

Seeing the Door in Isolation by Carl McMurray

The American Sociological Review reports that the number of people who say they have no one to confide in has risen from about 10% in 1985 to 25% in 2006. That's 75 million people. Nearly half the population, 43.6%, say they share and discuss important matters with no one or only one other person. And for those who do have confidants, their inner circle of friends has decreased from an average of three people to two.

Now I'm sure it would be easy to draw some correlations between the figures above demonstrating a growing isolation and subsequent loneliness in our society with our increased use of the internet and drive up conveniences. That's not the point of this article however. My point is not to focus on what has caused this societal shift over the past two decades, but to note how it serves the purpose of our Creator.

Men and women are creatures of society. Like deer or geese, we are made to run in the company of our fellows. It doesn't have to be a large group, but the truth is that as people, we need other people. One truly is the loneliest number after all. Whether it is the false relationship of online chat rooms or the open violence of our cities, whatever pushes people apart pushes them toward isolation, loneliness, and depression.

If the figures above are correct, half the population of our country is feeling this. One in every four is feeling it deeply. This gives the Christian an opportunity if we will be aware of it. People around us are lonely. They are hurting and in the words of Jesus, are like sheep without a shepherd. It is not the time for us to pull back and go into isolation also. Instead, now is the time for us to let our light shine so that others might see our good works and glorify the Father. I don't mean stand off at a distance and applaud and glorify; I mean stand beside us and glorify WITH us because of what they have found, i.e., fellowship and salvation.

Now is the time to get in the habit of reaching out with kindness. Look for someone you can help. Take a cake to those new people moving in on your block, or better yet, a plate of sandwiches while they are moving in. If someone is hurting, offer to pray for them (ask their permission... it will let them know how serious you are). As you note, and you will sooner or later, that someone is burdened with trouble or hurt, sit down with them and listen (don't talk, just listen and sympathize). Then call back on them to offer comfort (or some brownies, ha). People are lonely and they are looking for someone who really cares. Don't make it an act, but look for the door in isolation.