Loneliness

*Kerby Anderson discusses the pervasiveness of loneliness in our culture, particularly within marriage.*

The baby boom generation is headed for a crisis of loneliness. The reasons are simple: demographics and social isolation. More boomers are living alone than in previous generations, and those living with another person will still feel the nagging pangs of loneliness.

In previous centuries where extended families dominated the social landscape, a sizable proportion of adults living alone was unthinkable. And even in this century, adults living alone have usually been found near the beginning (singles) and end (widows) of adult life. But these periods of living alone are now longer due to lifestyle choices on the front end and advances in modern medicine on the back end. Baby boomers are postponing marriage and thus extending the number of years of being single. Moreover, their parents are (and presumably they will be) living longer, thereby increasing the number of years one adult will be living alone. Yet the increase in the number of adults living alone originates from more than just changes at the beginning and end of adult life. Increasing numbers of boomers are living most or all of their adult lives alone.

In the 1950s, about one in every ten households had only one person in them. These were primarily widows. But today, due to the three D’s of social statistics (death, divorce, and deferred marriage), about one in every four households is a single person household. And if current trends continue, sociologists predict that ratio will increase to one in every three households by the twenty-first century.

In the past, gender differences have been significant in determining the number of adults living alone. For example, young single households are more likely to be men, since women marry younger. On the other hand, old single households are more likely to be women, because women live longer than men. While these trends still hold true, the gender distinctions are blurring as boomers of both sexes reject the traditional attitudes towards marriage. Compared with their parents, boomers are marrying less, marrying later, and staying married for shorter periods of time.

**Marriage Patterns**

The most marriageable generation in history has not made the trip to the altar in the same percentage as their parents. In 1946, the parents of the baby boom set an all-time record of 2,291,000 marriages. This record was not broken during the late 1960s and early 1970s, when millions of boomers entered the marriage-prone years. Finally, in 1979, the record that had lasted 33 years was finally broken when the children of the baby boom made 2,317,000 marriages.

Instead of marrying, many boomers chose merely to "live together." When this generation entered the traditional years of marriageability, the number of unmarried couples living together in the United States doubled in just ten years to well over a million. The sharpest change was among cohabiting couples under 25, who increased ninefold after 1970. Demographers estimate that there have been as many as one-and-a-half to two million cohabiting couples in the U.S. Yet even high figures underestimate the lifestyle changes of boomers. These figures merely represent the number of couples living together at any one time. Cohabitation is a fluid state, so the total number living together or living alone is in the millions.

Not only is this generation marrying less; they are also marrying later. Until the baby boom
generation arrived on the scene, the median age of marriage remained stable. But since the mid-fifties, the median age of first marriage has been edging up. Now both “men and women are marrying a full eighteen months later than their counterparts a generation earlier.”

Another reason for a crisis in loneliness is marital stability. Not only is this generation marrying less and marrying later; they also stay married less than their parents. The baby boom generation has the highest divorce rate of any generation in history. But this is only part of the statistical picture. Not only do they divorce more often; they divorce earlier. When the divorce rate shot up in the sixties and seventies, the increase did not come from empty nesters finally filing for divorce after sending their children into the world. Instead, it came from young couples divorcing before they even had children. Demographer Tobert Michael of Stanford calculated that while men and women in their twenties comprised only about 20 percent of the population, they contributed 60 percent of the growth in the divorce rate in the sixties and early seventies.

Taken together, these statistics point to a coming crisis of loneliness for the boom generation. More and more middle-aged adults will find themselves living alone. Thomas Exter, writing in American Demographics, predicts that

The most dramatic growth in single-person households should occur among those aged 45 to 64, as baby boomers become middle-aged.

These households are expected to increase by 42 percent, and it appears the number of men living alone is growing faster than the number of women.

The crisis of loneliness will affect more than just the increasing number of baby boomers living alone. While the increase in adults living alone is staggering and unprecedented, these numbers are fractional compared with the number of baby boomers in relationships that leave them feeling very much alone.

The “C” word (as it was often called in the 80s) is a significant issue. Commitment is a foreign concept to most of the million-plus cohabiting couples. These fluid and highly mobile situations form more often out of convenience and demonstrate little of the commitment necessary to make a relationship work. These relationships are transitory and form and dissolve with alarming frequency. Anyone looking for intimacy and commitment will not find them in these relationships.

Commitment is also a problem in marriages. Spawned in the streams of sexual freedom and multiple lifestyle options, boomers may be less committed to making marriage work than previous generations. Marriages, which are supposed to be the source of stability and intimacy, often produce uncertainty and isolation.

Living-Together Loneliness

Psychologist and best-selling author Dan Kiley has coined the term “living-together loneliness,” or LTL, to describe this phenomenon. He has estimated that 10 to 20 million people (primarily women) suffer from “living together loneliness.”

LTL is an affliction of the individual, not the relationship, though that may be troubled too. Instead, Dan Kiley believes LTL has more to do with two issues: the changing roles of men and women and the crisis of expectations. In the last few decades, especially following the rise of the modern feminist movement, expectations that men have of women and that women have of men have been significantly altered. When these expectations do not match reality, disappointment (and eventually loneliness) sets in. Dan Kiley first noted this phenomenon among his female patients in 1970. He
began to realize that loneliness comes in two varieties. The first is the loneliness felt by single, shy people who have no friends. The second is more elusive because it involves the person in a relationship who nevertheless feels isolated and very much alone.

According to Kiley, “There is nothing in any diagnostic or statistical manual about this. I found out about it by listening to people.” He has discovered that some men have similar feelings, but most tend to be women. The typical LTL sufferer is a woman between the ages of 33 and 46, married and living a comfortable life. She may have children. She blames her husband or live-in partner for her loneliness. Often he’s critical, demanding, uncommunicative. The typical LTL woman realizes she is becoming obsessed with her bitterness and is often in counseling for depression or anxiety. She is frequently isolated and feels some estrangement from other people, even close friends. Sometimes she will have a fantasy about her partner dying, believing that her loneliness will end if that man is out of her life.

To determine if a woman is a victim of LTL, Kiley employs a variation of an “uncoupled loneliness” scale devised by researchers at the University of California at Los Angeles. For example, an LTL woman would agree with the following propositions: (1) I can’t turn to him when I feel bad, (2) I feel left out of his life, (3) I feel isolated from him, even when he’s in the same room, (4) I am unhappy being shut off from him, (5) No one really knows me well.

Kiley also documents five identifiable stages of LTL which are likely to affect baby boom women. A typical LTL woman who marries at about age 22 will feel bewildered until she is 28. At that point, isolation sets in. At 34, she begins to feel agitated. This turns to depression between the ages of 43 and 50. After that, a woman faces absolute exhaustion.

Women may soon find that loneliness has become a part of their lives whether they are living alone or “in a relationship,” because loneliness is more a state of mind than it is a social situation. People who find themselves trapped in a relationship may be more lonely than a person living alone. The fundamental issue is whether they reach out and develop strong relationship bonds.

**Male Loneliness**

In recent years, social psychologists have expressed concern about the friendless male. Many studies have concluded that women have better relational skills which help them to be more successful at making and keeping friends. Women, for example, are more likely than men to express their emotions and display empathy and compassion in response to the emotions of others. Men, on the other hand, are frequently more isolated and competitive and therefore have fewer (if any) close friends.

Men, in fact, may not even be conscious of their loneliness and isolation. In his book *The Hazards of Being Male: The Myth of Masculine Privilege*, Herb Goldberg asked adult men if they had any close friends. Most of them seemed surprised by the question and usually responded, “No, why? Should I?”

David Smith lists in his book *Men Without Friends* the following six characteristics of men which prove to be barriers to friendship. First, men show an aversion to showing emotions. Expressing feelings is generally taboo for males. At a young age, boys receive the cultural message that they are to be strong and stoic. As men, they shun emotions. Such an aversion makes deep relationships difficult, thus men find it difficult to make and keep friendships.

Second, men seemingly have an inherent inability to fellowship. In fact, men find it hard to accept the fact that they need fellowship. If someone suggests lunch, it is often followed by the response,
“Sure, what’s up?” Men may get together for business, sports, or recreation (hunting and fishing), but they rarely do so just to enjoy each other’s company. Centering a meeting around an activity is not bad, it is just that the conversation often never moves beyond work or sports to deeper levels.

Third, men have inadequate role models. The male macho image prevents strong friendships since a mask of aggressiveness and strength keeps men from knowing themselves and others. A fourth barrier is male competition. Men are inordinately competitive. Men feel they must excel in what they do. Yet this competitive spirit is frequently a barrier to friendship.

Fifth is an inability to ask for help. Men rarely ask for help because they perceive it as a sign of weakness. Others simply don’t want to burden their family or colleagues with their problems. In the end, male attempts at self-sufficiency rob them of fulfilling relationships.

A final barrier is incorrect priorities. Men often have a distorted order of priorities in which physical things are more important than relationships. Success and status is determined by material wealth rather than by the number of close friends.

Men tend to limit their friendships and thus their own identity. H. Norman Wright warns:

> The more a man centers his identity in just one phase of his life—such as vocation, family, or career—the more vulnerable he is to threats against his identity and the more prone he is to experience a personal crisis. A man who has limited sources of identity is potentially the most fragile. Men need to broaden their basis for identity. They need to see themselves in several roles rather than just a teacher, just a salesman, just a handsome, strong male, just a husband.

**Crowded Loneliness**

Loneliness, it turns out, is not just a problem of the individual. Loneliness is endemic to our modern, urban society. In rural communities, although the farm houses are far apart, community is usually very strong. Yet in our urban and suburban communities today, people are physically very close to each other but emotionally very distant from each other. Close proximity does not translate into close community.

Dr. Roberta Hestenes at Eastern College has referred to this as “crowded loneliness.” She says:  

> Today we are seeing the breakdown of natural “community” network groups in neighborhoods like relatives, PTA, etc. At the same time, we have relationships with so many people. Twenty percent of the American population moves each year. If they think they are moving, they won’t put down roots. People don’t know how to reach out and touch people. This combination produces crowded loneliness.

Another reason for social isolation is the American desire for privacy. Though many boomers desire community and long for a greater intimacy with other members of their generation, they will choose privacy even if it means a nagging loneliness. Ralph Keyes, in his book *We the Lonely People*, says that above all else Americans value mobility, privacy, and convenience. These three values make developing a sense of community almost impossible. In his book *A Nation of Strangers*, Vance Packard argued that the mobility of American society contributed to social isolation and loneliness. He described five forms of uprooting that were creating greater distances between people.

First is the uprooting of people who move again and again. An old Carole King song asked the question, “Doesn’t anybody stay in one place any more?” At the time when Packard wrote the book, he estimated that the average American would move about 14 times in his lifetime. By contrast, he
estimated that the average Japanese would move five times.

The second is the uprooting that occurs when communities undergo upheaval. The accelerated population growth during the baby boom along with urban renewal and flight to the suburbs have been disruptive to previously stable communities.

Third, there is the uprooting from housing changes within communities. The proliferation of multiple-dwelling units in urban areas crowd people together who frequently live side by side in anonymity.

Fourth is the increasing isolation due to work schedules. When continuous-operation plants and offices dominate an area’s economy, neighbors remain strangers.

And fifth, there is the accelerating fragmentation of the family. The steady rise in the number of broken families and the segmentation of the older population from the younger heightens social isolation. In a very real sense, a crisis in relationships precipitates a crisis in loneliness.

