

Gospel Answers

The Gospel is the good news of our salvation: that we are no longer condemned by our sin, but forgiven through God's grace. Therefore, the Gospel provides the answer to our greatest need and question. Yet we have many other needs and questions. We desire answers to our pain, loneliness, shame, meaninglessness, and desire for justice. What about these questions? The Gospel is still the answer. It is the vastly better answer to our most fundamental questions and needs.

WEEK THREE

The Gospel provides a better answer to our loneliness

Message Passage: Psalm 25:16–17, 38:10–11, 142:4–5, John 1:1-3, John 14:1-4, & Revelation 21:3
Small Group Passage: 2 Corinthians 1:3–11

TEACHING AND VIDEO NOTES

Who here has ever learned a new language? Who here has ever tried to learn a new language and ended up with just a couple of handy catchphrases? There is a big difference, isn't there? Say you are learning Spanish and you know how to ask where the bathroom is (¿ Dónde está el bano?). But then a fully fluent Spanish speaker answers in full sentences, giving detailed directions to the bathroom. Your blank stare quickly communicates the reality that you are, in fact, not fluent in Spanish.

Similarly, we can do the same with the Gospel. We know valuable truths about Jesus. We can know that Jesus was sinless. That he was our savior. That he rose again. All of those things are true. But when a difficult situation arises, we struggle to speak the language of the Gospel into it.[1] One situation where we see this often is in seasons of loneliness. We believe in Jesus and the Gospel, but loneliness hinders our ability to speak the Gospel's hope into that struggle.

THE QUESTION

[1] Jeff Vanderstelt, Gospel Fluency: Speaking the Truths of Jesus into the Everyday Stuff of Life (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 28.

No man in Scripture wrestled with loneliness more than King David. Whether he hid in caves to escape Saul or fled Jerusalem after his son Absalom led a palace coup, he was no stranger to loneliness. This was true even when loyal followers (his mighty men) surrounded him.

Psalm 25:16–17 *Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted. Relieve the troubles of my heart and free me from my anguish."*

Psalm 38:10–11 *My heart pounds, my strength fails me; even the light has gone from my eyes. My friends and companions avoid me because of my wounds; my neighbors stay far away.*

David wrote the next Psalm while on the run from Saul, hiding in a cave (1 Samuel 22 or 24).

Psalm 142:4–5 *Look and see, there is no one at my right hand; no one is concerned for me. I have no refuge; no one cares for my life. I cry to you, LORD; I say, 'You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living.'"*

David did, in fact, have faithful men at his right and his left. About 400 men risked their lives so David would not be alone. That is the nature of loneliness; it is an emotion. One that is not solely rooted in reality. But God still listened patiently to David's cry for help rather than correcting David with all of the facts.

- God was not afraid of David's questions
- God did not shun him for his honesty
- God welcomed his transparency amid David's anguish and loneliness.

God has not changed since David's time. He still welcomes us in. He calls us into a relationship defined by honesty. Therefore, we should take our questions and emotions to the feet of Jesus. Not so that God may give an account to us, his accusers. We take our questions, doubts, and problems to Him who is both able and willing to bear our burdens.

This includes the burden of loneliness. His answer to your loneliness will be the same as His answer to so many of our real problems and questions: the Gospel.

THE GOSPEL ANSWER

John 1:1-3 *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* ***2*** *He was with God in the beginning.* ***3*** *Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.*

The Word (Logos) was there in the beginning; before anything was, he was there with God (co-eternal). Not only that, but He made everything through Him. The Word is Jesus! But Jesus also saw mankind fall through Adam's sin. He saw sin spread up to the time of Noah and continue to spread even after the Flood. From His vantage point at the right hand of God the Father, He saw the very worst of man's sinful rebellion.

I would never leave! Who would ever leave perfection for this mess? Jesus would and did.

John 1:14 *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

The Word (logos) left perfection at the right hand of God the Father (Heb 1:3) to be with us. The sinful and rebellious people who corrupted God's good creation. He took on flesh, knowing our weakness, pain, and temptation (Heb 4:15). That is why one of Jesus most celebrated names/titles is Immanuel.

Matthew 1:22-23 *All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet:* ***23*** *"The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us").*

This was the plan from the very beginning. God revealed Jesus coming to the prophets (Isaiah 52). God loved us so much that he refused to allow our sinful rebellion to permanently separate us from Him. We could not go to Him, so he came to us, Immanuel.

That is why Jesus came: so we could be with Him eternally. Sin is what separated us from God. Jesus' death on the cross made a way for our sins to be paid for, our debt canceled so that we could enter into an eternal relationship with Him.

