

# Carmel Counseling Center

February 2012



## Leaning Into Loneliness Wendy Eunice, MA, LPC

Valentine's Day brings excitement for some and a sense of loss for others. Even the best relationships have moments of feeling disconnected emotionally. Married folks can blame this on the lack of connection with a spouse; however, single/divorced/widowed folks experience a similar lack of connection and attribute it to the lack of a spouse. Since Genesis 3, we all experience a lack of connection and/or loneliness and try to find something to pin it on...and something to remedy its malaise.

Our first response is to ward off any pending lonely feeling at its first sign like we would a cold at the slightest tickle in our throats, popping Vitamin C. We want to nip it in the bud. To prevent our loneliness we can phone a friend, bury ourselves in work; engage in mindless internet reading or entertainment. Text messages and social media on our phones give us more methods of communication than ever, yet loneliness is pervasive. What would happen if we decided to lean into this dreaded feeling of loneliness instead of reaching for the nearest form of relief? What if we choose to sit in it, take our shoes off and stay a while? We would probably soon realize it is not nearly as scary as we thought it was going to be, and we may even find it as a surprising gift.

Consider the following quote from Henri Nouwen:

But the more I think about loneliness, the more I think that the wound of loneliness is like the Grand Canyon – a deep incision in the surface of our existence which has become an inexhaustible source of beauty and self-understanding. The Christian way of life does not take away our loneliness; it protects and cherishes it as a precious gift. Sometimes it seems as if we do everything possible to avoid the painful confrontation with our basic human loneliness, and allow ourselves to be trapped by false gods promising immediate satisfaction and quick relief. But perhaps the painful awareness of loneliness is an invitation to transcend our limitations and look beyond the boundaries of our existence. The awareness of loneliness might be a gift we must protect and guard, because our loneliness reveals to us an inner emptiness that can be destructive when misunderstood, but filled with promise for him who can tolerate its sweet pain... We easily relate to our human world with devastating expectations. We ignore what we already know... that no love or friendship, no intimate embrace or tender kiss, no community, commune or collective, no man or woman, will ever be able to satisfy our desire to be released from our lonely condition. This truth is so disconcerting and painful that we are more prone to play games with our fantasies than to face the truth of our existence.

(Henri Nouwen in 'The Wounded Healer')

Instead of the rush to remedy our loneliness, we should first try to spend a few moments in prayer, reading some scripture, or meditating on God's truth. God gives marriage, friendships, and the church to fill many longings we have, but the ache that remains points us to go to Him, "who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God." (2 Corinthians 1:4)

## ***Carmel Counseling Center***

***Compassionate Counseling, Distinctively Christian***

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**“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.”**

**2 Corinthians 1:3-4**

