



## Lonely singles

The story under Readers Forum (Vol. 62, No. 12: June 14, 2013) indicates to be about being single or being alone, without a partner. It soon becomes clear, however, that it is more about feelings of loneliness that are expected to disappear with "someone special in your life." This story is followed up with positive words of advice and encouragement, but will the feelings of loneliness stop?

Ups and downs in feelings and concerns about what others may think can easily be understood. Just recall your own teen years of doubts, unless you have erased them as too difficult to face. Feeling lonely in a crowd often results in withdrawal and in being alone, which further compounds the issue. The reason is that a feeling is purely subjective and not a reasonable, realistic fact. Generally speaking, negative feelings cause negative actions which in turn result in negative feelings. On the other hand, positive actions cause positive feelings which in turn stimulate positive actions. Therefore, to feel better means to act in a positive way. In other words, to stop negative feelings and to stop negative behaviour means to get involved in positive actions.

Loneliness can easily partner with boredom and idleness. These quickly wear down the defenses against sin, Satan, and self. "Idleness is (indeed) the devil's workshop." Being alone, lonely and inactive often appears to be more comfortable than fighting natural urges of feeling sorry for oneself. The ultimate comfort, however, is to acknowledge that one belongs with body and soul to the faithful Saviour Jesus Christ and not to the self. He gave us the Comforter to make each one of us share in Christ, in his suffering and resurrection, as well as in all his benefits and gifts. It is Christ-in-us that makes us able to do whatever it takes to deal with what we are faced with. Scripture shows that Christ is in us, and by the Spirit of God we are sons of God and more than conquerors (Romans 8).

One of Christ's benefits the Holy Spirit shares with us is the church. As a mature member of Christ's community can a believer ever be alone? Having been chosen and placed by him in the community of saints means not only that all do jointly "*have communion with him and share in all his treasures and gifts,*" but also that "*everyone is duty-bound to use his gifts readily and cheerfully for the benefit and well-being of the other members*" (LD 21 and text references).

Based on experience I like to add this concrete advice for lonely singles: get involved in that community, do your God given duty and participate in everything, whether it suits you or not. You'll be surprised that in due time, when you least expect it, God will put your life partner on your way, if that is his will. That partner is only "special" because it is God who brings you together. So in trust be prepared to serve and to learn to be committed to each other, for what God brings together cannot be severed. Therefore, rather than looking inward, reach out not only in prayer but in your daily activities among God's people. For example, be involved in not only young men or women Bible study societies, but take a friend along and be guests at men or women societies as well. Help out in other activities such as building construction, renovations, or cleaning as well organizing sport activities or congregational picnics. Above all, don't say that this or that is not your kind of thing. Create new habits, get out of your comfort zone and drop your facade. Dare to be who and what you are, a convinced believer in Christ's comfort zone who takes responsibility for the consequences of all actions, good or bad. Reformed people believe in change, forgiveness, and renewal. They repent daily and they renew their faith every week. If necessary, a clean start without biases in another congregation may be helpful. Remember, "*The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it*" (1 Thessalonians 5:24). Not you. So be active, ready, and alert.

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