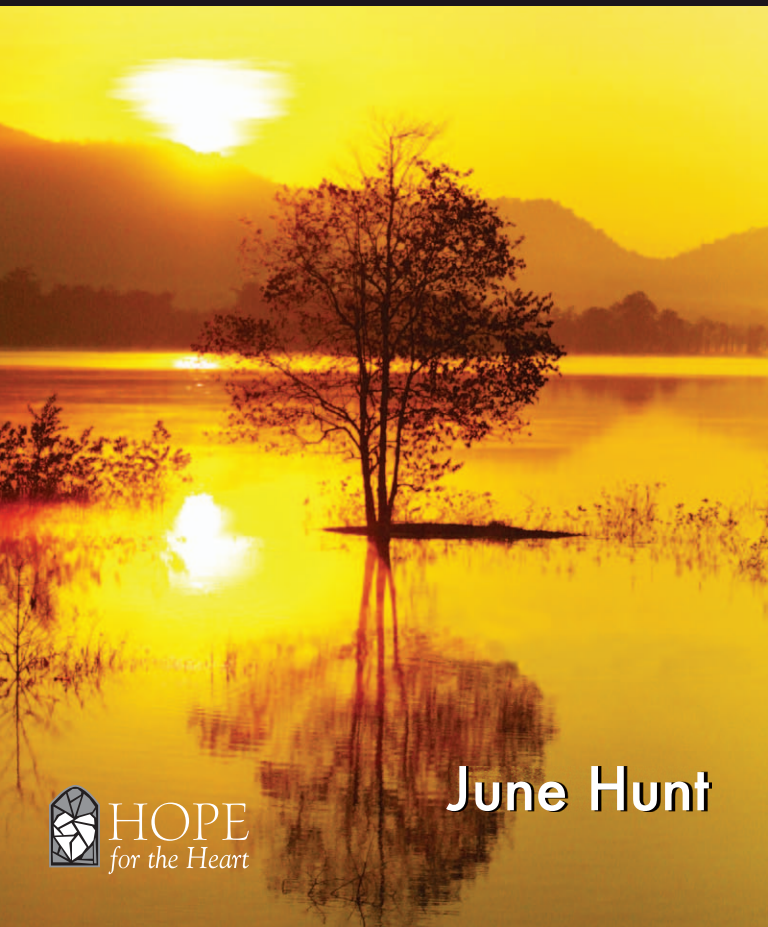




LONELINESS

How to Be Alone but Not Lonely



June Hunt



HOPE
for the Heart

LONELINESS

How to Be Alone but Not Lonely

JUNE HUNT



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Dear Friend,

Have you ever thought about what God was referring to the first time He said the words “*not good*”? Was it going without food or shelter? Was it being selfish or proud? *No*.

In Genesis 2:18 the Lord God said, “*It is not good for the man to be alone.*”

God did not design us to be alone. Although there will be periods when we are alone, that is not to be a permanent state. He knows that after a period of time we certainly can become lonely.

Looking back on my life, I remember a time that was painfully poignant. I was stunned by what had happened to a very special relationship. I was so hurt, so deeply wounded, my heart ached with pain.

While I had the support of a loving mother and several true friends, I didn’t want to share with them the depth of my pain. Although they knew some details, I didn’t feel like I could unload my overwhelming pain onto anyone. And truthfully, nothing that anyone said or did could have lifted the hurt from my heart.

During this time, I went inside a card store, saw a sentiment about tender relationships and suddenly my eyes filled with tears. And, I remember having tears all the way through a movie about a loving relationship. (As a “non-crier,” that was very unusual.) I could hardly

believe my response. However, the loss of a relationship—whether by death, divorce, or rejection of any kind—can leave us feeling devastated.

We can feel so lonely, so separated, so isolated, thinking no one really understands. Yet God understands our deepest times of loneliness. He knows the heaviness of our hurt.

Jesus said, *“Take my yoke upon you”* (Matthew 11:29). He is willing, and even *wants*, to lighten the burden of your heavy heart. Then, in turn, He will use your sensitive heart to be a source of strength to help others.

In time, you can be God’s instrument of compassion to come alongside and lighten the hearts of those who are lonely.


What I’ve personally learned is this: When my heart has been pressed down with pain, that is when my relationship with the Lord has grown deeper ... deeper ... deeper.

In times of loneliness and sorrow, take this verse to heart ...

*“I cry to you, O LORD; I say, ‘You are my refuge,
my portion in the land of the living.’”*

(Psalm 142:5)

Yours in the Lord’s hope,



June Hunt

LONELINESS

How to Be Alone but Not Lonely

Have you ever wondered: When is the first time God says, “*It is not good?*” Is it when Adam and Eve eat the forbidden fruit? Is it when they hide from God? Is it when they refuse to take responsibility for their disobedience?

Actually, prior to all these events, God states in no uncertain terms:

**“It is not good for the man to be alone.”
(Genesis 2:18)**

God Himself speaks these words after creating the first human being—the crowning glory of His creation, made in God’s image. Adam is surrounded by indescribable beauty in the Garden of Eden with its unlimited fruit, lush foliage, and a wide array of wildlife. Yet, there is something missing—rather, *someone*.

