

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

activated

Vol 27 • Issue 8

NEVER ALONE

God is always
with you

A Gift to Be Found

The blessing of quiet

Light in the Golden Years

You are seen, loved and
needed

What Angels Long For

The joy of salvation





PERSONALLY SPEAKING IF YOU GO, I'LL GO

Were you ever invited to an event that you'd never been to before, where you felt a bit of trepidation? And in that situation, possibly you told your best friend, "If you go, then I'll go. But if you don't go, I won't go."

That is what Moses told his "friend" God when he and the Israelites were on their way to the Promised Land. They'd had quite a few rebellions during the journey, and the Lord told Moses that He would send an angel before them to guide the way, but that He Himself would not go with them. Moses reiterates his pledge to seek God's ways, and the Lord promises, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." Moses answers, "If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here." He wasn't going anywhere without God! (For the full story, see [Exodus 33](#).)

What set apart the Hebrew people from the rest of the world of their day? They journeyed with God. And to this day, God is unflinching in His promise to His followers, "I will never leave you nor forsake you" ([Hebrews 13:5](#)). He said, "I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" ([2 Corinthians 6:16](#)).

God has promised to walk with you every day. Not only that, He dwells within Christ-followers, and has set up residence in your soul ([John 14:23](#)). How's *that* for a cure for loneliness! He'll stick with you through the good times and the bad times. You can tell Him all your secret longings and dreams, and rest assured that He will understand the deepest desires of your heart.

In this month's issue we see that friendships can be cultivated when we are willing to step out of our private worlds and look to the needs of others. And we learn that Jesus longs to be our best friend, as is made clear in the feature article, "Never Alone," on pages 4–6. The articles in this issue were selected to assist us in strengthening our relationship with God as well as helping us reach out to others, thus relieving our own loneliness while we do what we can to make the world a better place.—That's a win-win situation.

May this month's issue be a blessing to you!

Gabriel and Sally Garcia
Activated Editorial Team

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NO TEARS IN HEAVEN

BY ROSANE CORDOBA

I HAVE LEARNED TO APPRECIATE EVERY GIFT, BIG OR SMALL, THAT COMES TO ME FROM THE ONE FROM WHOM ALL BLESSINGS FLOW. The freedom of finding your identity in Jesus and knowing that you are a son or daughter of the King makes everything else pale in comparison.

Still, life happens, and it can be hard to go up, down, and around its curves and mountains. I know, however, that trust in the love of our Creator can sustain us during these dark moments, together with the comfort of friends and family.

I remember a big heartache I experienced as a teenager when my boyfriend broke up with me. We were with a group of friends when he told me. Since I didn't want them to see me crying, I walked to a small park close by, and there alone, I cried.

Then, instinctively, I started to sing songs about love and hope to comfort myself. I remembered other sad events in my life, such as when a good friend died in a car accident. After I pondered each of these memories, I sang a song, and it felt like my soul was being washed by the melodies. Soon, peace filled my heart, the pain disappeared, and I was able to go back to my friends with a smile.

Eric Clapton, the famous singer and composer, tells in his biography that there was a time in his life, after his son died in an accident at four years old, when he felt so much pain and sorrow, that he spent one year in seclusion grieving his loss and playing his guitar. Finally,

he decided that, to honor the memory of his son, he would write a song of comfort. He then composed "Tears in Heaven," a song that became number one on the hit parade at the time, and is still a consolation to many in their times of heartbreak.

To think about heaven, the place where God will dry all the tears from our eyes, is an excellent antidote to sadness. And here on Earth, a song, a smile, a hug, a word of comfort, and a sincere prayer can help to bring a touch of heaven to us and others, and remind us of a God of love who will one day make all things right!

ROSANE CORDOBA LIVES IN BRAZIL. SHE IS A FREELANCE WRITER, TRANSLATOR, AND PRODUCER OF FAITH-BASED AND CHARACTER-BUILDING CHILDREN'S MATERIAL. ■



NEVER ALONE

BY PETER AMSTERDAM

THE AUTHOR OF THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES PENNED THESE TIMELESS WORDS OF WISDOM, “FOR EVERYTHING THERE IS A SEASON, AND A TIME FOR EVERY MATTER UNDER HEAVEN” (Ecclesiastes 3:1). During our lifetimes, we each experience different seasons of life—times of plenty and times of need, times when our lives are full to where “our cup runs over” (Psalm 23:5) and the dry times where there are empty spaces that once were filled. It is often during these times that we learn to be content in whatever situation we find ourselves—through Jesus who strengthens us (Philippians 4:11–13).

