

WEEK 3 - How does Jesus interact with the lonely?

Spring Emphasis 2024 // Canopy Guide

Love Your Neighbor

CONVERSATION STARTERS

Use the questions below to kickstart a community building, all-play conversation that connects to our weekly topic. If your group meets for dinner, these might be great questions to share around a table.

- What is the difference between loneliness and being alone?
- Has modern technology made people more lonely? If so, what can we do to combat that?
- Is it possible to be lonely in the midst of a crowd?

STUDY GUIDE

It should come as no surprise that, as Christians, we are called to love the lonely and pay special attention to the needs of the orphan, the elderly, the widow. “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.” (James 1:27) Jesus didn’t shy away from inviting children to come and sit at his feet. He sat and ate with those from all walks of life. He spoke with women, Samaritans, sinners, and more.

It may seem like this is a simple command - sit with someone who is lonely, or bring them a meal once in a while - but in reality the long term loving of these neighbors can be difficult. It involves opening your home to people who may not have anything to give you in return. It involves sacrificing time and comfort for someone else’s well being. It means listening to their stories with compassion and without judgment. It may inconvenience you. It may be hard, but it is a part of loving your neighbor.

Jesus wasn’t afraid to be inconvenienced and he sat and talked with the woman at the well even though she was cast out from society. He healed Peter’s mother-in-law and let little children come to him in the midst of others who wanted his help.

Loving the lonely goes beyond these things. You may be someone who is lonely and finds it hard to accept the invitations of others, perhaps you feel like a burden or like you just don’t fit in. Or maybe you are one who finds it hard to extend invitations to others, afraid

you'll be rejected or that it will be perceived as a pity ask. No matter where you find yourself, Jesus calls us to step out of our comfort zones - to ask and accept invitations, to ask for and accept help, and to love our neighbors in this way.

Even Jesus found himself lonely in the Garden. Chances are you'll be lonely someday too, and you'll need someone to reach out with an invitation to be loved. We hope you'll accept the invitation.

Scripture to Read

Luke 4:38

Luke 18:16

Luke 7:11-17

Acts 20:35

Hebrews 13:16

James 1:27

Deeper Discussion Questions

1. Perhaps you are someone who fits into these categories of loneliness and find it hard to accept help from your neighbor. Read Luke 2:36-38. How did God use this widow in Jesus' life? How does this encourage you that God can use you in your loneliness?
2. How do we put ourselves in positions to notice our neighbors who are lonely? What might it cost us to do so?

PRAYER

Make sure to claim some time as a group each week to pray specifically for each other.

EXTRA RESOURCES/ARTICLES/RESEARCH

1. A short article by John Delony on overcoming loneliness:
[How to Deal With Loneliness - Ramsey \(ramseysolutions.com\)](http://ramseysolutions.com/how-to-deal-with-loneliness)
2. Research Article- "No More FOMO: Limiting Social Media Decreases Loneliness and Depression" - <https://guilfordjournals.com/doi/abs/10.1521/jscp.2018.37.10.751>
3. Video Podcast "Loneliness and Social Isolation"
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZT6cYsx-F0> (do yourself a favor and skip to 2:27 time marker to avoid a really bad Beatles cover song)
4. Book: [Finding God in My Loneliness](#), Lydia Brownback