

Isolation Small Group Guide

Warm-up Question: (Choose one, make up your own, or skip this part all together, depending upon the nature of your group.)

1. Describe one of your earliest friendships.
2. How involved on social media are you: very involved, fairly involved, involved a little, not involved at all?

Read the following passage: Luke 8:26-31, 38-39.

This is a fascinating passage on multiple levels. It is interesting to note that the dark forces operating in this man's life drove him "into solitary places." We, too, experience internal and external pressures that can lead us into isolation. In fact, in our current cultural context, loneliness has reached epidemic proportions. One author puts it this way.

Among epidemiologists, psychiatrists, public-health officials, and social scientists, there is a growing consensus that the number one health crisis in America right now is not cancer, not obesity, and not heart disease—it's loneliness.

Ben Sasse, *Them: Why We Hate Each Other—and How to Heal*

A recent survey conducted by the giant health insurer, Cigna, indicated that the majority of people in the United States sometimes or always feel like nobody knows them well. Perhaps surprisingly, young adults are the demographic most likely to feel alone. But God does not intend for us to live in isolation. With his help, we can lean into healthy relationships in which we are really known.

Questions for Discussion (Choose several that are relevant for your group):

1. Do you ever struggle with loneliness? Are there circumstances that seem to make you more prone to isolate yourself? Explain.
2. Read 1 Corinthians 12:21-26. What should the attitude of followers of Jesus be toward relationships with other believers?
3. In John 4 Jesus had a conversation with a Samaritan woman who was at a well, alone, at a time of day when women typically did not make such trips for water. It's pretty clear she was avoiding other people. As her conversation with Jesus continued, it became clear that her life was marked by relational dysfunction: she had been married to five different men and was now living with a sixth. Explain how past pain can cause us to keep people at arm's length, or even avoid them all together. Is there anything in your past that is creating obstacles to connection in the present?

4. When a great demonstration of God's power did not lead to spiritual renewal in Israel, but instead put his life at risk, Elijah became disillusioned and ran away from everything (1 Kings 19:1-18). Have you ever done, or felt like doing, something similar? How do we know the difference between taking some healthy time to ourselves and running away from relationships and responsibility?
5. As the ancient account recorded in Genesis 3:1-8 indicates, sin can cause us to hide from people, and even from God. What are some of the "false selves" that we project to others? What are some things we try to hide? How can we get to a place where we present an authentic self to others?
6. Have you ever felt overlooked or abandoned by others? Explain. What should we do in such moments?
7. How known do you feel in your life right now? How would you rate your own level of connectedness? Is there anything you would like to see change in your relationships? Explain.

Pray