The tests, trials, and losses we endure bring spiritual growth and blessings to our lives as we place our trust in the Lord and allow the Holy Spirit to work in our lives. Of course, it is a whole lot easier to be content and trust the Lord when things are going well—when we are surrounded by loved ones and friends, we’re in good health, and we’re not in want. But when things are not going well, we learn how to depend on the Lord and discover His joy even in difficult circumstances (Nehemiah 8:10).

Life in the times in which we are living poses some unique factors and challenges that the world has never experienced before. The advent of modern technology has both facilitated communications with others while also leading to a loss of community and in-person engagement with others. The replacement in many cases of the traditional workplace with virtual ones and the transition of aspects of education to online spaces has led to less opportunities for friendship-building. As a result, numerous health organizations have warned of a “loneliness epidemic” in our world today.

As Christians, we are not immune to the challenges of loneliness and isolation. We may find ourselves in a season where we are less connected to other people for various reasons, whether due to health issues, the loss of a loved one, retirement, or limitations in our mobility due to aging. During such times it can be a struggle to find meaning and purpose in our everyday lives, which can lead to a sense of hopelessness and depression.

We were not created to do life alone. From the beginning of the Bible, we see that God created us to live in community with others (Genesis 1:27–28; 2:18). Our interactions with others, in particular with other Christians, provide encouragement and strength, build our faith, and bring joy and inspiration to our lives. Our relationships with people—with our families, friends, in the workplace, in our church or fellowship, in the community or neighborhood—can shape and form the contours of our daily routines and add meaning to our everyday tasks. If that community structure falls away

or is inaccessible, these losses can take a toll on our emotional and spiritual well-being.

When we are experiencing a time of loneliness, it is important to reach out to our fellow Christians and to ask for prayer and support. Letting others know about the challenges we are facing opens the door for them to offer comfort, prayer and support. The comfort we receive from God and other believers in turn will equip us to provide support to others. “He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us” (2 Corinthians 1:4 NLT).

REACHING OUT TO OTHERS

Seasons of loneliness help us to grow more aware of what others experience, especially those who don’t yet know the Lord, and to be attentive to this in our interactions with people in our everyday lives. We often cannot know what people are experiencing, but the Bible teaches us to look at each person with kindness and compassion, which takes paying attention to them and looking beyond outward appearances.

We are called to reflect the love and mercy of Christ to the people we encounter, and to make a difference in their lives, when possible, even if we are only in contact with them in passing. God’s Spirit can work through our interactions with others, no matter how brief, to be a witness of His love and compassion (Colossians 3:12). We can speak words of faith and hope into someone’s life—even in a one-time encounter.

Simple acts of kindness can help alleviate someone’s loneliness and let them know that someone cares. We might be surprised at what an impact even small interactions can have in not only providing hope and comfort to others but also giving us a sense of fulfillment and purpose. Our interactions with other people—even if these are brief—can enrich our lives and help both the people we minister to as well as ourselves to feel connected and less isolated.



ALWAYS WITH US

Our relationship with God and His Word provides an anchor for our faith when we are enduring a season of solitude in our lives. *We are never alone!* No matter what our circumstances, we are not alone. Jesus is with us constantly, every second of every day. “Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:20 NIV).

We can avail ourselves of times of solitude to grow in our relationship with the Lord and our awareness of His constant companionship as we “practice the presence of Christ,” a term attributed to Brother Lawrence, a 17th century monk in France. Brother Lawrence worked in the kitchen in a monastery, where he spent his days cooking and cleaning. As he went about his work, he determined that he would maintain an ongoing conversation with God. He believed God’s presence could be enjoyed anytime and all the time.

When you find yourself in a season of solitude, the Lord’s constant companionship will bring you hope, give you His peace that surpasses all understanding, and help to fill up the empty places (Philippians 4:7). As we cultivate a deeper awareness of the presence of Christ, we will find His comfort, companionship, and a sense of belonging that will never fail us. “He has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you’” (Hebrews 13:5).

