

FREE

A Twelve Tribes Freepaper

Eleanor Rigby



and all the
LONELY PEOPLE

Who is Eleanor Rigby?

Today, as I was walking along the way, I saw her again. Yes, there she was — I saw her yesterday, too. And perhaps, almost certainly, I will see her tomorrow. She's always somewhere. She haunts me. I turn the corner, there she is — Eleanor. As I reach for my box of Cheerios in the air-conditioned supermarket, I hear them singing about her on the radio — Eleanor... Eleanor Rigby. I do not escape her.

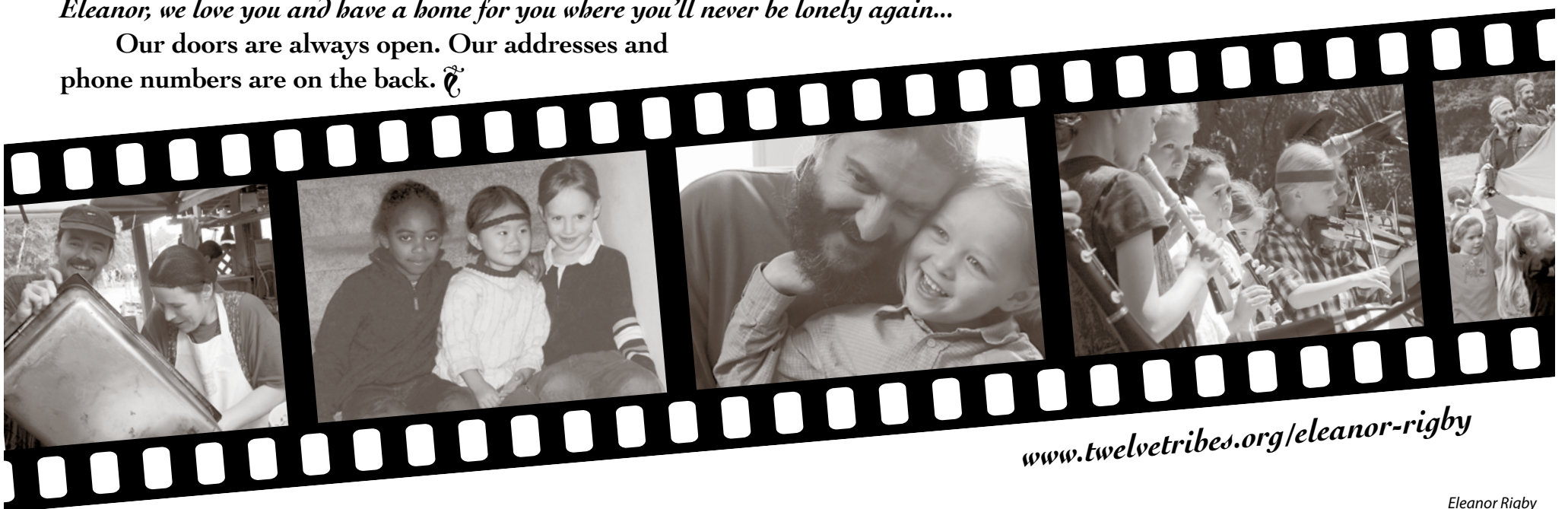
Sometimes she fools me with disguises, and at first I do not realize it is really her. She dresses like the teller at my bank; she talks politely and smiles. And then I catch that familiar look in her eyes and I realize — it's her, it's Eleanor.

Or sometimes at a party, everyone seems so happy — she's the center of the crowd, talking loudly and laughing, but then she turns her back for a moment and I catch a glimpse of that look on her face and I realize again — it's Eleanor. She's wearing the face that she keeps in a jar by the door. She's trying to be someone else again. Sometimes she may even fool me completely and I never realize that I am talking with her. She has many faces...

Perhaps you've noticed her, too. Perhaps you have caught a glimpse of her pale, sad face peering at you from behind her curtains as you passed her home. Perhaps you know her. Does she haunt you, too? Maybe your own name is "Eleanor Rigby" but you're too ashamed to admit it. Many of us were, too.

