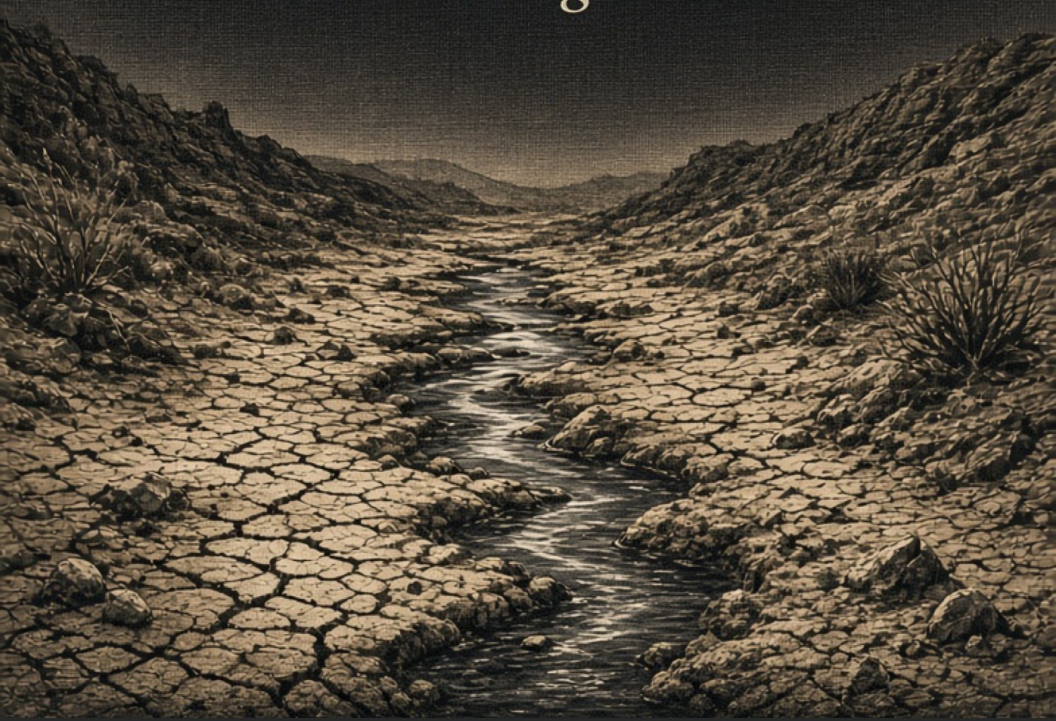
JEREMIAH 15:18

OVERCOMING LONELINESS

Committing to Love



STUART GREAVES

Will You surely be to me
like an unreliable stream,
as waters that fail?

Jeremiah 15:18

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Part One

What Loneliness Is

> *Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; for I am called by Your name, O LORD God of hosts. I did not sit in the assembly of the mockers, nor did I rejoice; I sat alone because of Your hand, for You have filled me with indignation. Why is my pain perpetual and my wound incurable, which refuses to be healed? Will You surely be to me like an unreliable stream, as waters that fail? (Jeremiah 15:16–18)*

What Loneliness Is

This subject touches more people than we know, and more than are willing to acknowledge it. In Jeremiah 15 the prophet is speaking to the Lord under the pressure of his ministry, yet the things he names are the DNA of loneliness in the human heart.

He says three strong things. The pain is perpetual. There are seasons when a person wakes and feels this for days or weeks before it subsides. The wound seems incurable. Then, most intense of all, he addresses God as unreliable. He is not saying the Lord fails to provide or to anoint. He is saying God feels unreliable in His promise to satisfy the human heart: “Why are You like an unreliable stream to me?”

Loneliness is a strong sense of alienation, a powerful and even overwhelming sense of emotional estrangement. It is rooted in spiritual barrenness, yet past and present circumstances can inflame it. Scenarios of the past produce mindsets and strongholds in the soul. Loneliness is an empty trembling with deep pain. No amount of companionship can touch or heal it. Thinking that companionship is the answer is the illusion that accompanies it. It is a profound feeling of being isolated, a strong sense of invisibility or of being unheard, which makes meaningful relating difficult.

There is a basic human loneliness, and there is an overwhelming inflammation of loneliness that can be energized by the flaming arrows of the enemy.