At such times, we may need to adjust our perspective and make a deliberate effort to reflect on the Lord’s goodness and His faithfulness throughout our lives. Ask the Lord to establish your thoughts (Proverbs 16:3) and to help you set your mind on the things that matter and will last, the “things that are above, not on things that are on earth” (Colossians 3:2).

It is also important to seek out new ways of building community with

others as we are able, whether through volunteering, participating in a Christian ministry or church, joining online communities, or reaching out to our neighbors. Choose to use your time and energy in positive ways that promote health and peace and build your faith. Think of ways you can touch the lives of others, even in small ways such as through an email, a phone call, a smile or a word of encouragement.

As Christians, we are blessed with the certainty that no matter what difficult seasons we face in life, we have been given the gift of God’s grace and the promise of eternal hope (1 Peter 5:10 NIV). Jesus is our Good Shepherd (John 10:11). When we are weary, we can rest in Him and find renewed strength and resilience. He is always with us.

“Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever” (Psalm 23:6 NIV). We can trust in this promise that God’s goodness and love are unchanging and will be with us all the days of our lives—and we can look forward to the day when we will be with the Lord in heaven forever.

PETER AMSTERDAM IS A CHRISTIAN AUTHOR AND BIBLE TEACHER, AND RETIRED CO-DIRECTOR OF TFI, A CHRISTIAN ONLINE NETWORK. ■

WHAT ANGELS LONG FOR

BY UDAY PAUL

I HAVE OFTEN BEEN INTRIGUED BY THE SCRIPTURE WHERE, AFTER SPEAKING OF THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL AND THE SALVATION OF BELIEVERS, THE BIBLE SAYS, “EVEN ANGELS LONG TO LOOK INTO THESE THINGS” (1 Peter 1:12 NIV). What are the matters of humans that angels desire to look into? After all, angels are a higher order of creation than mankind (Hebrews 2:9) and are wiser and more powerful than humans (2 Peter 2:11).

An important aspect of the human experience that angels can never experience is the joy of salvation, of being delivered from bondage to sin and passing from darkness to glorious light (1 Peter 2:9). When Adam and Eve rebelled in the Garden of Eden, humanity fell from grace and intimate fellowship with God. We have been in bondage to sin ever since (John 8:34). Jesus gave His life for us on the cross of Calvary to redeem us from the power of sin and to set us free (John 8:36). God did not send His Son to die for the angels, but for us. As the song says:

“Holy, holy,” is what the angels sing,
And I expect to help them make the courts of Heaven ring;
But when I sing redemption’s story, they will fold their wings,
For angels never felt the joys that our salvation brings.
—*Johnson Oatman Jr. (1856–1922)*