Taken together, these various aspects of loneliness paint a chilling picture of the 1990s. But they also present a strategic opportunity for the church. Loneliness will be on the increase in this decade, and Christians have an opportunity to minister to people cut off from normal, healthy relationships.

The local church should provide opportunities for outreach and fellowship in their communities. Individual Christians must reach out to lonely people and become their friends. And ultimately we must help a lost, lonely world realize that their best friend of all is Jesus Christ.

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**Time and Busyness**

It has, perhaps, always been true that “time is money.” But for the current generation, this maxim has a new twist. In the frenetic 90s, time has become even more scarce than money and therefore more valuable. As with any commodity, the law of supply and demand determines value. In the last two decades, free time has grown scarce and hence has become a valuable possession.

The 1990s is the decade of the time famine. Leisure time, once plentiful and elastic, is now scarce and elusive. People seeking the good life are finding it increasingly difficult to enjoy it, even if they can afford it. What money was in the 1980s, time has become in the 1990s.

According to a Lou Harris survey, the amount of leisure time enjoyed by the average American has shrunk 37 percent since 1973. A major reason is an expanding workweek. Over this same period, the average workweek (including commuting) has increased from fewer than 41 hours to nearly 47 hours. And in many professions, such as medicine, law, and accounting, an 80-hour week is not uncommon. Harris therefore concludes that “time may have become the most precious commodity in the land.”
The Technology of Time

Our current time crunch has caught most people off-guard. Optimistic futurists in the 1950s and 60s, with visions of utopia dancing in their heads, predicted Americans would enjoy ample hours of leisure by the turn of the century. Computers, satellites, and robotics would remove the menial aspects of labor and deliver abundant opportunities for rest and recreation.

The optimists were partly right: computers crunch data at unimaginable speeds, orbiting satellites cover the globe with a dizzying array of messages, and robots zap together everything from cars to computer chips at speeds far exceeding their human counterparts. Yet these and other technological feats have not freed Americans from their labors. Most people are busier than ever.

It wasn’t supposed to be this way. Testimony before a Senate subcommittee in 1967 predicted that “by 1985, people could be working just 22 hours a week or 27 weeks a year or could retire at 38.” The major challenge facing people in the 1990s should have been what to do with all the leisure time provided by our technological wizardry.

Instead, technology has been more of an enemy than an ally. “Technology is increasing the heartbeat,” says Manhattan architect James Trunzo, who designs automated environments. “We are inundated with information. The mind can’t handle it all. The pace is so fast now, I sometimes feel like a gunfighter dodging bullets.”

Actually, the problem isn’t so much technology as it is the heightened expectations engendered by it. The increased speed and efficiency of appliances, computers, and other machines have enabled us to accomplish much more than was possible in previous decades. But this efficiency has also fostered a desire to take on additional responsibilities and thereby squeeze even more activities into already cramped calendars.

As the pace of our lives has increased, over-commitment and busyness have been elevated to socially desirable standards. Being busy is chic and trendy. Pity the poor person who has an organized life and a livable schedule. Everyone, it seems, is running out of time.

Time-Controlling Devices

It is little wonder that most of the products now being developed are not so much time-savers as they are time-controllers. Most of the appliances developed in the 1950s–vacuum cleaners, dishwashers, mixers–were designed to save time and remove drudgery from housework. By comparison, most of the products developed in the 1980s–VCRs, answering machines, automatic tellers–were time-controllers. These devices do not save much time, but they do allow harried consumers to use their time more effectively.

Technological efficiency has also increased competition. Labor-saving devices that are supposed to make life easier frequently force people to work harder. Baby boomers who are intensely competing with one another for jobs and prestigious promotions avidly employ the latest equipment to give them an edge. Faxes, LANs, car phones, and laptop computers are viewed as necessities if one is to remain competitive.