Henry David Thoreau wrote that the mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation, and that what is called resignation is confirmed desperation. With Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, people collect thousands of friends and followers, and loneliness has still risen exponentially. Studies have put the figure near twenty-five percent of Americans. In a city of hundreds of thousands, that is not a rare private sorrow. Being alone and being lonely are not the same. There has been an increase of people who live alone, and there is

no strong correlation between the two. Loneliness often increases with human contact. A highly social setting can actually intensify it. That is why the church, the most social of contexts, is not immune. The issue is not merely relating. It is how we relate to God and how we relate to one another.

The biggest lie loneliness offers is that more interaction with certain individuals will soothe the pain. It is often that specific: not anyone, but a particular person or circle. When that desire is unmet the ache grows. Because the condition is spiritual, even relating with those people can intensify the inner experience. We are caught in a cycle. The Lord wants to free the heart from it.

Loneliness can serve as an alarm that calls us to look outside ourselves, connect with God, and give ourselves to others in love. You go to God to receive love. You go to people to give it. That is the premier way forward, and it is harder to live than to say.

Identity and a Heavenly Country

Some of the pressure on the heart comes from the question, Who am I, and where do I belong? A “third culture” life, living in at least two cultures, trains a person to search out the rules and norms of each place in order to survive. You become acclimated. You learn how more than one world operates. The other culture does not have the same pressure to understand yours. That collision produces a lingering misunderstanding, and with it a lingering homelessness.

Many who live that way are bilingual, not only by study but by sheer survival. Languages are glorious. They are also, at their origin, divine discipline. Genesis records that the Lord confused the speech of the earth to slow the maturing of sin until the appointed time at the end of the age. Languages shape how we think, how we structure sentences, how we process what is said to us. There is beauty in that, and there is pain in it.

National identity has more power over the heart than we admit. Belonging to a country everyone recognizes is a kind of shelter. Coming from a small nation most people cannot place, or living for a season with no settled citizenship, a passport that only lets you travel until some country claims you, exposes how much weight we put on the sentence “I am such-and-such.” The feelings of not being able to say it are real.

The good news of the gospel reaches that place. For some it arrives early, while the identity question is still raw. Paul told the Philippians that our citizenship is in heaven. That is not a poetic idea. We truly belong to what Scripture calls a heavenly country. When the heart connects with that, many other things begin to rearrange.

> *For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. (Philippians 3:20)*

> *He has put the lines for me in pleasant places; yes, I have a good inheritance. (Psalm 16:6)*

Symptoms and Distinctions

Not everyone experiences every symptom. Common ones include mistrust; an internal disconnectedness from social realities, especially celebration and the joys of others; anger; self-pity; a sense of oppression; inward paralysis and apathy about work and responsibility; loss of perspective; and posturing for rejection, an outlook that expects “no” from people and from God.

> *For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us. (2 Corinthians 1:20)*

Loneliness is an inward state. It is not a personality type. Introverts and extroverts both know it. It is not solitude. Solitude is being alone and talking to God, feasting on God. Isolation is being alone and talking to yourself, feasting on yourself. Loneliness is hollow. It can feel like forsakenness and can be aggravated by human contact. Depending on temperament it may heighten in a room and subside when one is alone, which can lead to isolation.

> *A man who isolates himself seeks his own desire; he rages against all wise judgment. (Proverbs 18:1)*

Sometimes you disappear in a crowd of five. You speak and the room carries on as if you had not spoken. People who care about you did not hear you. The enemy can inflame that moment with flaming missiles. The feeling of being unheard is part of the condition, not proof that no one loves you.

At the core of loneliness, said with tenderness, is self-absorption. The only durable way through is to be a disciple: by the grace of God to take up the cross, deny ourselves, and follow Him.

Loneliness is hard to admit because of the fear of being perceived as quirky and the fear of vulnerability. A person often battles the sense that they are being petty and that they are the only one. That fear keeps us trapped. One of the first steps is to find a trusted person and say it: I am battling chronic loneliness. Articulating it begins to break the cycle. Another lie is that you are the only one. You are not. Men often have a harder time naming it. Scripture does not treat aloneness as a small thing. Read Genesis. It is not good for the man to be alone.

Two Passages That Show the Way

Two of the most searching sentences on this subject sit in John 16 and 1 Samuel 30.

> *Indeed the hour is coming, yes, has now come, that you will be scattered, each to his own, and will leave Me alone. And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. (John 16:32)*

Jesus, fully God and fully Man, shows a pathway for weak people. We can be alone and not alone, because we have the confidence that the Father is with us.

> *Now David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and his daughters. But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God. (1 Samuel 30:6)*

David is truly alone. He is outside the will of God in the enemy's country. He comes home to kidnapped families. The men with him are discouraged, in debt, and discontent, and they pick up stones. His household is strained. And the sentence stands: he strengthened himself in the Lord his God. That is where this has to go if we are going to walk free.

The Trinity: The Divine Inner Circle

Loneliness makes us stand outside circles we wish we were in. The Lord answers by inviting us into another circle: the eternal fellowship of the Godhead. The Father gives Himself to the Son. The Son gives Himself to the Father. Proverbs says the Son was always rejoicing before the Father before the foundations of the earth. In that love they said, Let Us make humans who can enter this with Us. As they experience how the Father enjoys the Son and how the Son enjoys the Father, they will enjoy Us that way, and they will begin to enjoy one another that way.

> *And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was. (John 17:5)*

> *And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one. (John 17:22)*

> *God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. (1 Corinthians 1:9)*

> *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen. (2 Corinthians 13:14)*

The reality of the Trinity has to be entered by meditation. Worship becomes the conduit and container for revelation. Trinitarian communion takes our eyes

off ourselves and loses us in the fellowship into which we have been called. Jürgen Moltmann warned that the modern culture of subjectivity is in danger of turning into a culture of narcissism, which makes the self its own prisoner and supplies it merely with self-repetitions and self-confirmations. It is time for the doctrine of faith to present itself as the all-embracing history of God. Experience of the self has to be integrated into the experience of God, and the experience of God into the Trinitarian history of God with the world. The individual self is discovered in that history and finds its meaning there.

> *But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. (1 Corinthians 2:10, 12)*

The Spirit makes the depths of God's heart, His thoughts, feelings, power, and purpose, known to us. That is intimacy with God. From that place we go and love others. In loving others we return to encounter. It becomes deep unto deep.

> *Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy. (Philippians 2:1)*

Loneliness Is Anxiety

The fundamental issue is not only self-absorption. More specifically it is anxiety: an inordinate desire for things more than for God. God is not against our wanting good things. He is against their being first.

> *Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Therefore do not worry, saying, "What shall we eat?" or "What shall we drink?" or "What shall we wear?" For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. (Matthew 6:25–33)*

Food in that passage is nourishment and provision. Clothing is honor and status. The body is comfort. Most of us do not wake fearing our next meal, so we disconnect from the text. Jesus is addressing everything bound up with food, including relationship and fellowship. When we say "let us get together," there is almost always a table in it. Part of what He is saying is, Do not be anxious about relating.

Loneliness is a manifestation of anxiety rooted in the fear of being left alone and forgotten. That fear stirs anxieties that defile the spirit. They are healed by

embracing the truth of the gospel and living it out by grace. The reality of loneliness is also rooted in a wrongly prioritized desire for honor, money, recognition, and comfort. Loneliness gives the illusion that any of these can solve despair.

> *And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled. (Colossians 1:21)*

Anxiety steals time. Prayer redeems time. Worry is the opposite of prayer. Anxiety is feasting on self, not being able to see past ourselves, rather than fellowshipping with the Spirit.

> *Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? (Matthew 6:27)*

> *See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. (Ephesians 5:15–16)*

The primary way out of the swirl is the way Jesus prescribed: seek first the kingdom. He says the things will be added. Give yourself to connecting with Him, and the heart is realigned. You become, in His language, a magnet for the good things the Father already knows you need.

Turning Loneliness into Sacred Space

> *Therefore thus says the LORD: "If you return, then I will bring you back; you shall stand before Me; if you take out the precious from the vile, you shall be as My mouth. Let them return to you, but you must not return to them." (Jeremiah 15:19)*

Jeremiah has just said his pain is perpetual and God feels like a failed stream. The Lord's answer is not first sympathy. It is, If you return to Me. The issue is between Jeremiah and the Lord. His heart was not turned. There was a "do not enter" sign on the chambers of his soul. If he returns and separates the precious from the vile, he will stand before the Lord and become a mouthpiece.