The really important thing is this—we have a message for Eleanor. If you see her, can you please tell her this: *Eleanor, we love you and have a home for you where you'll never be lonely again...*

Our doors are always open. Our addresses and phone numbers are on the back. ☺



www.twelvetribes.org/eleanor-rigby

She keeps her **face** in a jar by the door – who is it for?



Waits at the window, wearing the face that she keeps in a jar by the door; Who is it for?

No longer is the mask kept in a jar by the door. The modern Eleanor Rigby keeps her false persona on her phone or tablet, presenting a smiling, happy exterior to others. This self-created image merely masks her own deep-seated loneliness and insecurity.

“Will they **like** me?” The desire to be *liked* runs stronger than ever in the age of instant communication. So what will she do to be accepted? She puts her false **face** forward. Perhaps you can relate.

Canned photos and smiling “selfies,” taken again and again until just the right

pose is achieved. Then click *Post* and wait for the reactions to come flooding in. Or deafening silence.

Tweets, Facebook wall posts — social media puts it all in your grasp, even for the socially inept. If you make a social blunder, you can just delete your post and hope people didn’t notice. Now it’s like a live, running yearbook for all to see. The lingering question remains — will they like what they see?

Who is it for?

This just creates a land full of uncertainty and breeds insecurity. You may have a network of 500 “friends.” But with how many of them can you really share your hopes & dreams —

even your fears? Is there even one you can pour your heart out to? Will anyone be there for you in your time of need?

A true friend sticks closer than a brother (Proverbs 18:24), loves at all times and is there for you in times of adversity (Proverbs 17:17). We’ve found such a friend. And with Him comes a healing environment where no one likes us for a polished exterior we keep in a jar by the door. Instead, we’re liked for who we truly are. It’s an environment of love and security. We’ve laid aside our pretenses and can be *real*.

In this secure place, we no longer worry about being “liked” – we’re *loved*.



Loneliness is the Ten Year Old Girl

"Buddy" came up wagging his tail. Deep down she knew he'd wag for anyone. She could have been Hitler standing there, and "Buddy" would have been as cordial.

Loneliness is the ten-year-old girl, pasting herself against the outside wall of a concrete school building at recess, hoping the bell would ring so she can go inside where her desk awaits her. In the classroom it wouldn't be so obvious that she's alone as it is when she's outside on the crowded playground.

The bell rings — relief for a while. From her desk she watches the clock, hoping for the lunch bell to save her from an even more obvious exposure as a failure in math.

Lunch comes — relief for a while. She arrives at the cafeteria with a book to read, making her isolated position at the table more graceful — less conspicuous. She reads the same page for half an hour.

After school, avoiding main streets, she talks to herself, but it only sounds like she's talking to herself. Actually her mind is in another place, another time. In her fantasy, she can become the brilliant conversationalist most asked for at any party. She's now a movie star, twirling around in a sparkly dress. Wheel! — she stops, looks around, jolted into reality. She hopes no one is looking.

Home, safe at last, she can't wait to talk to her friend, the only one who seems to understand. The family beagle "Buddy" awaits, tail wagging. Deep down she knows that he'd wag for anyone. It could have been Hitler standing in her place, and Buddy would have been just as cordial. The dog is the end of the line.