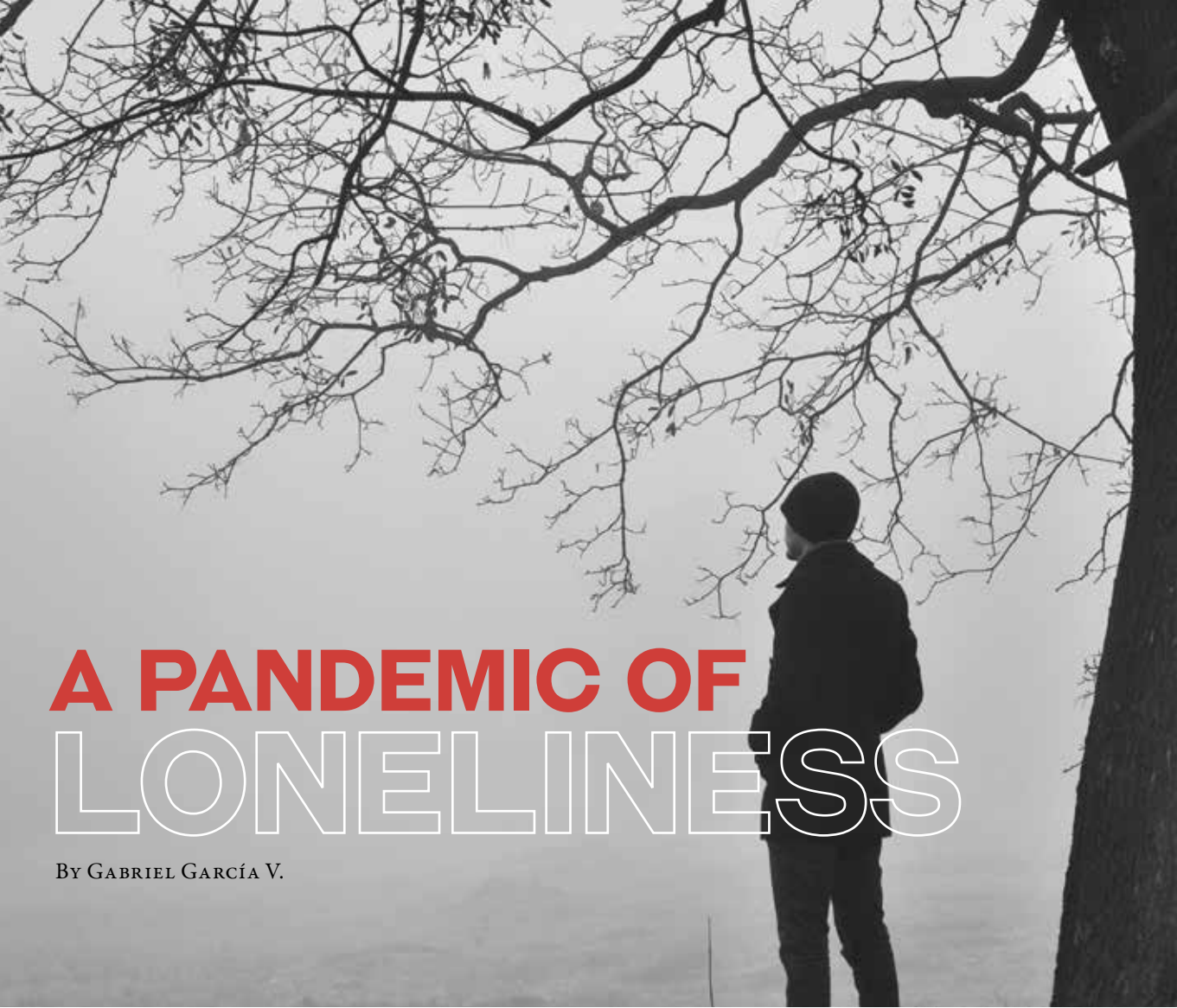
Another privilege given to humanity is that of walking by faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). Angels live in the presence of God and in a place of such light and splendor that to praise and worship Him comes naturally to them. We believe in God and trust in Him by faith, even though we are not able to experience Him with our physical senses (1 Peter 1:8).

Some of our earthly experiences and trials can also break our hearts in a way that angels can only observe. But God promises that everything we go through in our lives will eventually work together for our good because we love Him (Romans 8:28).

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, gave humanity its greatest privilege when He took on the form of a human being and became one of us. He did this so that He could better understand us and become our intercessor before the Father (Hebrews 2:16–17). He is now exalted to the right hand of God and freely bestows His grace on all who call on Him (Romans 10:12).

UDAY PAUL IS A FREELANCE WRITER, VOLUNTEER, AND TEACHER BASED IN UGANDA. ■





A PANDEMIC OF LONELINESS

BY GABRIEL GARCÍA V.

MANY NEWS ARTICLES ARE ALERTING US THAT A PLAGUE WORSE THAN COVID IS RAVAGING COUNTRIES AROUND THE WORLD, ONE WITH SILENT SYMPTOMS BUT LETHAL AFTEREFFECTS. Some have labeled it the globalization of loneliness, a type of epidemic that is spreading around the world with devastating consequences.

Many people lead lives of isolation, confinement, and withdrawal. We live in a sea of loneliness, where touch technology has replaced the human touch.

“Loneliness is an open wound in our time,” says Chilean interviewer and columnist Cristián Warnken. He adds, “We are much concerned about climate change, but

talk and do little about the growing desert creeping into human relations.”

“Loneliness can literally shorten our life,” declares Michel Poulain, a Belgian demographer specializing in longevity studies, who introduced the concept of *blue zones*, regions of the world where people have exceptionally long lives. He says that “in blue zones people prioritize social relations, they gather at plazas, talk in cafes and play together. Social contact is a truly essential principle. In these communities, interpersonal relationships are at the heart of daily life.” His advice for us is to “try to talk to two or three persons during the day.”



Many young people are also plagued by this lack of human company; children fail to have significant contact with others and are susceptible to depression or suicidal ideas. Is the solution only medical? To only medicalize the issue would be simplistic and ineffective, when it is also a social and spiritual issue.

Can we as Christians do anything to alleviate this malady? Indeed, we have a treasury of resources! God's Spirit can empower us and show us creative ways to help. If we know of a lonely person, they may enjoy a phone call. If we notice that people seldom drop in on a neighbor, we can pass by to say hello and ask if they need anything. If someone starts rattling off a long, detailed story—often a sign of not having anyone to talk with—we can hear them out. We can let people that seem isolated know that we are there for them. These sacrifices are pleasing to God (Hebrews 13:16).

As Rick Warren says, we were “created for community.” By being on the lookout for each other and loving our neighbor as ourselves (Mark 12:30–31), we can help to remedy this ailment, even if only in our own corner of the world. And as we reach out to others, we in turn alleviate our own loneliness. We become both comforters and comforted. Volunteer work is a way to both reach out to others and supply your own need for fellowship. This does wonders for your spirit and helps keep you connected, relevant, and active.

As Christians, we can also seek out community through joining a local church, Bible study group, prayer group, WhatsApp group, etc. When an opportunity arises, it's helpful to make an effort to overcome your

shyness by approaching someone and striking up a conversation. You'll be surprised how many interesting, friendly, and empathetic people you'll meet who are happy to chat.

So, on the one hand, as Christians we are ministers of hope to those in need, and on the other hand, if we ourselves are alone and isolated, we can seek out community through various means.

That's on the social side. On the spiritual side, the key is to remind ourselves of God's unconditional love for each one of us as His precious son or daughter, and to know that Jesus cares and longs to be our best friend.

So, if you're walking through the dark ravines of solitude, take heart. Remember that God will be with you and comfort you (Psalm 23:4), and will not leave you or forsake you (Deuteronomy 31:6). “Even if my father and mother left me all alone, the Lord would take me in” (Psalm 27:10 CEB). Scripture also guarantees that Jesus will not leave us as orphans (John 14:18). For those who have lost their sense of belonging (a major cause of loneliness), or perhaps never had it, it says, “Father of the fatherless and protector of widows is God in his holy habitation. God settles the solitary in a home” (Psalm 68:5–6).

Do you sometimes feel like there is “not even one friendly hand,” as the famous French poet Arthur Rimbaud put it? Reach out to the Lord and He will be your helping hand. Are you alone and abandoned, and figure nobody hears you? God will hear your cry when you walk without hope in the desert of loneliness, just as He heard Hagar's cry (Genesis 21:14–21) and the desperate pleading of the psalmist (Psalm 18:6). If you don't have anybody else to vent to regarding your pains and anguish, the Lord is always ready to listen to you.

And best of all, we can be at peace about our future, as Jesus promised that He would be with us every day till the end. “I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28:20 KJV).

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LIGHT IN THE GOLDEN YEARS

Staying Connected to the Heart of God

BY G.L. ELLENS

AS AN EMPTY NESTER, I'VE FOUND THAT THE TWILIGHT YEARS OF LIFE HOLD A UNIQUE SENSE OF QUIETUDE. My bustling home of previous years has transitioned into silence, and the chatter of my children has faded into memory. At times like this, loneliness can feel like a heavy weight. Yet for those of us who are Christians, this season of life is not a descent into isolation, but an invitation into a deeper, more intimate relationship with Jesus.

The most profound truth we can hold on to as we age is that God's love never changes. He does not distance Himself just because our strength wanes or our outward worth seems to shrink. Instead, He promises: "Even to your old age and gray hairs, I am He who will sustain you" (Isaiah 46:4 NIV).

