

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA

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Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will deal with the statement of Scripture **"It is not good for the man to be alone"** (Gen. 2:18). This is of particular interest for in one sense Adam was not alone. He was surrounded by birds, trees, flowers, and animals. Further, he was also in fellowship with God.

An article titled *"What Extreme Isolation Does to Your Mind"* was featured in the Oct. 18, 2012 issue of *Mother Jones Magazine*. During the 1950's Donald O. Hebb of Montreal's McGill University put volunteers "alone" into tiny rooms and deprived them of virtually all sensory input. They covered their eyes and ears to keep them from seeing and hearing. They wore gloves and placed cardboard tubes over their arms to limit their sense of touch. They would lie on a small bed and a U shaped pillow and the hum of an air conditioner helped to cancel any outside noise.

Hebb had hoped to study these volunteers for six weeks, but most lasted only a few days, and none over a week. A 1957 *Scientific American* article described the experiments. *"Nearly all of them reported that the most striking thing about the experience was that they were unable to think clearly about anything for any length of time and that their thought processes seemed to be affected in other ways."* Cognitive tests revealed that their mental faculties were temporarily impaired. Many suffered vivid hallucinations. One volunteer heard constant music from a phonograph, and another could not escape from the singing of a choir. Still another felt that his arm was being shot with pellets from a miniature rocket ship. One man could see nothing but dogs and another could not escape from visions of various types of eye glasses.

Hebb's work wasn't driven entirely by academic curiosity. There was a concern during the 1950s that the Soviets were using sensory deprivation to brainwash Canadian POWs in Korea. Certainly the experiment confirms the statement of Scripture that it is not good for man to be alone.

Perhaps the primary focus of God's concern for Adam involved procreation. Animals and birds could reproduce because they were both male and female. This, however, provides only a partial answer. Just as fish cannot survive without water and animals cannot breathe without air, man cannot thrive without the fellowship of other humans. This is particularly true of the "new life" experienced by Christians. The "new creation" needs the fellowship of the church. In this way we can teach, encourage, and admonish one another to grow into the likeness of Christ.

God calls some people like Paul to not be married. Paul could survive without a wife, but not without the church. While pets are appreciated, and human contact adds meaning, for the Christian, nothing takes the place of Christian fellowship. Remember! Paul was sometimes "alone" even though he was never abandoned by Jesus. When everyone else abandoned him the Lord stood by his side and gave him strength (2 Tim. 4:16). Still, when Paul faced the reality of his own execution, he wrote to Timothy and told him "come to me quickly" (2 Tim. 4:9). Demas had deserted him, Crescens had gone to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia. Only Luke was with him. He pleaded therefore with Timothy to come quickly and bring Mark, his cloak, his scrolls, and especially the parchments. Remember, Adam was in fellowship with God when the Lord said **"It is not good for the man to be alone"**. Consequently, even though Paul was in fellowship with Christ he still needed the fellowship of his brethren as well.

Fortunately, **“God is faithful; He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you can bear” (1 Cor. 10:13)**. Frequently God meets our needs through people. When Paul was a prisoner on his way to Rome by ship, they made a temporary stop at Sidon. It was here that the centurion allowed Paul’s friends to meet his needs (Acts 27:3). Later, in the midst of a storm, when his “friends” could not meet his needs God sent an angel to do so (Acts 27:23). Sometimes these “angels” are so much like men that we can’t tell the difference. That’s why we are encouraged to entertain strangers for by doing so some have entertained angels without knowing it (Heb. 13:2).

The fact that it is not good for man to be alone, of course, does not mean that we should never take time for personal prayer and solitude. Jesus taught us to enter into our closet and close the door when we pray (Matt. 6:6). The point is, it is not good for man to spend his entire life in a closet!

The Scriptures warn: **“Bad company corrupts good character” (1 Cor. 15:33)**. Please surround yourselves with people of good character. Yes! There are hypocrites in the church, but on balance the finest people in the world worship Jesus. Imagine, for example, that on some dark night you have a flat tire in the inner city. As you open your trunk to retrieve your spare tire you hear a dozen young men moving down the side walk in your direction. You probably would be comforted if you knew they were on their way home from a Bible study.

My happiest times have been in church. My dearest friends are in the church. When faced with a need I find the best help and counsel from my friends in the church. Christians do good to all people, but especially to those who are in the family of believers (Gal. 6:10). Paul knelt before the Father from whom His whole family in heaven and earth derives it’s name (Eph. 3:14-15). Without our spiritual family in the church we are “alone” spiritually, and this is not good. God sets the lonely in families (Ps. 68:6), and this includes the church. If you are not already part of a church family, please make the decision now to find a spiritual fellowship which will help you develop and mature into the likeness of Christ (Eph. 4:11-16).

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce