



Finding God in My Loneliness

Lydia Brownback

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Young or old, single or married, male or female--at some point in life, we're all confronted with loneliness. We try to fill the void or change our circumstances so we no longer feel the pain. But what if our pangs of loneliness are meant to point us to something greater?

Looking at various aspects of loneliness, Lydia Brownback reminds us of God's power to redeem our loneliness and use it in our lives to draw us to himself. Ultimately, she helps us see that even when we feel misunderstood, forsaken, or abandoned, we're never really alone. God is always with us, and only he can meet all of our needs in Christ Jesus.

Finding God in My Loneliness Details

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Dorothy says

This study on loneliness is timely and applies to all women in some way at some time in their lives. I find the author's writing is concise, and she deals with her subject thoroughly. There is a rich use of Scripture throughout. The questions at the end of each chapter are appropriate for group discussion and/or personal reflection--be sure to have your journal at hand. Personally, I learned that some of my choices have left me lonely, but that my focus on my devotion to Jesus Christ is the answer. Also, I need to seek out fellowship instead of using my disability as an excuse to wait for others to come to me.

I received a free copy of this book from Amazon in exchange for my honest review.

Sarah Trice says

Beautifully written. She really touches, exposes, and opens up some deep things some of us don't even know are there, but yet feel with frequency and frustration, unable to navigate what we can't even formulate into a sentence. It's almost like sitting across from an excellent friend with whom you've shared years of life experience with and having them speak into your trouble, heart break, trepidation, melancholy, struggle, and whatever else may grip your mind and spirit with a tender but truthful wisdom. The relateability and muscular content makes this a must read for everyone, in particular women of all stages and walks of life.

Bridgette says

I book I plan to turn to again when those seasons of loneliness return. One of the ideas that I keep using in my day to day life is that loneliness or longing isn't wrong, it's an alert. It should point me to something; it should point me to Christ and His lordship in my life. It should be an alert to refocus my attention on what my here and now is.

Dana says

I was recommended this book to read along side another book with a similar theme. I found Lydia's book to be carefully planned out and organized. The chapters were short and to the point. The book was filled with great vocabulary and intelligent thoughts. I felt as though the writer respected me as a thinking woman. I was convicted and encouraged to repent. I was pointed to Christ in every chapter. From the beginning of the book, I was given hope and a remedy for theme of the book. It was very applicable and many examples of people in scripture were used to spur me on toward Christ, my groom and his heavenly kingdom! Well done, Lydia! Thank you!

Rachel Dawson says

This is a pretty small book, and it wasn't very meaty in my opinion. I wanted a lot more personal stories and thoughts shared than there were, and I found that it came across pretty dry and a little preachy, despite being such a potentially intimate and emotional topic. I had higher hopes for this one, but wasn't a fan.

Kirsten says

An encouraging book that directs our gaze to Christ and how He has liberated us from our loneliness by partaking of the greatest loneliness Himself: "Jesus took on all our loneliness at the cross, where He was left alone to die, cut off even from His beloved Father. He knows the agony of loneliness, of being utterly alone, which we hear in His cry from the cross: 'My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?' (Matt. 27:46). Because He was forsaken, we are not. People may reject us, but we will never be forsaken by the one who matters most--God Himself." (pp. 162-163)

Also, Lydia Brownback does not hesitate to point out the necessity of weekly worship in order to be free from loneliness: "The lost and the lonely need Jesus--the real one--and they need churches that proclaim Him as He is shown in Scripture. A real church as set forth in the New Testament is not a support group. It's not a social club or a counseling center. It's a family of redeemed sinners who have God as their Father through their union with Jesus Christ. It's a body knit together by the Holy Spirit so that together all are built up and strengthened and loved. Church is God's idea. It is His protection and provision for His people. Spiritually speaking, we do not grow well in isolation. God planned that we grow in fellowship with other believers, sinners rubbing up against sinners, giving and receiving the love of Christ. In this lifetime, the church is where loneliness is redeemed." (pp. 151-152)

Yong Zhen Chua says

An ambitious book that has much potential but under-delivers.

Apparently, a book written exclusively for women, I had thought that it was for a general population. Am I supposed to assume, since the author is female?

The author had many thoughts that were interspersed between the chapters; she jumps back and forth between many points, attached with far too many examples presented in snippets, but never really expounding those ideas in depth.

What frustrates me the most is that the examples she used were very contextual, which may not necessarily relate to all readers, leaving those hypothetical situations to speak for themselves as valid points to the discussed type of loneliness. It might have been better if she went with a more big-picture explanation of biblical truths to delve deep into each type of loneliness.

There was also a ?printing error with the word "imminent", which was printed as "immanent", on page 84; both of which have two very distinct meanings.

Nevertheless, there were some merits to the book, since it is catered to the Christian female population. It is simplistic in its literary content and I would recommend this book to new believers, and especially those in need of some spiritual perspective to a personal experience of loneliness. I would not recommend it to those who have stronger theological/biblical foundation.

Laura says

I have nothing negative to say about this book! Lydia writes that *everyone* will be lonely at some point in their life. Whether from a move, life change, relationship status, death of a loved one, sin, whatever- we will all be lonely at some point. She then approaches how Christ is completely sufficient for us in any of those circumstances. I loved how she was respectful when she corrected wrong thinking; how her chapters were very specific, easy-to-read and also bite-sized; and how she wrote not only from her own life situation but in a way that is applicable to everyone. Her life was not the central focus of the book: Christ was. The only thing that can fill the desire for companionship in our hearts is the One who placed in us a desire for togetherness.

Melanie says

A very quick read, but also meaningful. I do think I read it a little too fast and so I want to reread someday. I liked how the book explained that no matter where you are in life, you can and will experience loneliness. Some people think that if only they were married, they wouldn't be lonely anymore...and that just isn't true -- as one of the chapters in this book showcases.

All in all, very good and eyeopening at times. I recommend it!

I received a complimentary eBook copy via NetGalley for my honest review.

NinaB says

I really wanted to love this book. It was, after all, recommended by The Gospel Coalition and the Mortification of Spin podcast and endorsed by some well known, respected Christian authors. We all could learn more on its topic and the solutions it offers. Who hasn't dealt with loneliness at least once in their life? It is necessary for Christians to have a proper, biblical view of this ubiquitous problem in our social media-saturated culture. However, I found that the author's hermeneutics are off in some parts.

What I didn't like about the book:

1. In the beginning of the book, she states that loneliness is a result of or sin. But later on, she says it really is not. For sure, loneliness exists because of the fall. But being lonely doesn't necessarily mean you're in sin. It's how you respond to loneliness that could be sin.
2. She makes a distinction between being lonely and being alone. God saw that Adam's aloneness as "not good," but it is not a result of the fall. But then throughout the book, she mixes loneliness and aloneness as if they're synonymous. It's quite confusing.

3. The chapters are organized so she addresses loneliness in different life circumstances: leaving, night, obedience, running away, grief, being different, being unclean, misplaced love, marriage, being unmarried. In the first eight of these, she uses biblical examples to make her point. This is where her hermeneutics is off. She forces her point in these characters, that they struggled with loneliness when they struggled with something else entirely. No doubt, they probably battled with loneliness, but it wasn't their main problem.

Leaving - she uses Abraham as an example. His problem was disobedience and not trusting the Lord. That's why he lied about Sara being his wife.

Night - this chapter seems out of place in the book. She addresses the literal loneliness of night and jumps to Jacob's wrestling with and being humbled by God. I don't really get the connection here. She also implies hating nighttime is the same as loneliness.

Obedience - she uses Joseph as an example, though she does admit the Bible isn't explicit in saying he was lonely when he was mistreated by his brothers, sold to Egypt, and wrongfully imprisoned. She claims Joseph overcame his loneliness by embracing God's purposes as his own.

Running away - she uses Elijah as an example, but his problem was not loneliness. His main issues were self-pity, discouragement, and fear of men. He focused on his circumstances, instead of God's character.

Grief - she uses David's grief over Absalom's death as an example here. David's real problem wasn't loneliness, but regret and guilt. His past sins led to Absalom's eventual demise. He grieved, of course, but grief is not synonymous with loneliness.

