



# What's the connection?

Ever noticed two familiar strangers always following you? The guy and the girl? They catch your bus, laugh on billboards and pout at you from fashion boutiques. They mock you with perfect teeth, expensive clothes and tanned bodies as they splash along tropical beaches.

Meet Mr and Mrs Right – the advertising industry's perfect couple... young, carefree and in love. They really don't exist, but they're selling dreams, right? Unfortunately, for many of us, these ads only remind us that we're alone.

Alright, so now I'll introduce myself. I'm the guy who smiles a lot. I even sing really enthusiastically at church. But I harbour a secret like burning acid. I'm lonely. I have a stinging, sorrowful loneliness that sometimes leaves me feeling deserted even in a church that's full. I yearn for love, to be happily married, for my home to be filled with the laughter of friends.

I'm not the only sufferer. A 2008 report from the University of Tasmania found that one in three Australians aged 25 to 44 agreed loneliness was at times a serious personal problem.

The Bible knows about loneliness. King David once prayed to God, "Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely

and afflicted. The troubles of my heart have multiplied; free me from my anguish." (Psalm 25:16-17).

So what do I do when the pain burns inside? I fall to my knees and pray for God's mercy. I want the doorbell to chime and hear a courier say, "Special delivery from Heaven", with a gift waiting to take away my emptiness.

I admit, sometimes I wonder if God's listening. But then I remember Jesus knew loneliness intimately. His friends deserted and betrayed him before he was arrested, crucified and left abandoned on a cross.

Loneliness is separation. In our fallen world, we're all separated from God, so we all experience some loneliness. Ironically, Jesus's isolation at the cross was to remove ours. His lonely death paid for our sin and opened up the possibility of relationship with God. When a person comes to know Jesus, God lives in them by his Holy Spirit. Jesus called the Holy Spirit the 'helper' or 'comforter'.

I feel sad for those who ignore God, because the only way to really overcome permanent emotional and spiritual loneliness is to have a deep relationship with God that lasts forever.

**Prayer:** Dear God, love me when my courage falters and I feel lonely. Let me fully trust you to remove this loneliness of mine. AMEN.