But technology isn’t enough. So most professionals, especially those in service industries such as law, accounting, and advertising, work long hours in an effort to meet their clients’ seemingly endless needs and demands. Other baby boomers feel trapped in the same rat race because economic pressures make it nearly impossible to support a family on one income.
The work ethic seems out of control. In the frenetic dash for success or just plain survival, leisure time becomes a scarce commodity. “My wife and I were sitting on the beach in Anguilla on one of our rare vacations,” recalls architect James Trunzo, “and even there my staff was able to reach me. There are times when our lives are clearly leading us.”

**No Time to Talk**

Everywhere, it seems, people are over-scheduled and over-committed. Workers are weary. Parents are preoccupied. And children and family relationships are often neglected.

A recent survey by Cynthia Langham at the University of Detroit found that parents and children spend only 14.5 minutes per day talking to each other. That is less time than a football quarter and certainly much less time than most people spend commuting to work.

She says that many people are shocked to hear the 14.5-minutes statistic. But once they take a stopwatch to their conversations, they realize she is right.

But that 14.5 minute statistic is misleading, since most of that time is squandered on chitchat like “What’s for supper?” and “Have you finished your homework?” Truly meaningful communication between parent and child unfortunately occupies only about two minutes each day. Langham concludes, “Nothing indicates that parent-child communications are improving. If things are changing, it’s for the worse.”

She points to two major reasons for this communication breakdown. First is a change in the workforce. A few decades ago the dinner table was a forum for family business and communication. But now, when dinner-time rolls around, Dad is still at work, Mom is headed for a business meeting, and sister has to eat and run to make it to her part-time job. Even when everyone is home, there are constant interruptions to meaningful communication.

The second reason for poor parent-child communication is the greatest interruption of all: television. Urie Bronfenbrenner of Cornell has reported a forty-year decline in the amount of time children spend with their parents, and much of the recent loss is due to television. TV sabotages much of the already-limited time families spend together. Meals are frequently eaten in front of the “electronic fireplace.” After dinner, talk-starved families gather to watch congenial television families with good communication skills, like the Huxtables on the Cosby show.

While some television shows deal with issues families might discuss (drugs, pregnancy, honesty), few families take advantage of these opportunities to talk about the dilemmas portrayed on the programs and provide moral instruction.

The greeting card business has developed a whole new product line for busy parents and children. More and more children are finding cards in their backpacks or under their pillows that proclaim, “Have a good day at school,” or lament, “I wish I were there to tuck you in.”

The effect of time pressures on the family has been devastating. Yale psychology professor Edward Ziglar somberly warns that “as a society, we’re at the breaking point as far as family is concerned.”

Homemaking and child-rearing are full-time activities. When both husband and wife work, maintaining a home and raising a family becomes difficult. In the increasing numbers of single-parent households, the task becomes next to impossible.

Someone has to drive car pools, make lunches, do laundry, cope with sick kids and broken appliances, and pay the bills. In progressive homes, household tasks are shared as the traditional
husband/wife division of labor breaks down. In others, super-Mom is expected to step into the gap and perform flawlessly.

Inevitably, children are forced to grow up quickly and take on responsibilities they should never have to shoulder. Some children are effectively abandoned—if not physically, at least emotionally—and must grow up on their own. Others are latch-key kids who are forced to mature emotionally beyond their years. These demands take their toll and create what sociologist David Elkind has called the “hurried child” syndrome.

Time, or rather our lack of it, is severely hurting families. Nurturing suffers when families do not have time to communicate and parents do not have time to instruct their children. In the end, the lack of time takes its toll on the stability of our families.

**Never Enough Time**

A 1989 survey done by *Family Circle* documented the loss of time in families, especially for working mothers. The article, entitled “Never Enough Time?” began: “Remember ‘quality time’? In the 1980’s that was what you sandwiched in for the children between the office and the housework. We all learned how valuable time was in the school of hard knocks. Life was what happened while we were busy making other plans, to paraphrase ex-Beatle John Lennon.” That was then.

A resounding 71 percent of those surveyed said their lives had gotten busier in the previous year. Nearly a third attributed this increase in busyness to expanding work loads at the office, the demands of a new job, or the pressures of starting a business or returning to work. Not only were the women working longer hours, but many were also working on weekends, and nearly a third often took work home.

Dual-income couples reported major difficulties finding time for each other. Negotiating schedules and calendar-juggling were daily activities. Three out of four women in the survey reported that finding enough time to be alone with their husbands was “often” or “sometimes” a major stress in their relationships. When asked, “In a time crunch, who gets put on the back burner?” half said friends, then husbands, and then other family members.

Those hit hardest by time pressures were single parents. One single mother with two teenagers in Illinois wrote: “I am responsible for a house and yard, work 40 hours a week, take college classes, run a local support group for divorced and widowed women and am involved with a retreat group through church. I have time because I make time.”

Often the first thing women will let slide is housekeeping. A full 82 percent said they had changed their standards of cleaning and organizing a house. When asked why, 49 percent said other things are more important, 42 percent said they were more relaxed about letting chores wait, 35 percent said they had one or more young children, and 23 percent said they had taken a paying job.

Organization expert Stephanie Winston says that the young generation of working women has reframed expectations about household responsibilities. She says, “Their sense of what is expected of them is really very different from what was expected 10 years ago, when women joining the work force had been raised on the old model—rearing the family, cooking, cleaning and the proverbial white-glove test.” But whether they were in the work force or full-time homemakers, more than half of the women surveyed were either “very” or “somewhat” dissatisfied with the amount of time they have alone. Only 30 percent try to set aside four or more hours a week just for themselves. Another 30 percent carve out two to three hours. But 19 percent say they give themselves an hour or less a week, and 20 percent do not allot themselves any leisure time at all.
The time pressure on women and families is significant. The time crunch is squeezing out meaningful communication and important time to think and reflect. The additional time will not come without changes in our lifestyles.

**Redeeming the Time**

Time, or the lack of it, will continue to dominate our thinking through the 1990s. All of us are in the midst of a time crunch—the solution is to recognize our priorities and apply them rigorously to our lives.

First, we must establish biblical priorities in our lives. Often our busyness is merely a symptom of a deeper problem, such as materialism. In Luke 12, Jesus illustrated this danger with the parable of the rich fool. He says, “The land of a certain rich man was very productive. And he began reasoning to himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?’ And he said, ‘This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods, laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.”’ But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?’”

There are a number of applications we can derive from this passage. First, we should make sure that we are not so involved in the affairs of the world that we neglect the affairs of the spirit. To turn the familiar adage around, we can be so earthly-minded we are no heavenly good.

Second, we should ask ourselves if we are tearing down productive resources for a more luxurious lifestyle. If a three-bedroom house is sufficient, are we selling it merely to move up to a four-bedroom house? If the car we are currently driving is fine, are we nevertheless eager to trade it in on a newer or more expensive model? Often our indulgences constrain our time and financial resources.

This observation leads to our second biblical principle: fight materialism in our lives. Proverbs 28:20 says "He who makes haste to be rich will not go unpunished." Materialism brings with it a haste to get rich. Materialistic people are not patient people. They want what they want, when they want it, and they want it now.

Often our lack of time is tied to our haste to get rich, to feed our greed. We need to ask ourselves the fundamental question, How much do we really need? If we fight materialism in our lives and cut back on the lavishness of our lifestyle, we might be surprised how much time we will free up.

A third biblical principle is to redeem the time. Ephesians 5:15-16 says “Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil.” Colossians 4:5 says, “Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, redeeming the time.”

Unlike many of the other resources God has given us, time is not renewable. We may lose money, but we can always earn more. We may lose our possessions, but we can always acquire new ones. But time is a non-renewable commodity. If we squander our time, it is lost forever.

All of us, but especially Christians, must carefully manage the time that God has given us. It is a valuable resource, and we can either spend it on ourselves or redeem it as a spiritual investment. We can spend it only once, and how we spend it can have eternal consequences. Let us not waste the resources God has given us. Instead, let us redeem the time and use it for God’s glory.