Being different - this chapter should've been entitled, "Loneliness in Being Sick." The author uses the example of the woman in Mark 5:25 who had been suffering from bleeding for 12 years. Based on this passage, the author concludes that if we focus on our sufferings, we will be lonely. She again assumes loneliness of being different was this sick lady's problem. I think her big issue was her disease.

Being Unclean - the author uses the demon-possessed man from Mark 5:1-20 as an example. She describes this man's situation and jumps to idolatry. True, idolatry makes us lonely, but this man's main problem wasn't idolatry and certainly not loneliness. His main problem was he was demon possessed! She says that the modern manifestation of demon possession may be in addictions, I.e. different forms of idolatry. It almost sounds like it's not our fault if we're addicts because we're just under the influence of the devil.

Misplaced Love - she uses the adulterous Samaritan woman at the well as an example. She goes from describing this lady with multiple husbands and her focus on filling her physical thirst (when Jesus was referring to spiritual thirst), to our tendency to abuse food and drink consumption as a way to cope with loneliness. It seems like a big jump.

What I liked:

1. It is saturated with Scripture. Sadly, many "Christian" books nowadays are all about man's opinions without a biblical basis. Ms. Brownback did a great job putting the focus on what the Bible says.
2. She has helpful questions at the end of each chapter that are great for discussions and self-examination.
3. Her conclusions on how to deal with loneliness in different circumstances are right on. Jesus is the answer.

He fulfills our every need. We can go to Him with our struggles. He went through them himself and is our greatest comforter because he knows what we're going through.

We're too focused on the little things, removals of suffering, that we fail to see the big picture of spiritual healing. We seek for any remedy to make us feel normal. It is Jesus. He gives us Himself, fills up what is lacking.

4. For the last 3 chapters and conclusion, the author did a phenomenal job addressing loneliness because she didn't use any biblical examples to make her point. For this reason, I cannot recommend these chapters enough. If only she applied this study method throughout the book.

5. She gives an outstanding emphasis on the importance of church involvement. We were made by God as relational beings, to fellowship and to belong in community. We do not have to be, and should not be, alone. The church is there to fill the need of belonging, even if we are single and/or struggling with loneliness.

5. Here are some wonderful gems and favorite quotes:

“Loneliness is an indicator that something is missing, and that something is found only in Jesus Christ.”

“Lonely times are preparatory times (for greater things).”

“Our problem isn’t God’s failure to heal, but it’s our expectation of what that healing should look like.”

“Singleness is not a problem to be solved.”

To an idolator, blessings become a means of bondage. (paraphrased)

Becky says

In *Finding God in My Loneliness*, Lydia Brownback argues that every person--every man, every woman, every child--experiences loneliness in one degree or another. It doesn't matter if you're young or old, if you're single or married or divorced, if you've got twenty kids or zero kids, if you're working six jobs or no jobs. Every person is prone to experiencing loneliness. (And there is a distinction between being alone and feeling lonely.) We're lonely for a reason: Eve ate the apple.

“God created human beings with a capacity for loneliness so that we would yearn for and find our all in him.”

“The loneliness we experience is a consequence of sin and has been ever since Adam and Eve disobeyed God. The couple hid from God after they ate from the forbidden tree, and that’s also when they began to hide from each other. Loneliness began in the garden.”

The goal of this one is to show readers that they are never truly alone, and that all of God's people have felt lonely. Each chapter examines a story--a person--from the Bible and deals with different ways of experiencing loneliness.

Favorite quotes:

"Self-seeking breeds loneliness; self-forgetfulness breeds fullness."

"We won't know him as our greatest treasure if our view of him is skewed, and the more we seek escape from our pain in worldly things, the more warped our view of God becomes. Instead of looking for a way out of loneliness, we need to look at Jesus. Only then will we discover that he is what we've been looking for all along. And only then will we really be willing to "sell" our earthly possessions and acquisitions for the sake of God and his kingdom."