God is present in every stage of our lives, every change, and every challenge we face, including the transition to old age. When the house feels too quiet, He is the "still small voice" waiting to be heard. When the nights feel long, He is the shepherd who neither slumbers nor sleeps.





Dwelling in His presence does require being intentional about taking time with Him. When the outside world feels closed off, we can open the windows of our souls through spiritual practices. No matter our age, the way to become deeply aware of Jesus' presence is by prioritizing God's Word, gratitude, prayer, and serving others.

Music and praise: Starting each day with music and praise to Jesus fills my heart and lifts me into His presence. Music has a unique way of stirring your spirit. Whether you prefer the old classic hymns, as I do, or the melodies of contemporary worship, taking time to start your day with songs of praise invites the Holy Spirit into your space.

God's Word: After that, I take time to read the Bible. After all, Scripture is God's primary way of speaking to us. Reading a psalm or a chapter from the Gospels can turn what otherwise would be a lonely morning into a dialogue with Jesus.

Gratitude and prayer: I keep a gratitude journal and write while I have my morning coffee. It used to be difficult to come up with five things I was thankful for, but now I often keep writing until I end up with 15 or more things that I'm grateful for. I've also learned to shift my perspective on prayer from a one-sided recitation of my needs and wants to an intimate conversation with God. The mountain of obstacles that seems to rise ahead of me shrinks down to its true size when I talk to God in prayer. When we commit our ways to Him, He never fails to establish our thoughts and set our feet on a clear path (Proverbs 16:3).

Building relationships: After my morning praise and prayer time, I also take time to prepare for investing in my relationships with others. Our relationship with God is our foundation, but He also created us for human connections. Feeling included and useful is vital for the soul's health. I have learned that I don't need to feel inadequate

or disqualified because I'm 76 years old. In fact, it's never too late for God to use us. We just have to make ourselves available to Him. Who knows? Today just might be the day to embark on a new endeavor. If you feel sidelined, here are some practical ways to engage:

Praying for others: Even if our physical mobility is limited, the Bible teaches that "The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective" (James 5:16 NIV). Being a dedicated intercessor is an important role in the kingdom of God.

Ministry of encouragement: The wisdom and perspective we have as "old folks" are treasures that the younger generation desperately needs. A simple handwritten note or a text or phone call to a struggling grandchild can be a lifeline.

Volunteer: Look for opportunities in your community to volunteer. There are often orphanages, old folks' homes, or childcare centers that are happy to receive those who want to pour into the children or old folks, whether through games, music, educational activities, or crafts.

Keep in mind that old age is not a waiting room for the end; it is the front porch of eternity. Though loved ones may have left our lives, we are never truly alone. God is always with us, and He promises to renew our strength. "Those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength" (Isaiah 40:31 NIV). By taking time in God's Word and reaching out to those in need, we will find that our life's purpose doesn't expire—it simply evolves. We are seen, we are loved, and in the eyes of our heavenly Father, we are desperately needed.

G.L. ELLENS HAS BEEN A MISSIONARY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA FOR FOUR DECADES. SHE IS ACTIVE IN VOLUNTEER WORK FOR CHILDREN IN NEED AND IS PURSUING HER INTEREST IN WRITING. ■

THE POWER OF SILENCE

BY JOSEPHINE KIND



HENRI NOUWEN WROTE, “WHEN WE HONESTLY ASK OURSELVES WHICH PERSON IN OUR LIVES MEANS THE MOST TO US, WE OFTEN FIND THAT IT IS THOSE WHO, INSTEAD OF GIVING ADVICE, SOLUTIONS, OR CURES, HAVE CHOSEN RATHER TO SHARE OUR PAIN AND TOUCH OUR WOUNDS WITH A WARM AND TENDER HAND. The friend who can be silent with us in a moment of despair or confusion, who can stay with us in an hour of grief and bereavement, who can tolerate not knowing, not curing, not healing and face with us the reality of our powerlessness, that is a friend who cares.”