God causes a deep sleep to come over Adam and removes one of his ribs to form a woman. Then God presents her to Adam, and he is no longer *alone*.

If you are cut off from relationships, living in isolation, coping alone day by day, God considers this “*not good.*” While the Lord doesn’t lead everyone to marry, He does call everyone to be involved with people. *People*, not just charming pets, not just prized possessions, but *people*. You

are called to show interest in people, to express care to people, to sacrificially love people. Remember, Adam was surrounded by animals and objects of beauty in the Garden, yet God considered him “alone.” And that is why ...

**“The LORD God said ...
‘I will make a helper suitable for him.’”
(Genesis 2:18)**



DEFINITIONS

Interestingly, the word *alone* appears 123 times in Scripture (NIV), but rarely is it synonymous with the word *lonely*. In fact, in English, the noun “loneliness” did not acquire its present meaning until this century, and did not appear in any major dictionary until after the Second World War. In other words, loneliness has only recently been thought of as a mental condition.¹

It doesn't take long in the classroom of life to learn that you can experience loneliness even when surrounded by a crowd. But solitude is much different. Properly handled, loneliness can be a doorway leading to a deep relationship with God. Jesus experienced solitude but enjoyed unity with the Father.

**“You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me.”
(John 16:32)**

WHAT IS Loneliness?

Have you ever felt lonely in the midst of a crowd, feeling separate from people while in the midst of *people*? It's as if a great, invisible wall is keeping you isolated, allowing you to observe but not belong.

Have you ever felt so alone and burdened by sorrows that it was painful to watch others smile, chat, laugh, and go on with their lives with apparent contentment? In this condition, it can feel like no one else walks in your shoes, understands your pain, or senses your struggles.

This is loneliness, the state of sadness that comes from feeling alone, isolated, or “cut off from others.”² This sense of “disconnection” can be experienced at any time—when you don't have friends and loved ones nearby or even when you do.

**“Scorn has broken my heart and has left me helpless; I looked for sympathy, but there was none, for comforters, but I found none.”
(Psalm 69:20)**

- ▶ **Loneliness** is a state of sadness resulting from feeling isolated or “cut off from others.”³
 - *Lonely* in the Old Testament is translated from the Hebrew word *yahid*, which can mean “solitary, forsaken, wretched.”⁴
 - The psalmist David cried out to the Lord during his times of loneliness.

“Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted.” (Psalm 25:16)

► **Loneliness** means feeling separated from others.

- *Lonely* in the New Testament is sometimes translated from the Greek word *monoō*, which means to “be left alone.”⁵
- Loneliness can often occur when loved ones pass away.

“The widow who is really in need and left all alone puts her hope in God and continues night and day to pray and to ask God for help.” (1 Timothy 5:5)

Lonely Even with Christ in My Heart

QUESTION: “How can I feel lonely when I have Christ in my heart?”

ANSWER: It is not sinful to experience the pain of loneliness. In fact, it’s perfectly normal. We are made to have significant relationships with God and with others. When there is great loss or a great change in our lives, we experience great pain and stress. Even Jesus hurt when His friend Lazarus died. Tears are not wrong; they are God-given for healing.

“Jesus wept.” (John 11:35)

WHAT IS Chronic Loneliness?

Everyone experiences loneliness at one time or another, but you may be someone who struggles with loneliness day in and day out, with little or no hope for relief. You may feel like you are isolated on one side of a river and underneath an ominous black cloud that pours a steady rain of loneliness on your soul. You see people on the other side of the river, walking and talking with each other in the warmth of the sunshine and you yearn to join them, but have no clue how to bridge the river and cross to the other side.

Some people feel lonely because they are withdrawn, uncommunicative, and lack relationships. However, others feel lonely because they are in a physical relationship that leaves them inwardly isolated and very much alone.

Proverbs says ...

**“Each heart knows its own bitterness,
and no one else can share its joy.”
(Proverbs 14:10)**

► **Chronic loneliness** means continually feeling isolated and disconnected from others.⁶

- Can develop from constantly feeling misunderstood or cut off from everyone
- Can be rooted in feeling socially inept, full of shame, or having low self-worth

► **Chronic loneliness** often leads to personal isolation, bitterness, and destructive behavior.

- Can result in having “no hope of connecting again in the future”⁷
- Can end in “suicide or angry, violent alienation”⁸

“When my heart was grieved and my spirit embittered, I was senseless and ignorant; I was a brute beast before you.” (Psalm 73:21–22)

Active Yet Lonely

QUESTION: “My life is active and full, so why do I get lonely?”

ANSWER: Activity alone is not a cure for loneliness. Over-involvement in activities—to the point where you have no solitude—can be an attempt to numb the longing in your heart for God.

**“Find rest, O my soul, in God alone;
my hope comes from him.
He alone is my rock and my salvation;
he is my fortress, I will not be shaken.”
(Psalm 62:5–6)**