



Loneliness is a type of suffering.

Loneliness is much worse than being stuck in a traffic jam or having to do without cheesecake. Perhaps we hardly think of its calling for courage, because we hardly think of it as real suffering, yet it fits the simplest definition I know: having what you don't want, or wanting what you don't have. Loneliness we don't want. It comes from wanting what we don't have.

Elliot, Elisabeth. *Finding Your Way through Loneliness: Finding Your Way Through the Wilderness to God* (p. 109). Baker Publishing Group.

Loneliness is suffering that comes from wanting what we don't have.

SERIES BIG IDEA:

Loneliness is a gift that leads me to Jesus and allows me to experience His greater grace.

Reach up to receive God's grace in loneliness and reach out to give to others in my loneliness.

R: Recognize my loneliness, including its source, symptoms, and risks.

E: Express my loneliness to God and another person.

A: Anticipate that God will transform my loneliness into something positive and useful for His purposes.

C: Choose to connect with God and others.

H: Honor God in my loneliness by dedicating my season of loneliness to God.

Suffering is a wilderness experience. We feel very much alone and helpless, cut off from others who cannot know how we suffer. We long for someone to come to our aid, be "company" for us, get us out of this...In the wilderness of loneliness we are terribly vulnerable. What we want is OUT.

Elisabeth Elliot, *The Path of Loneliness* (p27,29)

Loneliness is a grief from suffering loss.

Lament is how we continue to reach up to God in the seasons of grief from suffering loneliness.

Lament is a gift God gives us in our suffering to lead us into His grace.

TEACHING BIG IDEA:

I experience hope and strength by lamenting through my sufferings.

Lamenting in loneliness provides hope in our pain and anchors our faith in God's goodness.

¹ How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?

² How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart?

How long will my enemy triumph over me?

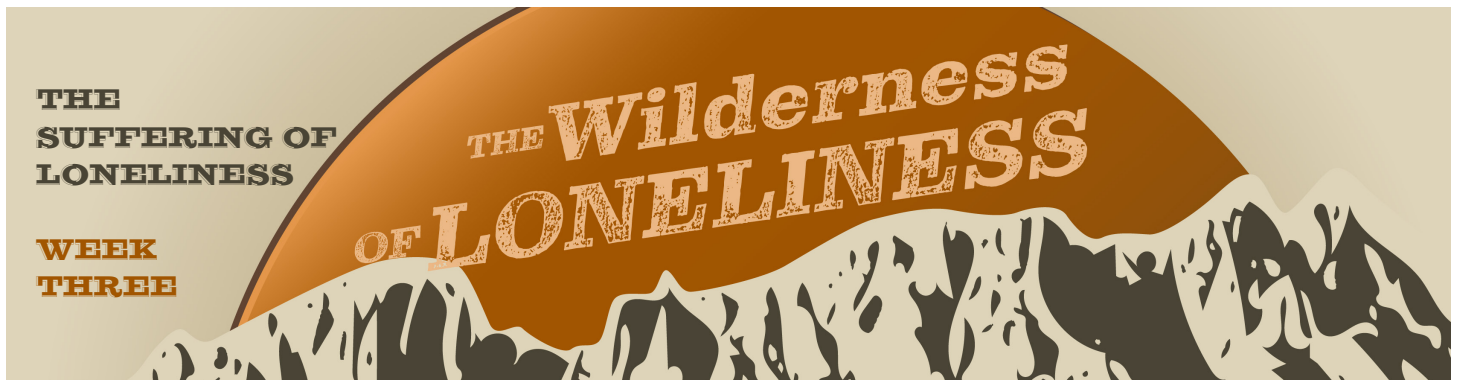
³ Look on me and answer, Lord my God. Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death,

⁴ and my enemy will say, "I have overcome him," and my foes will rejoice when I fall.

⁵ But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation.

⁶ I will sing the Lord's praise, for he has been good to me.

Psalms 13:1-6 (NIV)



The Ancient Process of Lament:

1. **Turn to God.**
2. **Complain about my pain.**
3. **Ask boldly for what I need.**
4. **Trust God's goodness and thank Him.**

³ "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
Matthew 5:3-4 (NIV)

There is comfort for those who lament, and God's kingdom is for those in the wilderness of loneliness.



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TEACHING SUMMARY:

The ways we describe loneliness all point to how loneliness is a type of suffering. In the many ways we describe being lonely, the sadness of suffering from being excluded is common. We suffer because we want something that we cannot have or have something we do not want.

In the suffering of loneliness, we experience the grief of loss. While the narratives of loss are varied, all grief from loneliness is expression of our suffering.

God has given His people a voice for our grief called lament. Lament is a way for us to reach up to God to discover His grace in our sufferings. This ancient practice leads us to experience hope as we anchor our faith in the goodness of God.

While our loneliness may last longer than we want, the prayer of lament will give us the strength to endure the wilderness of loneliness. Those who endure the wilderness of loneliness will be comforted, and those who have been rejected will inherit the Kingdom of God.

TALK-IT-OVER:

What metaphors or similes have you heard or used that express the feelings of loneliness?

Why do you think people ignore their grief? How can understanding loneliness as grief influence our approach to enduring through it?

Which part of the lament practice is easier for you? Which part is challenging?

What is one next step you need to take today?

Who do you need to tell about what you've learned?

DAILY SCRIPTURE READING:

- Day 1) Psalm 143:7-9
- Day 2) Matthew 26:37-39
- Day 3) Psalm 33:1-9
- Day 4) Isaiah 51:4-8
- Day 5) Psalm 36:5-9
- Day 6) John 14:15-27