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Anxious for Nothing (magazine article)

“Death is the only joy, and the only release.”

“Contrary to popular belief, there is no hope.”

What gloomy thoughts. The first came from the classified section of a college newspaper, the second from an anonymous inscription on a classroom blackboard. Both exhibit what psychologists call “existential anxiety”—frustration with a meaningless existence.

I was plagued by similar anxiety as a college freshman until some friends exposed me to the claims of Jesus Christ as found in the Bible. After accepting Him as Savior and Lord, I found that He freed me from slavery to anxiety. As a psychology major, I was fascinated, first to observe that many serious psychological disorders stem from smaller problems, and in turn to watch Jesus deal with these problems in my life.

Let’s consider two definitions and then examine four main causes of anxiety.

“Anxiety” represents a state of emotional turmoil characterized by fearfulness and apprehension. {1} It is not external stress, but an internal reaction to strenuous circumstances. {2} A “Christian” is an individual who has recognized his lack of fellowship with God and placed his complete trust in Jesus Christ as the only means of restoring that relationship.

Four causes of anxiety are guilt, fear, lack of interpersonal involvement and lack of meaning in life.

Guilt

Failure to achieve standards (internally or externally imposed) often results in guilt feelings. Often psychologists attribute these feelings to problems in the past or to following legalistic moral codes. Many persons do have these problems, but a more plausible explanation for guilt feelings is that a person has them because he is guilty. If this is true, then therapy for a person experiencing guilt feelings would include admitting his guilt. This, however, can be rather difficult.

O. H. Mowrer, a psychologist at the University of Illinois, points out the dilemma:

Here, too, we encounter difficulty, because human beings do not change radically until first they acknowledge their sins, but it is hard for one to make such an acknowledgement unless he has “already changed.” In other words, the full realization of deep worthlessness is a severe ego “insult,” and one must have a new source of strength to endure it. {3}

Jesus provides the strength needed to endure it. We must come to Him, admitting our sin and worthlessness, but the moment we accept Him as Savior, God forgives all our sins past, present and future. The Bible says that “He (Jesus) personally carried the load of our sins in His own body when He died on the cross . . . “{4} and “. . . paid the ransom to forgive our sins and set us free....{5} Each year we spend thousands of dollars in the hope that psychology and psychiatrists will solve our guilt problems. Yet the complete forgiveness—freedom from guilt—Jesus offers is free of charge.
Fear

Let’s consider two types of fear: of death and of circumstances. Fear of death is perhaps man’s greatest fear. When I was a sophomore in college, the student rooming next to me was struck by lightning and killed. His death shocked the men in my house, and they began to consider seriously the implications of death. Anxiety struck.

The person who accepts Christ as his Savior has no problem with death. The moment he receives Christ, his eternal relationship with God begins. The apostle John writes to Christians, “. . . God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life. . .” For the Christian, death loses its terror.

Fear of circumstances can also produce anxiety. Daily anxieties common to all of us include fear of inadequate finances, of social inadequacy, and fear for our personal safety and health.

All of these fears tend to occupy our minds and to keep us from enjoying the privilege of being alive. Enough worry and we soon find ourselves merely existing. But can we really be secure?

Financial security is tenuous, injury and danger are as near as the car whizzing by on the highway, and we can never be certain that everyone likes the way we act.

One summer I drove from Washington, D. C., to California with four girls. After that experience, I know the meaning of fear. Facing this responsibility, I became somewhat apprehensive. What would I do if a car broke down or one of the girls got sick? What if we had an accident? Also, the girls expected me to make all the decisions for the group.

At times, I became fearful, until I remembered what Jesus told His disciples: “Men, don’t worry about what you are going to eat or drink or wear. Your Father in heaven loves you and knows what you need. Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” And it works.