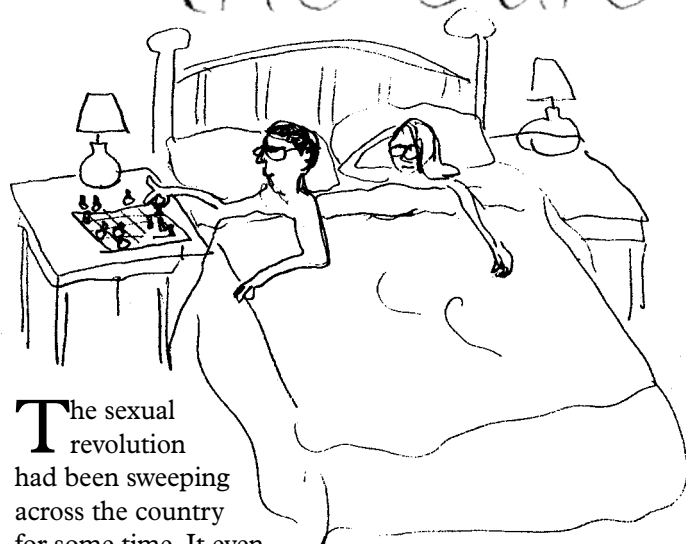
Loneliness is when you're a high school student, pacing through the halls, carrying books you don't need — at least you don't need them for your classes. Finally, you've developed something to do that looks busy and involved, cleverly disguised as one of the students. Just keep looking straight ahead, past the whispers and comments. You just know they're about you. But you don't care about them. You can't care.

Loneliness is being a divorcee, peering, crying, through the wire fence surrounding a kindergarten playground. Inside, your five-year-old son plays in the sand, unaware of your presence. You had been denied custody. Visiting day isn't until Sunday. What good is a Sunday visit in his little world? He's hurt and bitter towards you, and you're to blame. There he is, 100 feet away, and you've lost him. You pull your coat up closer around you and turn to go, fingering the iron grillwork as you slowly disappear. Loneliness is separation and alienation. It comes from being self-centered. I grew up self-centered, and I brought upon myself all the loneliness I am writing about. But there is someone who paid for my self-centered past. His name is Yahshua, a friend to even those who don't know how to be a friend. He is making a friend out of me.

Donna



Marriage Is Not the Cure



The sexual revolution had been sweeping across the country for some time. It even reached the small town where I lived. To be honest, few of us valued our innocence, and our virginity was no badge of honor. It was actually a source of embarrassment. So most of my friends treated it like any embarrassing thing — they got rid of it as soon as possible.

The revolution seemed to be passing me by, however. In part because of my shyness, I was continually amazed at how my friends convinced girls to have sex with them. It never occurred to me to apply a concept like double standard to myself or to my friends. We still lived in the make-believe world where the good girls didn't but the ones we went out with did. Someday we'd settle down and marry one of the good girls and live happily-ever-after. As I said, it was a make-believe world.

There was something besides my shyness that held me back. Try as I might, I couldn't hide the fact that I knew it was wrong. If I was to take my part in the sexual revolution — and so far I felt very left out and deprived — I was going to have to deal with this “right or wrong” thing. There had to be some way to take away my personal responsibility. Maybe there was a liberated woman who would sweep away all my inhibitions. My conscience could then shift the blame onto her and off of me. It was a pretty tall order, but as it was my only hope, I kept looking. And as an old and wise saying goes, “*He who searches after evil, it will come to him*” (Proverbs 11:27).

I didn't quite find her. I told the one I did meet that I loved her. I wanted to mean it, and she wanted to believe it. As I had no intention of marrying her, I was nothing but a hypocrite. I was too young to have ever applied that word to myself, however. The dullness of alcohol allowed us to slip by our screaming consciences, or so we tried to tell ourselves. The charade of marriage we played, without its commitment, soon came to an end.

Our friendship had no power to survive our “passionate” romance. Since it was painful to be around each other, we chose not to. We ended up lonelier than when we started, cut off from yet one more human being. And not surprisingly, from one another's family and friends as well. People have this gut-level response about their friends being used that is hard to get past. I didn't learn my lesson however. What was different was that my conscience bothered me a lot less. I had faced the issue squarely and I knew I didn't want to change. Anyone can silence his conscience.

In spite of my attempts to keep the word love out of future relationships, some significant part of me became attached to each woman I knew. That was obvious each time I suffered through the pain of breaking up. Wasn't free love supposed to be without cost? How come it hurt so much to break up?

It always took me by surprise, the fiery pain of another failed relationship. Like a burn that takes a long time to stop hurting, my life would be a haze until the scar tissue had formed on my heart. Then I'd be ready to try again. As scars lack feeling, it was easy to forget the permanent damage they cover over.