At the core of overcoming loneliness is this: receive love from God, then go to others to give that love. It preaches more easily than it lives. Jesus is the head of the church and He does move His love through His body, so we also receive love from others. Still the re-posturing has to be, Lord, I will receive love from You and I will commit myself to love those around me. It is more blessed to give than to receive, and that is not only about money. As we pray, community deepens. As we give ourselves in community, prayer deepens.

When we bring the void of loneliness before the Lord in prayer, that void can be transformed into a sacred space of fulfillment and joy as the Spirit fills us with the knowledge of God. Isaiah's picture is that every valley is raised. The Spirit goes into the valleys of pain, fear, and insecurity, speaks the truth of

God, and raises them.

> *For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. (Colossians 1:9)*

The knowledge of God is the primary antidote.

> *If you receive My words, and treasure My commands within you, so that you incline your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding; yes, if you cry out for discernment, and lift up your voice for understanding, if you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; then you will understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. (Proverbs 2:1–5)*

- Receiving God's words: obedience.
- Treasuring His commands: meditation.
- Inclining the ear and applying the heart: a teachable spirit.
- Crying out for discernment: prayer.
- Seeking her as silver: refusing to be denied.

It is essential to confess the struggle to those near us whom we trust, for prayer.

> *Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. (James 5:16)*

Ask the Lord for insight into what inflames the loneliness: situations, forms of entertainment, seasons of the year, holidays, physical energy. Sufficient rest and regular eating matter. Elijah under the broom tree was not first given a lecture. An angel said, Arise and eat.

> *Then as he lay and slept under a broom tree, suddenly an angel touched him, and said to him, "Arise and eat." Then he looked, and there by his head was a cake baked on coals, and a jar of water. So he ate and drank, and lay down again. (1 Kings 19:5–6)*

> *That each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor. (1 Thessalonians 4:4)*

The second movement is the second commandment. Many of our relationships are utilitarian. They get us from A to B. There is nothing wrong with A to B. If A to B is the primary posture of the heart, we will not taste the satisfying power of His grace to love others. Ask the Lord, Who are You highlighting in this season that I can love and serve in a specific way?

> *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. (John 13:34)*

The standard is the quality with which God in the flesh has loved us. Loneliness can serve as an alarm. When the feelings rise, and no one answers the phone, they tip us off: give yourself to God. Drink of the stream that makes glad the heart. Then give yourself to one another.

Father, we return to You. Take the "do not enter" sign off the chambers of the soul. Fill us with the knowledge of God. Teach us to strengthen ourselves in You. Invite us again into the fellowship of Your Son. Show us whom to love, and give us grace to love as You have loved us. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Discussion Questions

Part One

1. What three things does Jeremiah name in 15:18 that describe the experience of loneliness?
2. According to this study, what is loneliness, and where is it rooted?
3. Explain the difference between being alone and being lonely, and between solitude and isolation.
4. Why does the study say companionship cannot heal loneliness, and what illusion travels with that hope?
5. How do John 16:32 and 1 Samuel 30:6 show a path for a heart that feels abandoned?
6. What does it mean that the Trinity is the “divine inner circle,” and how do John 17 and 1 Corinthians 1:9 support that?
7. How is loneliness a form of anxiety in Matthew 6, including the fear of being left and forgotten?
8. Where have you treated a particular person or circle as the answer to an ache only God can meet?
9. What would it look like this week to turn a wave of loneliness into sacred space before the Lord?
10. Whom can you tell the truth to, and how will you receive love from God in order to give it?

Part Two

Committing to Love

> *Why is my pain perpetual and my wound incurable, which refuses to be healed? Will You surely be to me like an unreliable stream, as waters that fail? (Jeremiah 15:18)*

Committing to Love

Committing to love is the primary antidote to loneliness. Jeremiah knows God as the fountain of living waters. In chapter 2 he had called the nation to that fountain. Now he is saying, I thought You could satisfy me. I told the nation You were this, and I am not experiencing You that way. The passage also shows us how to speak to the Lord from the heart. The prophets and the psalmists teach us vulnerability before God.

Social media multiplies friends and followers, yet loneliness has risen. Naming it to a trusted person who can pray with you is one of the first steps toward liberty. The twenty-five percent who battle this in a chronic way are not strange. The other seventy-five percent are no strangers to the emotion. That knowledge gives courage to go to one another for understanding and compassion.

Paul told Colossae that before the new birth we were alienated and enemies in our minds. In Christ we are connected to God, yet the emotions can still feel the old estrangement. The way through those emotions is connecting with the presence of God’s glory now in us. That matters for those who want freedom and for those who want to help. We comfort one another with truth, not only with human sentiment.

