

## God Cares for the Lonely

Dr. Glenn Robertson

Many people have times in which they experience feelings of loneliness. People can feel alone when trouble comes, or when they struggle with a personal problem like an illness, or grief. Many teenagers can go through feelings of loneliness if they are not popular. Loneliness is a common problem. People can even feel lonely in a crowd or in a family, or in the body of the church.

Personal pain can drive you to loneliness. Many who are under the weight of loneliness suffer from depression or mental illness. Bad fortune can throw you into a serious decline and you can feel abandoned and alone.

Children can feel alone if their parents are occupied by work or drugs. They can be physically alone, as well as emotionally alone.

Sometimes people become alone because of decisions that others make. Those decisions influence you, or put you in a desperate place. Yet, God still cares for you. He sees you where you are.

**Hagar was once alone. God saw her and helped her.**

**Genesis 16:1 -16 NIVO**

Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian maidservant named Hagar;

<sup>2</sup> so she said to Abram, "The LORD has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my maidservant; perhaps I can build a family through her." Abram agreed to what Sarai said.

<sup>3</sup> So after Abram had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai his wife took her Egyptian maidservant Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife.

<sup>4</sup> He slept with Hagar, and she conceived. When she knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress.

<sup>5</sup> Then Sarai said to Abram, "You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering. I put my servant in your arms, and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me. May the LORD judge between you and me."

<sup>6</sup> "Your servant is in your hands," Abram said. "Do with her whatever you think best." Then Sarai mistreated Hagar; so she fled from her.

<sup>7</sup> The angel of the LORD found Hagar near a spring in the desert; it was the spring that is beside the road to Shur.

<sup>8</sup> And he said, "Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?" "I'm running away from my mistress Sarai," she answered.

<sup>9</sup> Then the angel of the LORD told her, "Go back to your mistress and submit to her."

<sup>10</sup> The angel added, "I will so increase your descendants that they will be too numerous to count."

<sup>11</sup> The angel of the LORD also said to her: "You are now with child and you will have a son. You shall name him Ishmael, for the LORD has heard of your misery.

<sup>12</sup> He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers."

<sup>13</sup> She gave this name to the LORD who spoke to her: "You are the God who sees me," for she said, "I have now seen the One who sees me."

<sup>14</sup> That is why the well was called Beer Lahai Roi; it is still there, between Kadesh and Bered.

<sup>15</sup> So Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram gave the name Ishmael to the son she had borne.

<sup>16</sup> Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore him Ishmael.

### **Hagar was alone, and lonely.**

Hagar was alone in a bad place, and not solely by her own choices. She was a slave, a servant of her mistress Sarah. Abram and Sarai had been in the land of Canaan for 10 years. They had been looking for the promise of a son, which God gave them. They were old. A baby wasn't coming. So Sarah had an idea. Maybe this was the practice of others in the culture around, who knows. Sarai decided to give Abraham her maid as a wife to bear a son on her behalf. It worked. Hagar quickly got pregnant. Congratulations, Abram, you are going to be a daddy!

(Do notice, that Abram took Hagar as his wife. He took her in a responsible way.)

After a while, Hagar starts walking around with her baby bump. She's proud of her bump. She decided to shame Sarai. She is still Sarai's maid. She makes sure Sarai sees her bump. When Sarai says something about it, Hagar lets out, "At least I can bear a child to my master!"

Sarai goes to Abram and complains. Abram was party to this problem, but he doesn't want to help. He tells her that Hagar is still her servant, so she can do as she wants. So, Sarai begins to mistreat her.

Hagar has Abram's child, but she doesn't have any power. So Hagar runs away. She runs down into the desert, in the Negev. There she is all alone. She has no food. She has nothing to survive. She is a runaway. She is not in a good place.

Yet, God sends his angel to find Hagar.

The angel of the Lord asks Hagar, Where did you come from? And, where are you going? Hagar says, "I am running away from my mistress, Sarai." The angel of the Lord told her to return home and submit to her mistress, Sarai.

He also told her to name him Ishmael, meaning, "God hears." God heard her cry in the wilderness. When Hagar thought she was abandoned and alone, God heard her cry.

Because God saw her when she was alone, Hagar gave God the name, The God Who Sees (El Ra-ee).

God rescued Hagar from Abram and Sarai's failure of faith. Hagar returned home and gave birth to her son, Ishmael.

### **Loneliness is a common problem.**

There are likely times in all of our lives when we have felt lonely.

