

December 2011 R&R

Loving the Lonely

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Who are the unloved and lonely in the world? At first thought, we usually think of those in prison who have violated society's laws or whom our culture has placed a mark upon. But could it be a family member? Or do you see yourself as unlovable or lonely?

Now wait just one minute, you say? Aren't we all lovable since we are all made in the image and glory of God? Yes, we are, because everyone has been shaped and formed in the womb by the Master Sculptor. However that's not what I am asking.

Let's be honest, with ourselves at least, about our feelings for a moment. Is there one member of your immediate family, extended family, or church family that you or others just cannot seem to get along as well with, no matter how hard you try? Not that either of you is a bad person, but the personalities and interests are so different that the two of you find it hard to get along. You still care for them, but just cannot seem to get along with them as well as everyone else.

There are some dads/fathers who have had a difficult day at work and then come home to a wonderful home. They are stressed and fatigued physically, mentally, and emotionally, which makes it difficult to put aside work and show love to those who so desperately need him. Dads, is there one in your family that is harder to be close to at times, or easily frustrates you when your patience has worn thin? Husband, has your wife ever told you she is a failure in all she has done her entire life because she feels neglected, lonely, or unloved?

There are also some mothers/wives have had a similar hard day working away from home, or they have worked hard all day long as a homemaker and being a teacher to their children. After a while, is it the little things your family does that are irritating and get under your skin? Does what your child did that day feel like salt in an open wound? Do they or your husband become such an irritation to you that you just don't see how you can put up with one more minute of them?

Let's not leave out the children. If homeschooled, they are around the same people day, after day, after day. They are not going to get along at some point. One or two of siblings are going to get singled out because they are the easiest to pick on or they make the loudest noise when teased. If schooled outside of the home, they may grow to like their friends and emulate them while their own siblings become inferior and unwanted in their eyes. Do your children feel like they are a failure because of how they are seen by their peers or siblings? Does a younger brother or sister feel alienated by being the brunt of everyone's joke? Do they feel unwanted, unneeded, or unloved because their parents are too worn out with the day's trials and time constraints to pay attention to them?

Many people don't like to answer these questions for one reason or another, but many times the answer to these questions is a whispered "Yes." Our culture has sadly turned family members into individuals who are self-promoting with self-fulfilling ideas and purposes. We become so self-absorbed in what we want and desire that we fail to see the ones closest to us floundering and barely making it by in life.

So how do we love those whom we care about in life the most when we have nothing to give? The answer can be as simple or as complicated as you would like for it to be. There are numerous books on this topic that are 100's of pages in length. I think they all boil down to a couple of things.

1. **Always** remember that no matter what you think of yourself, in the sight of something pure and Holy, you are technically unlovable. But God being rich in grace and mercy loves you enough that He sent His one Son to die for you (John 3:16). Can you not at least show a little of the same love to your spouse or child?
2. **Never** get so involved in the things of this world to the point that your desire is not toward home and those waiting for you there. When we find ourselves in those situations, we must learn to say "No" and become less involved in the world's problems and issues in order to focus on the more important matters.