



1 John 4:16

16 And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.

NKJV

God loves you. God loves me. What does being loved by God mean to you? Does it create a sense of awe in you?

Our appreciation for someone's love for us is determined by the sacrifice they make to meet our felt needs.

If you give me 10 dollars and I am a millionaire, I will not appreciate it very much.

But if you give me 10 dollars and I am broke and starving, I will be very forever grateful to you. You saved me from starving. I would appreciate it even more if I knew that ten dollars was all you had, and you sacrificed it all for me. You met my felt need.

Our appreciation for God's love for us is determined by our understanding of the sacrifice He made to meet our felt needs.

Today, I am 65 years old. 48 years ago, on my 17<sup>th</sup> birthday my felt need was I felt alone.

Feeling alone does not mean being alone.

Feeling alone occurs when we are suffering from painful emotions and we feel alone with our feelings.

Feeling alone with our painful feelings is a dark place. It is a dark place that God never intended for us to be in.

After the creation of the first man, God said, it is not good for man to be alone and He solved the problem. When God says something is not good, it is not good. It was not good in a perfect world. It is worse in a fallen world in which we suffer from all these painful emotions. (Grief, sorrow, depression, anxiety, fear, hopelessness, insecurity, insignificance, disappointment, frustration, anger, jealousy)

We all suffer from these painful emotions. One of the greatest causes of addiction is that people feel alone with their feelings. It is also one of the greatest causes of acts of violence and suicide. People that feel alone with their feelings become bitter.

Feeling alone with our feelings is a felt need for all of us.

48 years ago, on my 17<sup>th</sup> birthday my felt need was I felt alone with my feelings.

Birthdays and Christmas at my house did not amount to much. There was no birthday party with friends. There was no family meal and gatherings at our house for birthdays or Christmas. There were no cousins to share birthdays and Christmas with. My older brother Jim was not a part of our lives at that time. My older sister Sandy was married and lived in Ardmore, Oklahoma. She would invite me to join her husband's family the Newton's for lunch on Christmas day and that is what I did every year during my teen years.

New Year's Eve that year was worse than my birthday and Christmas. I was not dating anyone. No friends invited me over to their house. I did not have family members that invited me to be with them at their house. No one invited me to be with them. I felt alone with my feelings.

My favorite song at that time of my life was by a group called Three Dog Night. The song was called, "One is the Loneliest Number."

(Play this video.)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d5ab8BOu4LE>

One is the loneliest number that you'll ever do  
Two can be as bad as one  
It's the loneliest number since the number one

No is the saddest experience you'll ever know  
Yes, it's the saddest experience you'll ever know

'Cause one is the loneliest number that you'll ever do  
One is the loneliest number, whoa-oh, worse than two

It's just no good anymore since you went away  
Now I spend my time just making rhymes of yesterday

One is the loneliest number  
One is the loneliest number  
One is the loneliest number that you'll ever do

One is the loneliest  
One is the loneliest  
One is the loneliest number that you'll ever do

It's just no good anymore since you went away

One is the loneliest (number)  
One is the loneliest (number)  
One is...

**There are times in our life when God must allow us to experience the worst in life so that we can discover His best for our life!**

On New Year's Eve that year, I decided to attend a Communion service. It started at 11pm.

The church I had been attending since the previous summer was having this communion service. When I arrived, I discovered this church service was very different. I was given some written instructions when I entered the building. The instructions were designed to prepare you for the communion. The instructions began by saying you should not talk to anyone but God during the time you were in the building. It was a silent service; no preaching; no singing; no announcements; The only sound would be some occasional instrumental music. Even your prayers were to be silent prayers.

For someone who was feeling alone with their feelings, that order of service was not very appealing. I was there feeling alone surrounded by about 1000 people and I could not talk to anyone.

**You can be in a room with hundreds of people and feel alone with your feelings.**

I took my seat. I then read some more instructions and decided to follow them. The instructions gave me some guidance about what to talk to God about and with each instruction there was a promise from scripture. I started following the instructions one by one. Then I came to this instruction. The instruction was to thank God for always being with me.

The promise was in this verse.

