

THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY

LENT 2021 LEADER GUIDE

WEEK 3: LONESOME DOVE

03.07.2021

SESSION GOALS

This session's discussions and prayer will equip participants to:

- Reflect on the experiences of loneliness, especially in context of the Passion of Christ;
- Explore some of the faithful responses to loneliness.

SCRIPTURE: Mark 14:53-65

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Jesus is surrounded by opposition from all sides. From the religious leaders of Jews (priests) to the people that he taught and fed, even his very close friend Peter, Jesus is rejected and denied from every direction. Eventually on the cross, Jesus cries out "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (see Mark 15:34), pleading his loneliness before God. Perhaps, the most painful part of the Passion of Christ is the painful rejection and separation Jesus had to go through again and again. Watching the relationships he cherishes crumble before his eyes, Jesus' deepest pain may have come from the loneliness of grieving the separation.

Peter, who once professed Jesus to be the Son of God, is now silent as Jesus' identity is denied and condemned by the priests. As Peter draws nearer to the fire of the priests in Sanhedrin to warm up, Peter keeps his distance far away from Jesus, who came as the Light of the World. Loneliness perhaps is not birthed by "the absence of," but rather by "the ill-suited presence" of the truth. Jesus, even being in the most vulnerable position, does not give up the truth and does not cease to present the truth, even if it means that he is the only one speaking of the truth.

SUGGESTED LEADER PREPARATION

1. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide your preparation, and your class as you present this guide to your participants.
2. Carefully read the scripture and take note of what stands out to you.
3. With the insight you have gained during the scripture reading, go through the leader guide to add/modify/eliminate any discussion questions or activities according to the needs of the participants.

LESSON PLAN

ENGAGE

ASK: According to the 2020 U.S. report from Cigna Health Services, 61% of those surveyed reported that they are lonely. Loneliness in Americans is up from 54% in 2019 to 61% in 2020.¹ Why?

Offer a moment of thinking in silence, ask participants to write down their thoughts, and share. After sharing their thoughts, please feel free to share the following.

SAY: According to Cigna, loneliness in Americans increased due to:

- Not enough social support
- Too few meaningful social interactions
- Poor physical and mental health
- Not enough balance in our lives

¹ For more information: www.cigna.com/static/www-cigna-com/docs/about-us/newsroom/studies-and-reports/combating-loneliness/cigna-2020-loneliness-infographic.pdf

EXPLORE

ASK: How is your response similar/different from the ones provided by Cigna?

SAY: Loneliness can have some serious consequences in our lives. Not only does it lower productivity at work significantly, there is a 45% increased risk of mortality in seniors who report feeling lonely. Loneliness is more dangerous than obesity and as damaging to health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day, according to Health Resources and Service Administration.²

² <https://www.hrsa.gov/eneews/past-issues/2019/january-17/loneliness-epidemic>

ASK: How is loneliness impacting our everyday lives? How is it impacting you?

COMMUNE WITH THE WORD

ASK: From today's passage, as well as from the other parts of the Passion of Christ, how is Jesus responding to being in such a lonely place of being rejected, denied, and disowned? (Think about what he says and does, and what he doesn't say and does not do.)

(OPTIONAL) ACTIVITY: Many Bible characters found themselves in lonely place. Think about the story of Job, Hannah, Joseph, etc. Which character's experience of loneliness do you relate the most? What about their journey resonates with you?

EMPOWER

ACTIVITY: Who among us or around us are like Jesus, found in an unexpected place of shame and loneliness? Who in our lives is God calling us to visit, serve, and minister to? I invite us to close our eyes, ask the Holy Spirit to reveal whom we can go and serve, and what we can do to serve them.

ASK: We may or may not share, but I would like us to think about what we do when you are overwhelmed with isolation and loneliness. Thinking about the stories of Jesus, and perhaps other characters in the Bible, as well as the report from Cigna and HRSA, what are some of the healthy coping mechanisms? What about the unhealthy ones?

CHURCH-WIDE MISSION: SHARING SHOES & JOY IN PERU

"Most of the boys are here because they were abandoned, because of abuse. The community here doesn't want to see it; people don't call them by their names. They call them 'those guys from the home.'" This is how the orphanage director described the boys we were visiting in Cusco, Peru. These boys were rejected, first by their families and then by the community. They were denied recognition and dignity. "That's why it's important for you to come here and get to know them by their names. It's important for them to see that someone cares for them just as they are."

- Lanie Williams, Mission Coordinator

** On this trip in 2014, over 400 of the Christmas backpacks we delivered were filled by Custer Road families.*



Playing games with the boys in the orphanage was one way we showed that we cared for them..

Join us in serving families in Peru by donating new shoes and socks, volunteering to sort and prepare shoes for delivery, or donate to help build more bathrooms.

LAUNCH

Dear Lord,
When loneliness seems overwhelming,
Make your presence known.
This world seems so full of death and destruction,
but you are a God of life and restoration.
Mold us into an unwavering people of grace,
passion and love that cannot ever be ignored.
Amen.

This prayer was written by the Rev. D.G.Hollums.