As a child, Polio left me with emotional stresses which often left me feeling lonely. Being with family, didn't remove the lonely feeling. I know the feeling of loneliness. There were times when I would go off to be alone. Now, I enjoy periods of being alone, as a place where I can experience God. Alone is a place where I know God sees me.

I had a conversation one day recently with a woman who told me of her childhood struggles. Her mother had mental illness. The stress at home was so difficult, she would go to the church to be alone. There she would find strength and faith to live.

Many people have experiences of being lonely.

### **Ministers can feel alone.**

Elijah, the great prophet felt lonely.

"I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors." (1 Ki. 19:4 NIVO)

Sometimes congregations do not always welcome ministers into the social circle. They feel that the minister will not stay long, so why bring him in close and have to suffer grief when he leaves. Or, they may feel they do not want to get too close for other reasons. For some, the minister represents God's presence. They don't want God to see everything they do, so they prefer to keep the minister at distance.

Ministers can also feel lonely just because the nature of their work is often not well received by people who want to live outside of God's will. They can feel alone if they feel they are the only one pushing the cause for the church.

### **Hardships and grief can make us feel alone. Just ask Job.**

Job felt alone

<sup>16</sup> I despise my life; I would not live forever. Let me alone; my days have no meaning. (Job 7:16 NIVO)

Job lost everything. His family, his business, and his friends. There is not much left after that.

### **Are you struggling with feeling alone?**

Do you find your days darkened with depression?

Do you feel unloved, even with others around?

Do you feel unblessed? Has your mother's blessing been taken from you? Or, has your father's blessing been neglected?

Feeling alone is a hard place to be.

God didn't make us to live alone. He made us for community. That is why God gave us the church, so we can have community, a family to help us when we struggle. Perhaps you could reach out to someone in the church and talk about feeling alone.

You might need counseling. I never received counseling help as a child. I wish I had. I had to wait until I could study counseling, to know how God can help me with my feelings. If you are deep in depression, or cannot overcome loneliness, I recommend that you seek help from professional counselors. When we are heard, by others, then we can know in a physical sense, that God hears us.

### **God is the God who sees.**

The God Who Sees (El Ra-ee)

Hagar gave God the name: The God who Sees. No matter how hard life is, God is the God-who-sees-me.

God reminds us that he always sees us.

<sup>7</sup> Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?

<sup>8</sup> If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.

<sup>9</sup> If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea,

<sup>10</sup> even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.

<sup>11</sup> If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me,"

<sup>12</sup> even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.

(Ps. 139:7-12 NIVO)

It is hard to push past the pain of sorrow and grief to feel the arms of the God who loves us. Yet, God still sees us. God sees us when we feel alone.

God saw me when I was in my mother's womb when she had the German measles. God saw me when I was in my crib in the hospital in a city away from home, isolated from mom and dad because of polio. God saw me when I was a child hiding under the table, because I wanted to be alone from the pain of feeling rejected and unloved.

God also saw me when I was alone on the back porch of my home one night as a college student. There I was praying and seeking him to find the direction for my life. God sees me when I am alone.

God sees you too. Take comfort that God sees you and God cares for you when you feel alone.

### **Jesus was waiting in the prison cell.**

A woman in Iran was arrested because she was a believer in Jesus. She had a house church so people could worship Jesus, in a land that forbids it. When they took her, they took her to a judge who sentenced her to prison. When she got to the prison, the guards made her take off her clothes. She had to do this before her captors. She was humiliated and broken by their unkindness. She was given prison clothes to wear. When they led her to her cell, she was weeping, shamed and broken, and feeling all alone. Yet, when they closed the cell door, Jesus was their waiting for her. Jesus revealed himself to her, when she was all alone. He embraced her with his love. He told her she was going to safe, because He was with her.

She knew she would be okay, because Jesus was there. Because Jesus was there, she was not alone. Because Jesus was there, she became even bolder about her faith. She turned her cell into a church. Instead of silencing her for her faith, the prison became a place where she could lead women to faith without any hindrance.

Do you feel alone today?

Reach up to Jesus. He is here. Jesus sees you, where you are.

Have faith in Jesus.

Faith begins by believing in Jesus. Jesus die on a cross to pay the penalty for your sin. Jesus suffered alone on the cross to save us. God says if you believe in what He has done in Jesus to save you, then you will be saved. Then, Jesus will come and live in you, and you will never be alone.