**Hebrews 13:5**

**5 Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."**

**NKJV**

I had talked to God before, but I never felt that He had said anything personal to me. But when I read, "I will never leave you nor forsake you," it was like God spoke audibly to me. It impacted my soul unlike anything I had ever experienced. That specific promise from God addressed my felt need and the love of God became real to me in a way that I had never experienced it before.

I realized in that moment that Jesus had sacrificed Himself for my sin so that we could have a personal relationship that would be unlike any other relationship I had known or would ever no in my life!

He would never leave me or forsake me!

He was the only one who could promise He would never leave me or forsake me and keep the promise. Even the promise of marriage is only until death separates us.

It met such a felt need in my life and it was so meaningful to me that I wept. To think that Jesus would sacrifice Himself for my sin so that He could have that kind of relationship with me left me in awe. I devoted my life to Him. I became a follower of Jesus. A few weeks later I would follow in Him Baptism.

48 years later, on my 65<sup>th</sup> birthday, I am still in awe. Nearly 48 years ago on New Year's Eve, I believed the promise. Nearly 48 years later on my 65<sup>th</sup> birthday, I can declare He has kept the promise.

- He has kept the promise during the best times of my life and during the worst times of my life.
- He has kept the promise during the lean times in my life and during the most prosperous times.
- He has kept the promise during those times when I have been very ill physically or emotionally and during the happiest times of my life.
- He has kept the promise during those times when I have rejected His authority and when I have obeyed Him and the pain of obeying Him was overwhelming.

There has not been one moment in time for the last 48 years that He has left me or forsaken me.

- When I have been a fool and wandered, He has followed me and drawn me back to Himself.
- When I have been rude to Him and lashed out at Him in my grief, He has grieved with me and sent me comforting words and signs of His presence.
- When I have neglected Him and our relationship, He has continually reached out to me affirming His love for me, calling me back to Himself.
- When I have been disappointed in myself or others, He has affirmed who I am to Him and in Him and lifted me up.

Because He is the only one who can promise that He will never leave me or forsake me, He is my all in all.

- He is where I find my security.
- He is where I find my significance.
- To think that Jesus would sacrifice what He sacrificed so He could make this promise to all of us.
- To think that He would consider us to be more important than Himself.
- To think that He would leave what He left to become one of us.
- To think that He would be born of a woman.
- To think that He would be born into a family of peasants.

- To think that He would be born in a place like Bethlehem.
- To think that He would be subject to His parents and to evil and wicked rulers.
- To think that He would be raised in a place like Nazareth.
- To think that He would live among sinful people.
- To think that He would experience hunger, thirst, and fatigue.
- To think that He would choose 12 ordinary men to be His disciples.
- To think that He would choose one man that He knew would betray Him.
- To think that He would be rejected by His own people.
- To think that He would be falsely accused and convicted
- To think that He would be scourged
- To think that He would carry His own cross
- To think that He would be executed on a cross
- To think that He would bear in his soul the guilt of the sins of the whole world
- To think that He would feel forsaken by His heavenly father

To think that He would do all these things so He could promise you and I, I will never leave you or forsake you.

It is almost too much to ponder.

In the story of George Bailey in *It's a Wonderful Life*, God sent people to show him he was not alone. Those people even paid his debt.

(Play this clip till the one minute and four second mark.)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OfUV-F9jFro>

This morning God wants you to know that He has done something even better than sending people to meet your need. He sent His Son Jesus. He paid your debt. If you receive Him, He promises He will never leave you or forsake you.

I don't know what your felt need is this morning. But I believe God leads me to share things because there is at least one person here this morning that feels how I felt. God wants you to hear Him speak through me, "I will never leave you or forsake you." He wants you to believe the promise and devote your life to Him. He wants you to become a follower of Jesus.

Will you receive His promise? Will you devote your life to Him? Will you be a follower of Jesus? Will you follow Him in baptism?

Church with such wonderful promises, how can we not devote ourselves to go and make disciples by sharing the good news with others? Will you devote your life to Him and accept His mission for you to go and make disciples? We will train you how to do it.

Song-I Have Decide to Follow Jesus