



Collegiate Quarterly

Teacher's Guide

When Alone

Surveying the Source

Gen. 2:18; 37:34; Eccles. 4:9–12; Matt. 6:33; 19:1–10; John 1:35; 16:32, 33; Gal. 1:10; Phil. 4:11; James 5:16

Plotting the Course

The students will:

► Know that God designed us to live in supportive, caring relationships so that they do not experience painful aloneness.

► Understand that God can use our times of aloneness to draw us to Him.

► Be inspired to reach out to others and be channels of God's love into lonely lives.

Preparing to Lead

Loneliness is actually a health risk. Heart surgery patients have a better recovery rate when supported by loving families. Being married can lead to better outcomes from chemotherapy for many cancer patients, especially men. Researchers estimate that living alone is as bad for your health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day or being overweight (www.iflscience.com/health-and-

[medicine/loneliness-is-as-bad-for-your-health-as-smoking-15-cigarettes-a-day](http://www.iflscience.com/health-and-medicine/loneliness-is-as-bad-for-your-health-as-smoking-15-cigarettes-a-day)). Health programs traditionally focus on stopping smoking and reducing weight. Spend time this week researching the effects of loneliness on physical and emotional well-being and how some churches and communities are addressing the serious issue of loneliness.

Materials

Reproducible Activity, Bibles, markers, pens, paper, buttons or safety pins—up to 3 items per class member

Getting Started

A. Provide paper and pens. Invite class members to draw a timeline of their lives starting at birth. Draw a colored line along the timeline indicating how alone they felt at different times in their life. During lonely times the colored line will drop down closer to the timeline, and it will rise to different heights above the line during times of closeness and connection. Invite them to reflect on their timeline and their experiences of aloneness and connectedness. Form pairs and share the challenges and joys of aloneness and connection.

B. Choose a friendly class member (person A) and ask them to leave the room. Tell the class to form groups of 3 to share their happiest experiences of the past week. Instruct them to totally ignore A when they enter the room, and not include them in their conversation. Allow A to experience a sense of exclusion then send them outside again. Instruct the class to be as welcoming, inclusive, and friendly as possible when A enters the room the second time. Then debrief and discuss what this experience was like for both A and the rest of the class.

Delving Into the Word

A. Divide the class into small groups. Have each group select one of the following categories: Celibate—Jesus, Jeremiah, John the Baptist; Isolated—woman at the well, woman with an issue of blood; Migrants—Daniel, Naaman’s maid, Joseph; Widows—Naomi, Ruth, Anna.

Ask each group to answer the following questions: How did they experience aloneness? What were some of the challenges and blessings of their aloneness? What did they do to mitigate their feelings of loneliness? How did this period of aloneness developed their character, grow their faith, and enhance their understanding of God?

Invite each group to find a creative way to tell the story of their character to the rest of the class, focusing on the spiritual and personal growth of their chosen person through their experience of aloneness. As a class, discuss common elements in the lives of all the chosen characters.

B. Say: “God said it was not good for man to be alone. How can those who are bereaved, divorced, abandoned, far from home, and isolated experience God’s love through healthy relationships? Let us explore some biblical ways to have caring relationships that minimize loneliness. These are all vital components of healthy relationships.”

Divide the class into pairs and give each person a copy of the Reproducible Activity. Allocate one or two relational “connections” to each group for discussion and reflection. After the discussion time invite each group to introduce their “connection/s,” what they have learned, and how they might put the connection into practice in everyday relationships.

Encourage the students to memorize the acronym CCAAARESSS so that they can use it to identify connection needs. Invite class members to experiment with these connections in their relationships during the week and report their experiences next Sabbath.

Discussing the Ideas

1. How does your Christian faith help you through times of aloneness?
2. How has God used your times of aloneness to draw you closer to Him?
3. When have you felt most alone? What contributed to your sense of aloneness? Who helped you to feel less alone and what did they do that helped?
4. What are some of the challenges and

gifts of living alone?

5. How can you identify the lonely people around you, as Jesus did, and show that you genuinely care about them?
6. What is your local church doing to reduce loneliness amongst its members? What else could it do?
7. What small project could you do to reduce loneliness in your community?

Closing the Activity

Provide a selection of simple, inexpensive objects that represent making connections, like safety pins or buttons. Invite each class member to identify 1–3 people in their lives that may be lonely, such as ageing or distant relatives, a new work colleague, a neighbor with special needs, etc. Invite them to take one object

for each lonely person that they have identified. Share in pairs why you have chosen these people, and what you will do this week to connect with them. Decide how you will keep each other accountable for following through with your ideas, and then pray for your plans.

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Experiencing Connections
CCAAARESSS (Cares or Caress)

Caring kindness towards each other—showing appropriate affection	Eph. 4:29, 32 Col. 3:12
Consolation/comforting others in times of sadness and distress	Rom. 12:15 2 Cor. 1:3–7
Acceptance of others—especially when they have made mistakes	Luke 19:1–10 Rom. 15:7
Appreciation —expressing gratitude to others as often as you can	Eph. 1:15, 16 Phil. 1:3
Attention —putting aside your own thoughts and needs to focus carefully on others	Mark 10:13–16 Phil. 2:4
Respect —lifting others up and not putting others down	John 8:1–11 Rom. 12:10
Encouragement —cheering others on towards the goals that they have for themselves	1 Thess. 5:11
Safety —protecting others, relating to them in caring ways that take away their fears	Mark 4:35–41 1 John 4:18
Specialness —letting others know that you value your relationship with them— blessing them	Matt. 3:17 Phil. 1:3–11
Support —helping each other in life’s struggles—not letting others struggle alone	2 Cor. 9:6–15 Gal. 6:2

Instructions

Read the verses given for your group’s relational “connector.”

Explore other Bible verses that describe this “connector” and other Bible stories where people connected powerfully in this way.

Identify ways in which Jesus connected with people using this “connector.” What effect did His powerful relational connections have on the people who experienced them?

How might we know when others are hungry for this “connection?” What clues might they give us by what they say and how they behave? How can we hear and notice these clues, as Jesus did?

How might we help to meet other people’s relational needs/connections in simple and practical ways?

When we are hungry for one of these connections, how might we let others know so that they can help to reduce our sense of aloneness, too?