"All relationships are tainted by brokenness in one way or another because all of us are tainted by sin. Worst of all are the guilt-ridden thoughts that demand a place in our overburdened heart. The hurtful remarks we wish we'd never said; the selfish things we wish we'd never done; the requests for help we refused to heed—no one can fix this for us. No kind words can erase the past. We are alone in our pain."

"When he paid for our sin on the cross, he bore the weight of its consequences too—every sorrow and every broken thing for every one of his people. It's beyond our comprehension, but it's true. He knows us personally, and his knowledge includes a comprehension of what each of us uniquely feels. We are not alone after all."

"We miss so much if we fixate on what we need to fit into the world around us. We imagine how much better life would be if only, but even if those if onlys come to pass, they won't fulfill us the way we think they will. Only Jesus does that. If we're not convinced, it's because we haven't really tasted how good it is—how good he is. Once we do, we won't despise our differences anymore. We certainly don't have to like them, but if they linger, we can come to know a sweetness that we wouldn't trade for anything. Are we willing? That's the real question. If we let him choose for us, we will find way more than we've been hoping for with all our striving."

"Unlike Jesus, we bring a good bit of our loneliness on ourselves through sin and selfishness. Unlike Jesus, we deserve to be lonely. Being left alone is a fit consequence for sin. But Christ hasn't left us there. He has come to rescue us from ourselves and all we do to destroy our lives and our relationships. He gives us himself when the people we love have left us. And he fills up from himself what no person or circumstance in this life can ever fill—that aching place in our heart we call "loneliness." During his earthly life and in his death on the cross, Jesus did loneliness for us. He is back with his Father now, and he comes to take us there too. Close your reading of this book with Jesus's words to lonely hearts: Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. . . . I am the way, and the truth, and the life. (John 14:1–3, 6)"

Annette says

I read this book twice before sitting down to write a review. I rarely do that. In fact, I must confess that sometimes with book reviews I try to speed read through just so I can meet the review requirement and move on to another book. It's not right but I maintain that my opinions of some books wouldn't be that much different even if I chose to simmer over them rather than speed through. That usually happens when I'm not overly fond of a book.

That's not the case here. I wasn't quite sure what to expect with this book. I don't consider myself a lonely person per se. But in the current season of my life I do find myself alone more and often would consider some moments lonely. My default in those moments is to get online and surf, watch a stupid movie, or text garble to someone.

This book challenged me to rethink my alone moments but even more so, to embrace my lonely ones as a

gift to drive me to Christ and His word. Full of scripture and theological insight, this is a great book for women, though I suspect men will find nuggets as well. Even though it's written from a single woman's perspective, the application is not at all limited to singles and, in fact, can be even more applicable to marrieds as well.

Highly recommended!

I received an ebook copy of this book from the publisher in exchange for an honest review. All thoughts are my own.

Doreen says

The opening of this book is powerful. It made me excited to read this book. Brownback articulated many things that I have felt and experienced but hadn't put words to. It helped me. It really blasts away some of the falsehoods we believe about loneliness. For instance, we often think that married people aren't lonely because they have someone there all the time....or that others we know aren't lonely because they put up so many happy posts on social media. We don't realize that EVERYONE deals with loneliness at times. We are not unique in this. Brownback states, "God created human beings with a capacity for loneliness so that we would yearn for and find our all in him:

In Genesis 2 God ordains the marriage of male and female as another aspect of his design for our aloneness. Yet he never designed marriage to fulfill the incompleteness or eradicate the aloneness. Rather, it more fully reveals our need for our ultimate destiny-to be in union with him" (location 59).

Marriage...a design for our aloneness...and a pointer to our need to be in union with God? I had never thought of marriage in this way and found it challenging my paradigm a bit. The whole book was very thought provoking.

She talked about how all the freedoms and options we have can increase our loneliness. "Because we no longer have to stay in one place and do life with the people also staying in this place, we don't make commitments" (location 99).

"The god of open options is a cruel and vindictive god...He promises you that by keeping your options open, you can have everything and everyone. But in the end, you get nothing and no one" (location 105) We engage in the push and pull of relationships....not wanting others to get close enough to hurt us but not wanting them to stop being an "option" either. I am around a lot of teenagers on a regular basis and I hear this kind of talk all the time. "Do you want to hang out this week?" "Maybe....if I'm not busy (read here – if no better option comes along) then I might come over..." We are more connected than ever (via technology) and, I believe, more lonely than ever.