> *And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled. (Colossians 1:21)*

Symptoms include mistrust; an inability to enter the celebration of others, though Paul says rejoice with those who rejoice; anger; self-pity; inward paralysis; loss of perspective; and posturing for rejection, waking with the fists up, a clear case in the mind of why this is everyone else’s fault.

> *Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. (James 5:16)*

The antidote is giving ourselves to the Lord to receive His love and serving others in love. Committing to love is the opposite of preoccupation with self and with perpetual pain. Jesus told the lawyer, Do this and you will live.

Loving God

> *If you return, then I will bring you back; you shall stand before Me; if you take out the precious from the vile, you shall be as My mouth. Let them return to you, but you must not return to them. (Jeremiah 15:19)*

The Lord's answer to a man in pain is surprising. With kindness He says, Turn to Me. If you turn, I will bring you back. You shall stand before Me. Draw near to Me and I will draw near to you. Loneliness closes the spirit. We want connection and at the same time keep people at bay, because we do not want the rigors of love. Love, as Scripture defines it, is the giving of oneself to another by the grace of God.

When we open the spirit we let the Holy Spirit visit the deep recesses of the soul. Isaiah speaks of valleys raised. The Spirit goes into the valleys of pain, fear, and insecurity, speaks the truth of God, and raises them.

> *Trust in Him at all times, you people; pour out your heart before Him. God is a refuge for us. (Psalm 62:8)*

We often say we need someone to pour out our heart to. That has its place. The psalmist takes another step: pour out your heart before the Lord. He equates trusting Him at all times with that pouring out. Jeremiah 15:18 is that act. Even the charge "You are an unreliable stream" is spoken to God. The talking itself is confidence. It results in an answer: Turn to Me, and I will restore you.

When we bring the void of loneliness before the Lord in prayer, that void is transformed into a sacred space of fulfillment and joy. The Spirit fills us with a living, intimate understanding of the Father.

Two men in the New Testament, Jesus and John the Baptist, are testified as having fullness of joy while single. Jesus was anointed with gladness above His companions. John said his joy was fulfilled because he had heard the Bridegroom's voice. Influence, fame, and crowds were not the source. Experience of God was the source.

> *He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled. (John 3:29)*
>
> *For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him. (Colossians 2:9–10)*

David's one life vision sits between persecution, pressure, and abandonment. Three thousand men want him dead. Father and mother may forsake him. He is not afraid. He is confident. The reason is verse 4. Verses 3, 6–8, and 14 then speak confidence that flows out of that one desire.

> *One thing I have desired of the LORD, that will I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in His temple. (Psalm 27:4)*

The knowledge of God is the primary hope for overcoming loneliness. Set the heart to experience it as the primary inheritance of your life. The temptation of loneliness is isolation, talking to ourselves and feasting on our own pain. Solitude talks to God and feasts on His presence.

> *If you receive My words, and treasure My commands within you, so that you incline your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding; yes, if you cry out for discernment, and lift up your voice for understanding, if you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; then you will understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. (Proverbs 2:1–5)*

- Receive His words: obedience.
- Treasure His commands: meditation, turning the written Word into dialogue with Him.
- Incline the ear and apply the heart: a teachable spirit.
- Cry out for discernment: prayer.
- Seek her as silver: refusing to be denied.

Meditation on the Word is bound to the health of a community. Paul tells Colossae to be kind, patient, and forgiving. He says let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which you were called in one body. Then he says let the word of Christ dwell richly. There is a connection between the rich dwelling of the Word through meditation and the vibrancy of the people we belong to.

> *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another. (Colossians 3:16)*

He understands our frame. We are a smoking flax. He will not blow too hard or too soft. Before this is over He will gently lead the heart into a holy fire of love toward God and toward one another, filled with the fullness of God.

Loving Our Neighbor

> *A certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the law?" So he answered, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." And He said to him, "You have answered rightly; do this and you will live." (Luke 10:25–28)*

The pathway to the vibrancy of God's life on the heart is committing to both commandments. The lawyer, wanting to justify himself, asked who his neighbor was. Jesus answered with a story.

