

# **Loneliness in Counseling: Paul's Example of Gospel Companionship**

Kristin Silva Linder



“For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.”

**1 Corinthians 2:2**

"For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain."

**Philippians 1:21**

"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me."

**Galatians 2:20**

“What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord . . .”

**Philippians 3:8**



# **Paul Is Relentlessly Focused on Christ**

"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent."

**Colossians 1:15–18**

# **Paul Is Intimately Bound to the Body of Christ**



# Paul Is Intimately Bound to the Body of Christ

Their effect on Paul

- Joy and delight
- Gratitude
- Encouraged
- Comforted
- Refreshed and renewed

# Paul Is Intimately Bound to the Body of Christ

Their effect on Paul

Paul's engagement with them

“For I wrote to you out of much affliction and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to cause you pain but to let you know the abundant love that I have for you.”

**2 Corinthians 2:4**

“So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.”

**1 Thessalonians 2:8**



“It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.”

**Philippians 1:7–8**



# **Paul Is Like Christ**

# Paul Is Like Christ

Yearning

"O Jerusalem . . . how often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings."

**Matthew 23:37**

"Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today."

**Luke 19:5**

“For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you—that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith, both yours and mine.”

**Romans 1:11–12**



"As I remember your tears, I long to see you,  
that I may be filled with joy."

**2 Timothy 1:4**

“But since we were torn away from you, brothers, for a short time, in person not in heart, we endeavored the more eagerly and with great desire to see you face to face, because we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, again and again—but Satan hindered us . . .”

**1 Thessalonians 2:17–18**

# Paul Is Like Christ

Yearning  
Joy

“But since we were torn away from you, brothers, for a short time, in person not in heart, we endeavored the more eagerly and with great desire to see you face to face, because we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, again and again—but Satan hindered us. For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? For you are our glory and joy.”

**1 Thessalonians 2:17–20**



"Jesus . . . who for the joy that we set before him endured the cross . . ."

**Hebrews 12:2**



# Paul Is Like Christ

Yearning

Joy

Distress over sin

“And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, ‘Would that you, even you, had known on this day the thing that makes for peace!’”

**Luke 19:41–42**

“When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.”

**Matthew 9:36**

“I wrote to you out of much affliction and anguish of heart and with many tears . . . to let you know the abundant love that I have for you.”

**2 Corinthians 2:4**



“For even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were afflicted at every turn—fighting without and fear within. But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, and not only by his coming but also by the comfort with which he was comforted by you, as he told us of your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced still more. . . . I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting.”

**2 Corinthians 7:5–7,9**



# Paul Is Like Christ

Yearning

Joy

Distress over sin

Moved by faith

"O woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you desire."

**Matthew 15:28**

# **Paul's Union with Christ**

Demonstrated in his likeness to Christ

Evident in Christ's ministry to him in his relationships

# Loneliness in Counseling

Loneliness in the structure of counseling

Loneliness in the profession

Loneliness that is self-imposed

Loneliness of being unknown

# Being Known: How Union with Christ Shapes How We Share

It focuses our attention on Christ's work in others

It gives shape and direction to the impact we feel from our counseling



“Inwardly we die to sin and self and are raised into new life. But we also experience communion with Christ in His sufferings. We also share in the joys and triumphs of Christ that will eventually lead to the final triumph in the resurrection of our bodies.”

**Union with Christ: The Blessings of  
Being in Him, Sinclair Ferguson**

"I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ."

**Philippians 1:3–6**

“We find a pattern running through the stories of the saints of God in both Testaments [that] we might call the Christ-Pattern. Union with Christ in His death and resurrection serves as the ground plan of the Christian life and shapes the pattern of our lives. It creates a rhythm of sorrow and joy, of loss and gain, of death and resurrection.”

**Union with Christ: The Blessings of  
Being in Him, Sinclair Ferguson**



# Being Known: How Union with Christ Shapes How We Share

It focuses our attention on Christ's work in others

The Christ Pattern gives shape and direction to the impact we feel from our counseling

# Being Known: Practical Advice

Create a habit of framing your counseling through the Christ pattern

Share Christ's work with others



“Joining Christ means being joined to others who are joined to him. We don’t get Christ without also getting his people.”

**One with My Lord, Sam Allberry**

# Being Known: Practical Advice

Create a habit of framing your counseling through the Christ pattern

Share Christ's work with others

“For even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were afflicted at every turn—fighting without and fear within. But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, and not only by his coming but also by the comfort with which he was comforted by you, as he told us of your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced still more . . . Therefore we are comforted. And besides our own comfort, we rejoice still more at the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by you all.”

**2 Corinthians 7:5–7, 13**



“For even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were afflicted at every turn—fighting without and fear within. But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, and not only by his coming but also by the comfort with which he was comforted by you, as he told us of your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced still more . . . Therefore we are comforted. And besides our own comfort, we rejoice still more at the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by you all.”

**2 Corinthians 7:5–7, 13**

# Being Known: Practical Advice

Create a habit of framing your counseling through the Christ pattern

Share Christ's work with others

- Share suffering in broad strokes and your own heart in more specific detail



“For even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were afflicted at every turn—fighting without and fear within. But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, and not only by his coming but also by the comfort with which he was comforted by you, as he told us of your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced still more . . . Therefore we are comforted. And besides our own comfort, we rejoice still more at the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by you all.”

**2 Corinthians 7:5–7, 13**

# Being Known: Practical Advice

Create a habit of framing your counseling through the Christ pattern

Share Christ's work with others

- Share suffering in broad strokes and your own heart in more specific detail
- Find fellow workers

“For even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were afflicted at every turn—fighting without and fear within. But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, and not only by his coming but also by the comfort with which he was comforted by you, as he told us of your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced still more . . . Therefore we are comforted. And besides our own comfort, we rejoice still more at the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by you all.”

**2 Corinthians 7:5–7, 13**



# Being Known: Practical Advice

Create a habit of framing your counseling through the Christ pattern

Share Christ's work with others

- Share suffering in broad strokes and your own heart in more specific detail
- Find fellow workers
- The Lord is at work in us and others through the work he does outside of us

# Being Known: Practical Advice

The Lord is at work in us and others through the work he does outside of us

- Find friends who notice the work of Christ in others
- Look for the Lord to use the way he comforts you to comfort others
- Watch for this at work in your counseling