like heart disease and life-threatening events like strokes.”


"‘Only around half of Americans say they have meaningful, daily face-to-face social interactions.’ Loneliness, public-health experts tell us, is killing as many people as obesity and smoking. (Kay Hymowitz, “The Role of Family Breakdown in the Loneliness Epidemic”, IFS Studies, November 7, 2019, https://ifstudies.org/blog/the-role-of-family-breakdown-in-the-loneliness-epidemic)

“Loneliness isn't just a detriment to their social lives and happiness; loneliness is bad for their health.”


“The health dangers of loneliness are not new. A review of studies conducted back in 1988 identified higher rates of mortality, illness, injury, smoking, obesity and high blood pressure in lonely people, marking social isolation a risk factor for all of the above.”

“Despite all of our online connections the average person has 338 Facebook 'friends' – [yet] we are only getting lonelier.”


Former Surgeon General, Murthy wrote in the Harvard Business Review that “we live in the most technologically connected age in the history of civilization, yet rates of loneliness have doubled since the 1980s.”


“Recently in Great Britain, loneliness became so widespread that the British government created a cabinet level position, a ‘Minister of Loneliness’.”


“The University of Southern California in the last several years has seen such wide spread loneliness and depression on campus that they established a ‘Director of Belonging’ and has full-time wellness dogs that roam the campus (these are for University students).”


“But loneliness is not simply about being alone. What it really hinges on is the quality of your relationships: The more satisfied you are with them, the less lonely you are.”


“At the Finish the Task conference on global evangelism, Rick Warren stated that, ‘loneliness is one of the greatest problems.’”
Do you think the above data about extent of loneliness epidemic is exaggerated? Last week I had breakfast with two leaders of an organization that gives leadership to 8,000 youth workers. I asked. “What is their greatest challenge working with young people?” The immediate answer was, “Loneliness!” That is a confirmation of all the above.

6 Ways to Feel Less Lonely and More Connected

1. “Look up old friends. They probably want to catch up too.”
2. “Talk to strangers. Even 30 seconds of friendly conversation with a store clerk or cabdriver has a positive impact on mood.”
3. “Practice gratitude. Focus on things in your life that make you feel fortunate: your pets, perhaps, or a nice place to live…even a sunny day.”
4. “Exercise and get enough sleep. Both contribute to mood regulation and overall health.”
5. “Take a class. Sign up for something you’ve never tried, like dance, art, or meditation. Active learning exercises your brain, and you may make some new friends.”
6. “Volunteer. It’s hard to feel sorry for yourself when you’re helping improve the lives of others. Data shows that volunteering gives people purpose, which raises their self-esteem, in turn making them less lonely.”


“Three key lessons about happiness:”

1. “Close relationships - The men in both groups of the Harvard [80 year] study who reported being closer to their family, friends, or community tended to be happier and healthier than their less social counterparts. They also tended to live longer.”

2. “Quality (not quantity) of relationships - A 2015 study published in the journal Psychology and Aging that followed people for 30 years found that the number of relationships people had was, in fact, more important for people in their 20s, but the quality of relationships had a bigger effect on social and psychological well being when people were in their 30s.”

3. “Stable, supportive marriages - Being socially connected to others isn’t just good for our physical health. It also helps stave off mental decline. People who were married without having divorced, separating, or having ‘serious problems’ until age 50 performed better on memory tests later in life than those who weren't, the Harvard study found.”

   “But over and over, over these 75 years, our study has shown that the people who fared the best were the people who leaned into relationships, with family, with friends, with community.”