I was confused when reading this quote. I thought true friendship was much more than that, for sure a lot more *action!* After being involved with humanitarian work for years, my natural inclination is to intervene

practically whenever I’m faced with a needy situation. I’ve taught countless volunteers, held seminars, and sent out mailings, all extolling the value of giving and *doing*. Love in *action!*

It took me a while to finally understand the meaning of what Henri Nouwen was saying. I recalled my first trip to war-torn Mostar. I only knew a few words in the local language, so I accompanied some veteran volunteers as they distributed food. We entered many households touched by grief. I was shocked, as it was the first time I had visited a place devastated by war. A friend was kindly giving me a running translation of the conversations going on.

I was on the verge of crying when an elderly lady, whose legs were wounded by shrapnel, took my hands and began telling me her troubles. She talked and talked. I just listened. I didn’t understand anything since my translator was busy elsewhere. At the end, she thanked me profusely and we embraced and both cried.

That was an unforgettable experience, and not the only one of that kind.

The young people I train are faced with the same predicament as me on that first visit to Mostar. They don’t know the language, they feel helpless and uncomfortable, and I tell them: “Don’t worry, just be there. Hold their hand, look at the person with love and compassion, and listen. Listen and cry with them.”

Now I speak the local language and I help in different ways. But it all started in that simple way, which is still effective today. Last week, when a dear friend’s wife died suddenly in a car crash, I told him: “I have no words, I’m just crying with you. Come. My house is your house.”

JOSEPHINE KIND HAS BEEN ACTIVE IN HUMANITARIAN PROJECTS IN SOUTHERN EUROPE FOR THE LAST THREE DECADES. ■



A GIFT TO BE FOUND

BY MARIE ALVERO

LONELINESS IS A SLOW BURN AS YOU GO DAY AFTER DAY WITHOUT THE CONNECTIONS AND INTIMACY NEEDED TO FEEL FULLY ALIVE. The changes in society over the past decades have resulted in more people than ever feeling disconnected. For example, I read that 30% of adults experience loneliness on a weekly or even daily basis, that one in four adults will never marry, and that at least 12% of people report having no significant friendships.

There are many theories about how we got to this point, but technology and the breakdown of the family unit are the top contenders.

Loneliness is different for someone who has a relationship with Jesus than for someone who doesn't. Jesus has promised to never leave us nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). He is with us always, and if we draw close to Him, He will draw close to us (James 4:8). Remembering this is a game changer when it comes to dealing with loneliness, but it is still difficult.

The place to begin is acknowledging that you're lonely and that it hurts. Instead of fighting it, lean into it. Isaiah 45:3 says, "I will give you treasures hidden in the darkness—secret riches. I will do this so you may know that I am the Lord, the God of Israel, the one who calls you by name" (NLT).

Could it be that loneliness is a precious invitation to get to know the Lord better? God made us to be in community, to connect with other people, but sometimes we walk through lonely seasons, and there is something to be discovered there, which is a closeness with Jesus and the peace that comes from knowing that He will never forsake you.

Once you have leaned into the loneliness and let it deepen your relationship with Jesus, it can also be helpful to look for practical things you can do to build community. Yes, it will cost some time, and it might stretch you out of your comfort zone, but it's worth it. And if you're steady in your relationship with the Lord, you will be able to handle people coming in and out of your life until you find those precious ones who will stick around.

These few words can't capture the full scope of the journey, but what I'm trying to say is if you're lonely, don't panic. If you have Jesus you're not alone, and there's a gift to be found in the quiet.

MARIE ALVERO IS A FORMER MISSIONARY TO AFRICA AND MEXICO. SHE CURRENTLY LIVES A HAPPY, BUSY LIFE WITH HER HUSBAND AND CHILDREN IN CENTRAL TEXAS, USA. ■

A FRIEND OF JESUS

BY SAMUEL OUVINTE



If you have not yet received Jesus as your Savior, you can do so by praying the following prayer:

Dear Jesus, I believe that You are the Son of God and that You died on the cross for me so that, through Your death and resurrection, I can live forever with You in heaven. I ask that You forgive my sins. I open the door of my heart to You. Please fill me with Your Holy Spirit and help me live in a way that glorifies You. Guide my life and help me to follow You. In Your name I pray. Amen.

JESUS SAID, “YOU ARE MY FRIENDS IF YOU DO WHAT I COMMAND YOU” (John 15:14).

