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Loneliness in a Connected World

This article draws some content from the "Atlantic" feature... 'Is Facebook making us Lonely?

by Stephen Marche.

The Epidemic of Loneliness:

In this world of instant communications, unbounded by time and space, we suffer from unprecedented alienation. We have never been more detached from one another, or lonelier. We live in an accelerating contradiction: the more connected we become, the lonelier we are.

Mother Teresa said, "Loneliness and the feeling of being unwanted is the most terrible poverty."

In this century we are living in an isolation that would be unimaginable to our ancestors and yet we have never been so accessible.

Connections have grown broader, but shallower. Technology has delivered to us a world in which we may not be out of contact for a fraction of a moment.

The age of Facebook and Twitter brings with them the danger of not letting us isolate, but at the same time threatens to alter the very nature of solitude.

In 1950 less than 10% of American households contained only one person. By 2010 nearly 27% had just one person. This doesn't mean a person living alone is always unhappy or lonely. Research shows that it is the quality not the quantity of social interaction that predicts loneliness. It is not isolation that is raising sharply; it is loneliness too.

Loneliness is not just a matter of external conditions; it is a psychological state.

"Loneliness is a feeling of lack of intimacy on many levels.

Lack of intimacy may lead to emotional isolation, which may lead to social isolation."

Here are some questions in the UCLA loneliness scale:

- How often do you feel that you are in tune with the people around you?
- How often do you feel that you lack companionship?

A 2010 survey showed that 35% of adults older than 45 were chronically lonely, opposed to 10% ten years earlier.

Another survey showed 20% of Americans (60 million people) are unhappy with their lives because of loneliness. Physicians and nurses speak openly of an epidemic of loneliness.

Causes vary: It could be your marriage? Sherry Turkle wrote a book entitled, "Alone together".

A wife or husband may look to the internet for relationships, but the problem is that digital intimacy is ultimately incomplete. The ties that we form through the internet are not the ties that bind! But they are the ties that preoccupy. These days bonds are less meaningful; there is a decrease in quality social connections.

In 1985 10% said they had no one with whom they could discuss important matters, 15% said they only one such friend. 2004 25% had no one to talk to. In this time of social disintegrations we have essentially hired an army of confidants.....professional carers.

In the late 40's the US had 2,500 psychologists, 30,000 social workers and about 500 marriage therapists. In 2010 77,000 clinical psychologists, 192,000 clinical social workers, 400,000 non clinical social workers, 50,000 marriage family therapists, 105,000 mental health counsellors, 220,000 substance abuse counsellors, 17,000 nurse psychotherapists, and 30,000 life coaches. We need professional therapists more and more because of societal breakdown.

1. Being lonely is bad for your health; More likely to be put into a geriatric home earlier, less likely to exercise, more likely to be obese, less likely to survive a serious operation, more likely to be depressed or suffer sleeping problems.
2. The drive for isolation is always in tension with the impulse to cluster in communities that cling and suffocate. You know the porcupine parable; when cold he huddles together for warmth and shuffles away in pain, always separating and congregating.
3. There is a decline in social capital. Now TV has dominance over culture and there is the self absorption of the baby-boomers, also we have the disintegration of the traditional family.
4. Research has shown Facebook brought slightly lower levels of "social loneliness", a sense of not being bonded with friends, but it brought a significantly higher level of family loneliness.... not being bonded with family. Facebook encourages more contact with people outside of family at

the expense of family relationships.

In some cases it could be that outside relationships were sought because of poor family relationships.

Loneliness effects us physically.....medical tests have shown loneliness penetrates into the deeper recesses of the cell to alter the way genes are being expressed. It affects not only the brain, but the basic process of our DNA transcription. When you are lonely the whole body is lonely. The greater proportion of face to face interactions the less lonely we are.....the greater proportion of online interactions the lonelier we are.

The problem is then that we invite loneliness even though it makes us miserable. So are you going to buy your groceries from a human being or a machine? The machine may be faster, more efficient but?

New technologies lure us increasingly toward superficial connections. This brings a leaching of empathy.

Connection is not the same thing as a bond!

What About NZ?

2011-12 8,000,000 prescriptions for depression, insomnia, pain etc.Up 60% in 5 years

Pills to mask the symptoms of a deeper cause.

NZ at the higher end of the world spectrum.

What is the Answer?

Bring your loneliness to the Cross. ----- Jesus died that you may be connected to God.....abiding in Him. And he made the way for us to be connected to each other.

The Cross is vertical and horizontal Sometime we have to have help horizontally so we can be connected vertically with God.

Scriptures:

Let Jesus dwell in your connections with others, in your friendships. Come out of yourself to minister to others.

1 Cor 12: 26 If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together. Vs 27 Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

Galations 6:2 Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

Ephs 2:22 In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

Ephs 4:16 from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Psa. 68:6 God puts the solitary into a family; he leads out the prisoners to prosperity.

Quote from an invalid: "Loneliness is not an evil sent to rob you, it is

to drive you into the very heart of God; to increase your capacity for him. So that you may become a channel of his mercy to others.”

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