Lack Of Involvement

William Glasser, a medical doctor, writes in his book, *Reality Therapy*, that every man experiences two basic needs—the need to feel a sense of worth to himself and to others, and the need to love and to be loved. He says that the best way to satisfy these needs is to develop a close friendship with another person who will accept him as he is, but who will also honestly tell him when he acts irresponsibly.

Interpersonal relationships are important, but people are only human and do let us down and err in judgment. Wouldn’t the ultimate therapy be to become involved with our creator? He is faithful and righteous, never lets us down, and always has the best advice. Because He loves us, the Christian experiences freedom to love others. We are worth much to Him: “God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.” A person forgiven values himself, because he is “a new creature.” He is secure in Christ. The apostle Paul writes: “I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Lack Of Meaning

Another doctor conducted studies of 31,000 Allied soldiers who were imprisoned in Japan and Korea
during the 1940’s. He found that, although sufficient food was offered to them, more than 8,000 died. He diagnosed the cause of many deaths as “despair.”

Contrast this situation to that of thousands of Christians who have spent years in prison for their faith in Christ, only to be released to continue sharing God’s love, especially to those who persecuted them.

The Savior’s love sustains them and motivates them as “ambassadors for Christ.” What greater purpose could there be than serving as an ambassador for the King of kings?

A Common Question

Frequently it is suggested that Christianity could be merely a psychological “trick” or gimmick. After all, the reasoning goes, if someone thinks that the Bible is God’s Word, couldn’t he convince himself that what it says sounds true, and that through following the Bible he has found a groovy lifestyle?

After doing some research, I must conclude that Christianity could not be an illusion. There are three reasons for this.

The first concerns the object of the Christian’s faith–Jesus Christ. The evidence for His deity, His resurrection, the prophecies He fulfilled and the lives He has changed present an overwhelming case for the validity of His claims. Because the object of my faith is valid, I believe faith in that object to be valid as well.

The second reason has to do with the nature of human personality, which is composed of intellect, emotion and will. Psychologists feel that our will does not have complete control over our emotions. Nor does it seem likely that our intellect can completely control them. Yet some like those who have been imprisoned find it possible to love those who tortured them. Such behavior seems impossible, apart from supernatural intervention.

The third reason concerns the book that presents Christ’s answers to our problems–psychological and otherwise. The Bible, although written over a period of 1,500 years, in three languages and by 40 different authors (most of whom never met), has proved itself to be thematically coherent, internally consistent and historically accurate. Completed more than 1,800 years ago, it contains the cure for the psychological problems experienced by countless thousands of people today. The Bible is a supernatural book!

As a college student, I was curious to see what a professional psychologist would think of these views. Having written a term paper for my abnormal psychology course investigating how Jesus treats anxiety (this article contains some thoughts from that research), I sent a copy of my paper to the author of our textbook.

In his reply, he expressed an interest in the content. Several months later, I visited him personally, and he told me that he would like to have a personal relationship with Christ. After I shared with him the claims of Christ as contained in the “Four Spiritual Laws,” he prayed inviting Jesus Christ to come into his life. The latest edition of his text includes a short statement about the fact that many people today are finding psychological help through Christ.

Men everywhere are searching for freedom from fear and guilt. They need to know that God loves them. If you have never asked Christ to be your personal Lord and Savior, I encourage you to do so today. If you have, tell others how they can know Him.

He frees us to “be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with
thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus“{16}

Notes

2. McMillen S. I. None of These Diseases, p. 106.
3. Mowrer O. H. “Sin, the Lesser of Two Evils,” quoted in Henry Brandt’s The Struggle for Peace.
4. I Peter 2:24, Living Bible.
5. Colossians 1:14, Beck.
6. I John 5:11,12.
7. Matthew 6:31-33, paraphrased.
11. II Corinthians 5:17.
12. Romans 8:38,39.
13. “A Scientific Report on What Hope Does for Man,” (New York State Heart Assembly, 105 East 22 St, N.Y.), quoted in McMillen's None of These Diseases, p 110.
14. II Corinthians 5-20.
15. McMillen, p. 77.

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