REPLACING LONELINESS WITH LOVE

By Paul Meier, M.D.

Do you ever wonder, “How can I send 100 Christmas cards each year to friends and relations and still feel all alone in the world?” If so, ask yourself these questions:

1. How loving am I to myself? Do I say negative, derogatory things to myself that I wouldn’t say to Jesus or to my best friend? If so, you may be unintentionally setting yourself up to be lonely. You haven’t decided to love yourself yet.

2. How many friends do I have who know all of my secrets and love me anyway, unconditionally, in spite of all my faults (and the book of James says we all fail in many ways). So quit expecting yourself to be perfect – you will never be perfect in this life.

3. Do I chat with my Heavenly Father, His Son, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit every day? Do I just sit for a while every day in silence, listening for God to tell me something?

At least 80% - 90% of the clients I see at our Meier Clinics Day Program report that they don’t have a single friend who knows all their secrets. And these are very successful people – business owners, doctors, pastors, homemakers, engineers, teachers, etc.

James 5 says that if we confess our faults one to another, we will be healed. I think James meant all kinds of healing can result from confessing our faults, failures and feelings to significant others who love us in spite of these things. In our Day Programs, people are in group therapy several hours a day practicing James 5:16. They tell stories of horror about childhood sexual abuse, physical abuse, and/or verbal abuse.

I think we all wanted to love and be loved when we were babies. When we were children we told the truth about being angry when we were angry, being hungry, being wet or soiled, being too cold or too hot. Even wanting to love our moms, dads and siblings, and desiring to be loved in return.

Eighty-five percent of our personality is formed by our sixth birthday. But Philippians 4:16 says we can change, with God’s help, no matter how old we are. If our moms and dads encouraged us to be honest about our feelings (even if angry), listened to our feelings, valued our feelings, and gave us lots of hugs and affirmation, then it will be quite easy to love and be loved as adults. But if they ignored us, we believe the lie that we aren’t worthy of being noticed. We received verbal and nonverbal messages that we weren’t worthy of living and may have even had thoughts of wanting to die or commit suicide. So, even today, we may wish for death as adults to please our parents.

If they punished us for being honest about our anger and other emotions, we learned to become intellectual and suppress our feelings. We become successful adults who are emotionally underdeveloped. We’re not even aware of our own emotions. We repress them to protect ourselves from the rejection and loneliness we felt as young children when we were aware of our feelings and shared them openly and honestly. We have become dishonest people, seeking to hide or deny our true feelings.

If our parents were verbally, physically, or sexually abusive, the lies we came to believe about ourselves are even worse:

1. I’m trash.
2. I deserve to be abused
3. I’m so bad my parents had to abuse me in disgust.
4. I’m disgusting.
5. No one who knows all my innermost thoughts and secrets could possibly love me.
6. God doesn’t even love me. How could He?
7. God may not even exist, or if he does, he seems off at a distance.

These are the kinds of lies I hear every week from very intelligent and otherwise outwardly successful patients who are also very lonely. Why do people push others away to avoid an intimate relationship, even from God? I think it’s mostly fear of getting hurt again like in the past.

So go ahead and protect yourself from painful people. It was the right thing to do when you were younger. It did protect you. But remember that God created us to love and be loved. We must find safe people to connect to now. Psalm 68 says God takes the lonely and places them into new families. So get fathered, mothered, “brothered” and “sistered” now!

Paul Meier, M.D., is the founder of the nation-wide Meier Clinics (www.meierclinics.org) established in 1976. He is widely acknowledged as a pioneer in the integration of the physical aspects of man with the psychological and spiritual dimensions.

Dr. Meier received his Masters of Science degree in Cardiovascular Physiology from Michigan State University, his Medical Degree (M.D.) from the University of Arkansas College of Medicine, and completed his psychiatric residency at Duke University. Dr. Meier attended graduate courses at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois, in 1975-76 while as a full-time faculty member. He also holds a Master of Arts degree from Dallas Theological Seminary, where he served as a full-time faculty member in pastoral counseling for 12 years.

In 1999, Dr. Meier was honored by the American Association of Christian Counselors with a Lifetime Achievement Award at their Worldwide Conference. In 2006, Dr. Meier was named as a Physician of the Year by The National Republican Congressional Committee and honored at a reception by the President of the United States and Congress in Washington, D.C.

Dr. Meier has been a guest on numerous radio and television programs throughout his professional career, including Oprah Winfrey, The Tom Snyder Show, Dr. Norman Vincent Peale, Joyce Meyer, Paula White, and Radio Free Europe. He has been honored to teach and speak at many universities and seminars throughout the world, often lecturing on insight-oriented therapy and other related topics. Dr. Meier has authored or co-authored over 80 books and written numerous articles for magazines and other publications.