

DAY 1 MORNING/MIDDAY OFFICE

Silence and Stillness before God (1-2 minutes)

Scripture Reading

The believers studied what the apostles taught. **They shared their lives together. They ate and prayed together.** Everyone was amazed at what God was doing. They were amazed when the apostles performed many wonders and signs. **All the believers were together. They shared everything they had. They sold property and other things they owned. They gave to anyone who needed something. Every day they met together in the temple courtyard. They ate meals together in their homes.** Their hearts were glad and sincere. They praised God. They were respected by all the people. Every day the Lord added to their group those who were being saved. (Acts 2:42-47, NIRV)

Devotional

In **1965**, a popular singing duo released a song that went to the top of the charts. It defiantly declared individuality and the needlessness of relationships. Decades later, the haunting lyrics can still be heard on Classic Rock stations. Here are a few:

**I've built walls,
A fortress deep and mighty,
That none may penetrate.
I have no need of friendships; friendship causes pain.
It's laughter and it's loving I disdain.**

**Hiding in my room, safe within my womb.
I touch no one and no one touches me.**

**For I am a rock,
I am an island.
And a rock feels no pain;
And an island never cries.**

That song, **I am A Rock**, was written by Paul Simon and released by Simon and Garfunkel; it represents a philosophy that hinges on these words: **"If I never loved, I never would have cried."** The song stresses the importance of protecting one's heart by isolating oneself from the hurt and pain of relationships.

Most of us can readily identify with the feelings of heartache and heartbreak as a result of a failed relationship. And, perhaps for a season, there's something to be said of a place of refuge, of consolation, that of being alone. But for only a season – as being alone is no way to live.

Loneliness is a terrifying word. It is defined this way:

- **a depressing feeling of being alone.**
- **Solitary; without company; companionless.**
- **Standing apart, isolated.**

Loneliness gives way to depression, despair, hopelessness, and a deep sadness of the heart.

John Cacioppo, the director of the Center for Cognitive and Social Neuroscience at the University of Chicago, is one of the world's leading experts on loneliness. In his landmark book, Loneliness, released in 2008, he revealed just how profoundly the epidemic of loneliness is affecting the basic functions of human physiology. He writes:

"When we drew blood from our older adults and analyzed their white cells, we found that loneliness somehow penetrated the deepest recesses of the cell to alter the way genes were being expressed."

In other words, when you are lonely, your whole body is lonely. This expert is saying that loneliness seeps into your entire being.

Most of us know loneliness. We all would readily agree – being alone is no way to live.

Questions

In the Bible reading, what “words” jumped out at you? How did these words make you feel? Was there any particular word that seemed to be used over and over again? Has that been your experience of “church”? What would that be like? How could you help develop that?

Prayer

Ask God to speak to you in the coming days. Let him know you are listening and waiting to grow closer to him.

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