Jesus' death on the cross provided the ultimate answer to not only our feeling of loneliness but, even more so, the reality of our alienation from God. That is why, before His death, Jesus reminded His disciples that His future death would not leave them alone. Quite the opposite.

John 14:1-4 *"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me.* ***2*** *My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you?* ***3*** *And if I go and prepare a place*

for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. ***4*** *You know the way to the place where I am going.*"

Rebuttal - "But that is a future answer that is great, but I feel alone today. What about that?" That is a valid point.

John 14:15–17 *"If you love me, keep my commands.* ***16*** *And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—****17*** *the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.* ***18*** *I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you*

We were not left alone as orphans. Christ is coming again. Until He comes, we are not alone. The Holy Spirit indwells within every believer. We are the furthest thing from being alone.

One day we will never feel alone again. We will be incapable of such a feeling because the reality before us will leave no room for it.

Revelation 21:3 *And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.*

Jesus provided an eternal answer to our loneliness on the cross.

Small Group Transition: The gospel being the answer to our loneliness does not mean we ignore, downplay, or shame one another for feeling lonely. Even as believers in Jesus Christ, we will feel alone. In some seasons of life, we will be more alone than others. But in those seasons, we remind ourselves all the more of the Gospel. We speak the truth of the Gospel into our lives and others'. Tonight, we'll talk about how and when we do that in small group.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Loneliness is an emotion that isn't always rooted entirely in reality. Sometimes people are there and care for us, yet we still feel alone. Why is that?

   Leader Note: Sometimes we feel alone even when surrounded by others because we do not feel seen or understood. We may be experiencing something that those around us never have. This may be true, or it may be our misguided perception of

reality. Regardless of whether our loneliness is fully rooted in reality, we should still take that burden to Jesus. Far too often we refuse to bring some burdens to Jesus because they don't feel burdensome enough, as if Jesus told us, “Only bring me the really bad stuff.”

2. David was remarkably honest with God about his loneliness. Why do you think we sometimes hesitate to be that honest with God about what we're feeling?

3. Jesus didn't simply promise to be with us someday. He gave us the Holy Spirit, who indwells every believer now. How should that reality shape how we think about loneliness?

   Leader Note: Some within charismatic camps argue that not every believer in Jesus Christ is indwelt by the Holy Spirit and therefore should seek a baptism of the Holy Spirit even after believing in Jesus. This position does not align with Paul’s clear teachings to the Corinthian church that all believers are baptized, indwelt, and sealed with the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19, 12:13, & 2 Cor 1:21–22. Believers in Jesus may be empowered or filled with the Spirit at distinct times for a specific purpose (Acts 4:8 & 13:9–12). But no believer is left alone apart from the Spirit, who does a sanctifying work in our lives when we keep in step with the Spirit (Gal 5:25).

   Leader Note: This doesn't mean the Holy Spirit's indwelling ministry magically eliminates loneliness. But it does mean that, when we feel isolated and lonely, we can remind ourselves of the biblical truth that we are never alone. In doing this, we use Scripture as the lens through which we view our experience, not experience as the lens through which we view Scripture.

   Read: 2 Corinthians 1:3–11

4. Vs. 4: What difficult season of life has God comforted you through? This can be a season of loneliness or any other difficulty.

   Leader Note: So often, when we face difficulty, we want God to take it away. We are not wrong for desiring this. But sometimes God’s answer to our heartfelt prayers is no, or even not right now. Why would God respond this way? There are many reasons, but one is that when the difficulty remains, we learn to rely on God’s strength and value his comfort in ways we never would have before. The Apostle Paul speaks to this in 2 Corinthians 12:1-10.

5. Vs. 4-5: How can the comfort that God provided for you in that season comfort others in similar situations?

Leader Note: Another way of phrasing this that may help the group is: *"What Biblical (Gospel) truth brought you comfort and assurance in that difficult season? Now who in your life would benefit from that same Biblical (Gospel) Truth?"* For example, if you faced a difficult season of rejection, yet were comforted by the Biblical (Gospel) Truth that God has not rejected you. Instead, he has chosen you (Eph 1:3-5). Who in your life needs to hear that Truth? Tell them with boldness.

6. Vs 6: We are not only comforted through seasons of difficulty, such as loneliness; we also grow in Christ in that season, seeing "patient endurance" produced in our lives. How has God grown you in difficult seasons, whether it be loneliness or something else?

7. Vs 9-10: The Apostle Paul wanted the Corinthian church to know that he and his partners in ministry, Timothy and Silas, had learned to rely on God's strength and the hope they had in Christ to get through their difficulties. What does it look like to rely on Jesus' strength and the Hope of the Gospel in a season of loneliness rather than on your own strength?

8. When loneliness comes, what is one truth from the Gospel you want to learn to remind yourself or others of in that time of need?

PRAYER TIME

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