Finally I met the woman of my dreams. I fit hers pretty well, too. We married, had children and I'd thought we would live happily ever after. We'd followed similar paths in life and we'd both come out profoundly affected. I'm sure you can fill in the details. Selfishness comes in many forms, but the worst is when you don't even know you're being that way. This was a woman I did love, at least I thought I did. The actual practice of love, however, interfered with my ambitions and demanded the time and energy I already didn't have enough of.

I had long since learned to put relationships second and myself first. However glittery it once looked, the sexual revolution did nothing but legitimize selfishness. Being excessively or exclusively concerned with yourself pushes others away. So right where I sought refuge from loneliness, it had followed me. Or rather, I had brought it with me. The walls around me weren't destroyed by my marriage certificate. It was just a piece of paper. It had no power to change my heart.

That was what desperately needed changing. Selfishness had captured the core of my being because, really, it was easier that way. The costs of friendship, of commitment, and of love, were all too high. And if people were willing to meet my needs without a corresponding return on my part, all the better. I was living for myself — wasn't everybody? Isn't self number one today? The sight of my weeping wife pleading for help and compassion under the load of the house, the children, the diapers, and, if she would have said it, my lack of affection almost made me see how selfish I was toward her. “What was going on here?” I wondered to myself. I never saw Mom treating Dad that way. I put up a strong front and let her know those were her responsibilities. Three times we came to this standoff until she stopped asking for my help. My world intact and my hard heart untouched, I never thought of what bitterness my callous answers may have buried in her soul. Selfish people usually don't think of such things. They are too selfish.

Time passed and we settled down into a normal existence. There were times I sensed that things weren't right, but I could see well enough to know that everyone else was in the same boat we were in. Even at church on Sunday, where everyone was so nice, it wasn't hard to catch the strained looks and the brief, whispered

arguments. What went on at home in their lives I couldn't tell. But I could guess. The way they avoided my eyes matched the way I avoided theirs.

Several years later we met some people who weren't so easy to dismiss. As we got to know them, I came to an unsettling realization: they had something I didn't. When they looked me in the eyes there wasn't challenge or suspicion or calculation. All those things I knew well. There was compassion, and that made me uncomfortable. Me, need compassion? Me?

It took me a long time to admit the obvious. They were right. I was

a hurt, fearful, lonely man. I had done many things that I was ashamed of. The memories of them were vivid and stinging. Yet here I was, being offered that which men ache for — a second chance, a clean slate. I couldn't deny what I saw in their lives nor what I saw in mine.

So I surrendered to the Savior — not the one I heard about in church, but the one who dwells in His people.

I was actually forgiven. It is the most wonderful thing that can ever happen to anyone. It sets you free to love. That is the cure to loneliness.

What must I do to be saved from this hell of loneliness? I am lonely — I need a woman. I am lonely — I need a man. But when a man has a woman or a woman has a man just for the sake of a physical relationship, loneliness persists. Even if a man and woman join together in a marriage, if God is not in it, loneliness persists. ☪

Kevin



Eleanor Rigby

LONELINESS IS ONE OF THE WORST THINGS A PERSON CAN EXPERIENCE.

It aches and gnaws at your innermost being, not being loved or having anyone to love. I've come to this place many times in my life, and have done many things to try to fill the void.

You could say I had a typical childhood. I lived with my parents, and my grandparents and relatives lived close by. But when I was ten, my parents divorced. Mom, wanting her own life, moved out. My parents decided that it would be best for my younger sister and brother and me to live with my dad. He had a steady job and seemed more stable than mom.

It was like a nightmare. I'd wake up at night expecting that it had all been a bad dream and imagining that my parents were back together. Lots of other kids had parents who were divorced, but I couldn't believe it had happened to my parents, too. I closed up. I felt so empty inside. I had no one to talk to. I wanted and needed my mother, like every young girl does. I needed her to help me through the turmoil of growing up, to help me understand what life was really about. There were so many changes that were happening to me. But she wasn't there, so basically, I had to go it alone. I started drifting further from everyone at home. They all said that I was so quiet and never looked happy.