Brownback talks about the various things we do to try to escape from loneliness and how they often breed more loneliness. Instead of trying to escape from it, she talks about redeeming it.

I could go on and on. This book challenged me and made me think about some of my own "coping mechanisms." It encouraged me and made me excited. It is a book I will come back to often. I can't recommend it highly enough.

Thank you to Crossway for providing me with a free e-copy of this book. All opinions are my own.

Lew Button says

Finding God in My Loneliness Lydia Brownback Published by Crossway Books

I was in my second year of college many years ago but I still remember a brief conversation I had with a classmate in this Christian college. He was the one I remember for the Christian mottoes in his room so I should have known I was going to hear a motto that day but I was lonely and desperate. So I said, “I am really lonely” and he replied, “You are never alone with Jesus”.

This is one of those phrases that I now label truthful but not helpful. Yes, Jesus promised never to leave us or forsake us but that truth did not relieve the loneliness I was experiencing at that moment and many times since. I would have benefitted more if my classmate had said, “There is a book by Lydia Brownback that you may find helpful”. Lydia Brownback had not started writing yet so I was on my own.

Few people want to talk about loneliness (maybe because we fear being put down). Few people want to read about it. Few people want to admit it so this book is both courageous and personal. This is not just about loneliness out there somewhere. The title is Finding God in My Loneliness. That’s personal.

Lydia Brownback is honest in reminding us that some loneliness is of our own making. For example she writes that “a great deal of loneliness comes from either a reluctance or an outright unwillingness to follow Jesus”. I have to admit that I was ready to put the book down at this point because I have experienced loneliness because I decided to follow Jesus. I don’t need any more guilt.

Thankfully, I kept on reading and was reminded that loneliness comes from living away from home. We are not in Eden. Loneliness began in the garden and in some measure we will experience loneliness until we finally arrive home. And loneliness isn’t all bad.

In chapter 2 the author responds to the lies of loneliness. The first of these lies is that loneliness is pure evil. In addressing this lie Lydia reminds us that loneliness can lead us to Christ. I made this discovery on my own when I went through a temporary career change and I can testify to the intimacy with Christ gained through that lonely time.

She goes on to talk about other lies about loneliness before moving on in Part 2 to different reasons for loneliness. Among the reasons or types of loneliness are the loneliness of leaving, the loneliness of night, the loneliness of obedience (Yes it can happen) the loneliness of grief, and the loneliness of marriage.

In telling the story of Abraham we reminded of the loneliness that comes from leaving and the loneliness of obedience. We are reminded of the loneliness of Joseph whose obedience got him thrown in jail where he waited for God to do what God had promised. Along the way we read about the loneliness of the unclean and the loneliness that comes from being different.

My college years are a distant memory and I have matured in many ways but there is still something in me that dreams of going back to that classmate holding up this book and giving him my best raspberry.

Loneliness is the dues we pay for living on this planet until it is redeemed. “God created us in such a way that we are complete only in and with him, which is why it is not until we have been perfected in glory that we will be forever free from the feeling that something is missing—that thing we call loneliness”.

This book would be a great resource for a Bible study and each chapter ends with questions for reflection. I know there are lonely people who would benefit by reading this book especially with a group of understanding and supportive fellow travelers.

I received a copy of this book from netgalley.com with the understanding I would write a review.

Kathy Humphrey says

The best book I've read outside of the Bible!!

I gave this book 5 stars because the author, Lydia Brownback, gave tremendous insight into why I am feeling so lonely...all backed up perfectly with scripture. Her writing style is easy and relatable; I almost felt as

though I were sitting in her living room listening as she spoke.

There's a story in scripture about a woman at the well where Jesus comes and asks her to give him a drink. After their exchange she realizes who he is and goes into her town saying, "Come! Meet the man who told me all about myself!"

I would say of this book and author, " Come! Read this book that told me all about my loneliness and it's cause" Nothing has compelled me more to seek the Lord with all my heart!