> *But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, "Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you." (Luke 10:33–35)*

The neighbor in the story is the Samaritan. Jews and Samaritans did not visit each other's towns or talk. When Jesus spoke with the Samaritan woman in John 4 it was radical. Jesus calls His people to love those they avoid, do not talk to, or feel they have nothing to receive from.

The enemy lies about both commandments. About the first he says, Do not overdo it. About the second he says, You are not doing it enough, usually as a charge against others. Sitting in a room talking about the lack of community is already community. Be that to one another. Bring your contribution of love. The sentence is not "my neighbor needs to love me." It is "you love your neighbor."

Loneliness is often rooted in predominantly utilitarian relationships, relationships that exist mainly to get us from A to B. Those have their place. Jesus calls us further: love those who cannot pay us back in this life.

> *But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just. (Luke 14:13–14)*

If you love those who love you, anyone can do that. He calls us to a quality of love only possible by connecting with Him, receiving love, and giving it. The Samaritan story also gives practical steps.

- He saw him. Ask the Lord to highlight one or two people you would not otherwise see.
- He had compassion. Seeing is often how compassion begins: a simple desire to check on someone.
- He went to him. The last thing a lonely heart wants to do is pursue. That is precisely the commitment: step outside yourself and go.
- He took care of him. Commit to be the servant in the relationship.
- He took out two denarii. Love will touch the pocket, even in a small way.

- When I come again. Follow up. Pursue, serve, engage, and return.

Each step calls us to step outside ourselves. The posture is not that we never receive love from others. We do. The posture is: go to God to receive love, go to others to give it, as He has loved us.

Engaging the Local Body

> *Draw me away! We will run after you. (Song of Solomon 1:4)*

There is an individual drawing, and there is a "we." Hebrews 10 warns against the habit of forsaking the assembling of ourselves together. The gathering of the body is under attack, and clever arguments keep people wallowing in pain. The Lord has created a family in which to set the lonely, that life may touch the heart.

> *And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. (Acts 2:42)*

"Continued steadfastly" means it will cost something. It is a resolution of heart under His leadership.

- Apostles' doctrine: the Word personally, in a small group, and heard corporately. All three strengthen the heart. Hearing the Word together is itself an act of love.
- Fellowship: first with God (1 John 1:3), then with one another, strengthening, encouraging, exhorting, comforting in truth, restoring wounded relationships, serving together. The gifts of the Spirit belong here. They create interdependence. They are identified as we give ourselves to relationship, often before we have a name for them. They are not for frivolity. There is too much pain in the Body to be casual with them. Use them to strengthen.
- Breaking of bread: remembering His broken body and shed blood. Considering Him who endured hostility keeps the soul from growing weary.
- Prayers: contemplative prayer, supplication, intercession, and thanksgiving, together and alone. Relational building and steadfast prayer are profoundly connected.

> *For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. (Hebrews 12:3)*

Do this, Jesus said, and you will live. Commit to love God with all the heart, and commit to love the neighbor, including the one who cannot repay you. That is the way forward.

Father, we turn to You. Take the closed sign off the soul. Fill the void with the knowledge of Your love. Teach us to see whom You are highlighting, to go, to

serve, and to follow through. Make us steadfast in the Word, in fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayer. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Discussion Questions

Part Two

1. What does Jeremiah mean by calling the Lord an “unreliable stream,” given Jeremiah 2 and the fountain of living waters?
2. What is the Lord’s answer in Jeremiah 15:19, and what does “if you return” require?
3. How does Psalm 27:4 sit between persecution, pressure, and abandonment, and why does that matter for loneliness?
4. Explain how John 3:29 and Colossians 2:9–10 locate joy and completeness in God rather than in a circle of people.
5. What question is Jesus answering in the Samaritan story, and why is it significant that the neighbor is the Samaritan?
6. How do utilitarian relationships differ from the love Jesus describes in Luke 14:13–14?
7. Name the six movements in Luke 10:33–35 and what each requires of the heart.
8. Where have you talked about the lack of community instead of being community to the people already in the room?
9. Whom is the Lord highlighting for you to see, go to, serve, and follow up with in this season?
10. How will you continue steadfastly in Acts 2:42 this month: the Word, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayer?

Notes

Notes

Will You surely be to me
like an unreliable stream?

Jeremiah 15:18

Loneliness is a spiritual condition,
an empty trembling no circle can heal.
The way forward is not more company.
It is committing to love:
receive love from God,
and give yourself to others.