

SESSION OUTLINE

OPEN

- Welcome
- Prayer

DISCUSS

- ① The problem of loneliness
- ② Frequent causes of loneliness
- ③ Confronting loneliness through groups

CLOSE

- Share your praises and prayer concerns in the group
- Spend some time in personal and group prayer.

"They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people."

ACTS 2:46-47

SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE

**Week of
September 13 -
September 20**

SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE: *Small Groups*

① THE PROBLEM OF LONELINESS

What's the worst thing we can face? Fear, sadness, pain...no, its loneliness. We can get through fear, sadness, and pain if we know that we're not alone, but to face those struggles with no one is much more difficult.

We all at one time or another have experienced loneliness. We even hear of loneliness in the Bible. David who was considered a "man after God's own heart" experienced loneliness, for example:

Psalm 38:11: *"My friends and companions avoid me... my neighbors stay far away."*

Psalm 102:7: *"I lie awake; I have become like a bird alone on a roof."*

- When was a time that you felt particularly lonely?
- Why is loneliness such a common experience for so many people?



② SOME FREQUENT CAUSES OF LONELINESS

George Gallup the social researcher of "Gallup Polls" states, "I think we are a very lonely populace; we are cut apart from each other." Even though we are often surrounded by people, the media, and countless means of communication we often feel isolated, cut-off, and alone.

Pastor John shared about the following key causes for loneliness:
(Review and discuss the following causes)

- **Transitions cause loneliness**
- **Separation causes loneliness**
- **Isolation also will cause loneliness**

- As a group identify some more causes of loneliness in people's lives.
- How can groups (even your own group) at times unfortunately promote or foster the causes of loneliness?

③ CONFRONTING OUR LONELINESS THROUGH GROUPS

The entire Bible focuses on our need for communion with God and with people. As Christians we are called to love, help, encourage, forgive, and care for one another. A growing relationship with God and with others becomes the basis for any solution to the problem of loneliness. F.B. Meyer said that, “loneliness is an opportunity for Jesus to make Himself known.” Bill Gothard put it this way, “loneliness becomes our ‘friend’ when it forces us to enjoy the friendship of God as much as we would the friendship of others.”

Small Groups Help you Grow Spiritually

Proverbs 27:17 says: “As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.”

- *Why do you think being a part of a group is so important to your faith?*
- *Why do you think the Bible emphasizes ideas such as: body, family, community, fellowship?*
- *How can your group do a better job of helping each other grow spiritually?*

Author Anne Ortland reminds us, “Every congregation has a choice to be one of two things. You can choose to be a bag of marbles, single units that don’t affect each other except in collision. On Sunday morning you can choose to go to church or to sleep in: who really cares whether there are 192 or 193 marbles in a bag? Or you can choose to be a bag of grapes. The juices begin to mingle, and there is no way to extricate yourselves if you tried. Each is part of all. Part of the fragrance. Part of the ‘stuff.’”

Connection Happens Best in a Small Group

Romans 12:10 says: “Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.”

- *How can your group become better connected with one another?*
- *How is your group intentionally connecting to others? (reaching out to new people)*
- *How can your group minister and serve each other more this year?*

John Bell, President of Special Olympics, used to tell the following story: He told the story of the 100 yard dash...where 8 special Olympians lined up on the starting block, they got their bodies in the starting block and the starter raised his pistol and the announcer said, “on your mark, get set, boom.” They all took off running, elbows and knees flying everywhere, but about seven steps into the race, one of the boys fell on the cinder track. The other seven stopped, turned around, came back, picked him up, brushed off his elbows and his knees. They linked arms together and they walked down the track together as though they all eight had won.

Spiritual Accountability Happens Best in a Small Group

Hebrews 10:24 says: “And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.”

- *Is spiritual accountability a priority in your group? Why or why not?*
- *Pastor John shared the following list of accountability questions, take a moment to review and discuss how these kinds of questions could benefit your group:*
 - Have any of your financial dealings lacked integrity?
 - Have you said, done, or seen anything inappropriate or that is not God honoring?
 - Have you spent adequate time in Bible study and prayer?
 - Have you given top priority to your family?
 - Have you shared your faith this week?
 - Have you just lied to me about any of the previous five questions?