Our priorities in life should be to love God with all our heart, soul and mind, and to love our neighbors as we love ourselves (Matthew 22:37–39), and to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33). God is the creator of the universe, yet He wants to have a personal relationship with each one of us. He wants us to worship Him in spirit and truth (John 4:24). We can do so by communicating with Him in prayer, reading and obeying His Word, and submitting to His will.

We are to be thankful for the many blessings we have received (Psalm 103) and to praise Him for His faithful love and care and His constant presence in our lives.

Singing songs that glorify God is a wonderful way to praise Him. I was reminded of the hymn that says: “What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear. What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer.”

When I was young, one of my teachers gave me a card with a picture of Jesus on it. She wrote on the back, “Always be a friend of Jesus.” Later, I learned a song that I still remember today that says: “I am happy, Lord, because You are with me, walking side by side with me, my best friend.”

Jesus said, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me” (Revelation 3:20). Since I asked Him to come into my life, I have always tried to be a friend of Jesus. He came so that we might live life to the full (John 10:10).

SAMUEL OUVINTE IS A BRAZILIAN WRITER, TRANSLATOR, AND ENGLISH TEACHER. HE AND HIS WIFE HAVE VOLUNTEERED IN MISSIONARY AND HUMANITARIAN WORK IN SEVERAL BRAZILIAN CITIES. ■



ANSWERS FROM GOD

FOR ALL THE NEGATIVE THINGS WE SAY TO OURSELVES, GOD HAS GIVEN US HIS POSITIVE RESPONSES IN THE BIBLE.

● You say, “It’s impossible.”

God says, “All things are possible with Me” (Matthew 19:26).

● You say, “I’m so tired.”

God says, “I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28–30).

● You say, “Nobody really loves me.”

God says, “I love you” (John 3:16 and 13:34).

● You say, “I can’t go on.”

God says, “My grace is sufficient and I will always be there to help you” (2 Corinthians 12:9 and Psalm 91:15).

● You say, “I can’t figure things out.”

God says, “I will direct your steps” (Proverbs 3:5–6).

● You say, “I can’t do this.”

God says, “You don’t have to do it.—I will” (2 Chronicles 20:17).

● You say, “I can’t manage.”

God says, “I will supply all your needs” (Philippians 4:19).

● You say, “It’s not worth it.”

God says, “It will be worth it” (Romans 8:18).

● You say, “I can’t forgive myself.”

God says, “I forgive you” (1 John 1:9 and Romans 8:1).

● You say, “I’m not able.”

God says, “You can do it with My help” (Philippians 4:13 and 2 Corinthians 3:5).

● You say, “I’m afraid.”

God says, “Be not afraid, for I am with you” (Jeremiah 42:11).

● You say, “I’m always worried and frustrated.”

God says, “Give your cares to Me” (1 Peter 5:7).

● You say, “I don’t have enough faith.”

God says, “I’ve given everyone a measure of faith” (Romans 12:3).

● You say, “I’m not smart enough.”

God says, “I give you wisdom” (James 1:5 and 1 Corinthians 1:30).

● You say, “I feel all alone.”

God says, “I will never leave you or forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5). ■



FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

Always with You

I am with you always, My presence surrounds you, I go before you, and I never leave or forsake you ([Deuteronomy 31:8](#)). Even at those times when you feel alone in the world or you don't feel My presence, I am just as near as I have always been, and you are just as dear to Me. You can always bring your every concern to Me in prayer and find My promised rest for your soul ([Matthew 11:28–30](#)).

I work in your life through the difficult things you experience to help you draw near to Me and understand your deep need of Me. If you didn't face any struggles or hardship, you wouldn't grow stronger in your faith and learn to trust Me and My promises to you in My Word. In your times of trouble, you learn to seek Me with all your heart, and that is the place where you find Me ([Jeremiah 29:13](#)).

Remember that I am always with you, even to the end of the world ([Matthew 28:20 KJV](#)). I am your good shepherd who is with you in the darkest valleys of life, leading you and restoring your soul ([Psalm 23:1–4](#)). So bring all your cares to Me and let Me carry the worries, heartaches, and burdens, while you find your rest in Me. Let My Word provide the peace, hope and wisdom you seek for every season of life. In Me, you will find all that you need ([Psalm 23:1 NLT](#)).