Then when I was twelve, my dad got drunk and broke down, telling me he wasn't my real father. I already felt like I was the black sheep of my family and this only confirmed it. I began to see all the real differences between my sister and me; my grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins, and other relatives I'd known all of my life were not even related to me at all. My arguments with my sister often ended with her yelling at me to go back where I came from, that I didn't belong with them. I felt so very empty, and alone. I felt like it was me against the whole world. The only one I truly belonged to was a mother who didn't want me. Somewhere I had a father I'd never met.

My time came when I had to go to high school. I really dreaded lunchtime, when hundreds of kids sat laughing and talking at the tables while I watched and said nothing. It made it clear how alone I really was. The whole scene made me sick. When the bell rang, I could see myself in some shoe factory, like it was time to go back to the assembly line.

Then, in the eleventh grade my opportunity for change came. My cousin transferred to my school. He made friends instantly and with people I'd only admired from a distance — the cool, progressive clique. Amazingly, I was welcomed by them. I actually felt happy. I was hanging out with the coolest people in school. I had a new identity, a new look, new friends. I felt accepted.

Not that my loneliness was cured. It just didn't hurt as much...but it was still there. Things were pretty good when I was with my friends, but in class I was the same

I was Lonely, now I'm Loved

Eleanor Rigby wore a face that she kept in a jar by the door. The cool exterior I hid behind made it easy for me to go against my conscience, damaging my ability to form deep relationships. Inside I was shallow and insecure, afraid to open up and let people see how I really was. Eleanor wore her mask to her dying day, but I found a place where I could be myself.



isolated, insecure person I had always been. I would count the minutes for the bell to ring so I could meet up with them again.

With this new scene came alcohol, drugs, and sex. It seems as if this was all we lived for. Our whole life was centered around the weekend. I hated being sober because I hated the reality of my life. I was lonely and miserable, and wanted love and affection so badly.

Being wasted helped me "open up," be friendly and not so intimidated by people. Sometimes I would even sleep with someone I didn't know very well or never met before. So many times I gave myself to someone in the hope of finding love, care, or just having a good friend.

I never found what I was looking for. I was used so many times, and then began to use others as objects of gratification. Really, I just wanted to be loved. But not only did no one love me, I didn't know how to love back.

Because I had violated my conscience so many times in such serious ways, I wasn't able to have deep relationships. I was shallow and insecure. I was so afraid to open up, to let people see how I really was. I didn't want to keep going from person to person, but something about being held by another human being gave me something I couldn't find anywhere else — a sense of security, a feeling that I was loved. When the moment was over, though, so was the "love," and loneliness was twisting my heart again.

So many times I gave my entire being to someone, and the next day we had nothing more than a passing "Hi" for each other, or worse, we never even saw each other again. Where was hope for a real relationship?

I knew I was absolutely wrong in what I was doing. My conscience screamed at me in drunken emotional depressions where I would grieve and agonize over everything I'd done, feeling so lonely, so desperate, so dirty.

Meanwhile, all my friends were telling me everything was okay. "Don't get so upset...it isn't so bad." They knew that if they told me the truth it would be true for them, too.

How I longed to not do these things anymore! I just wanted to be with people who loved me for me. But how could anyone love me for who I was, after all the things I'd done? Who was me, anyway? And where are friends who will tell you the truth about yourself and still keep on loving you?

This was not an easy story for me to write. But at least it's been made easier by how it ends. As the years went by, I made an amazing discovery: I found some people who are devoting themselves to become the kind of friends I always wanted. I learned from them that there is a way to become clean, and start life all over again on the good foundation of love. It's the kind of love I always wanted but couldn't find. Now I'm with those people and we're learning how to be friends from the most accomplished friend of all time. His name is Yahshua. He's the author of friendship. He is taking someone as wounded as I was and teaching me how to be a friend like him.

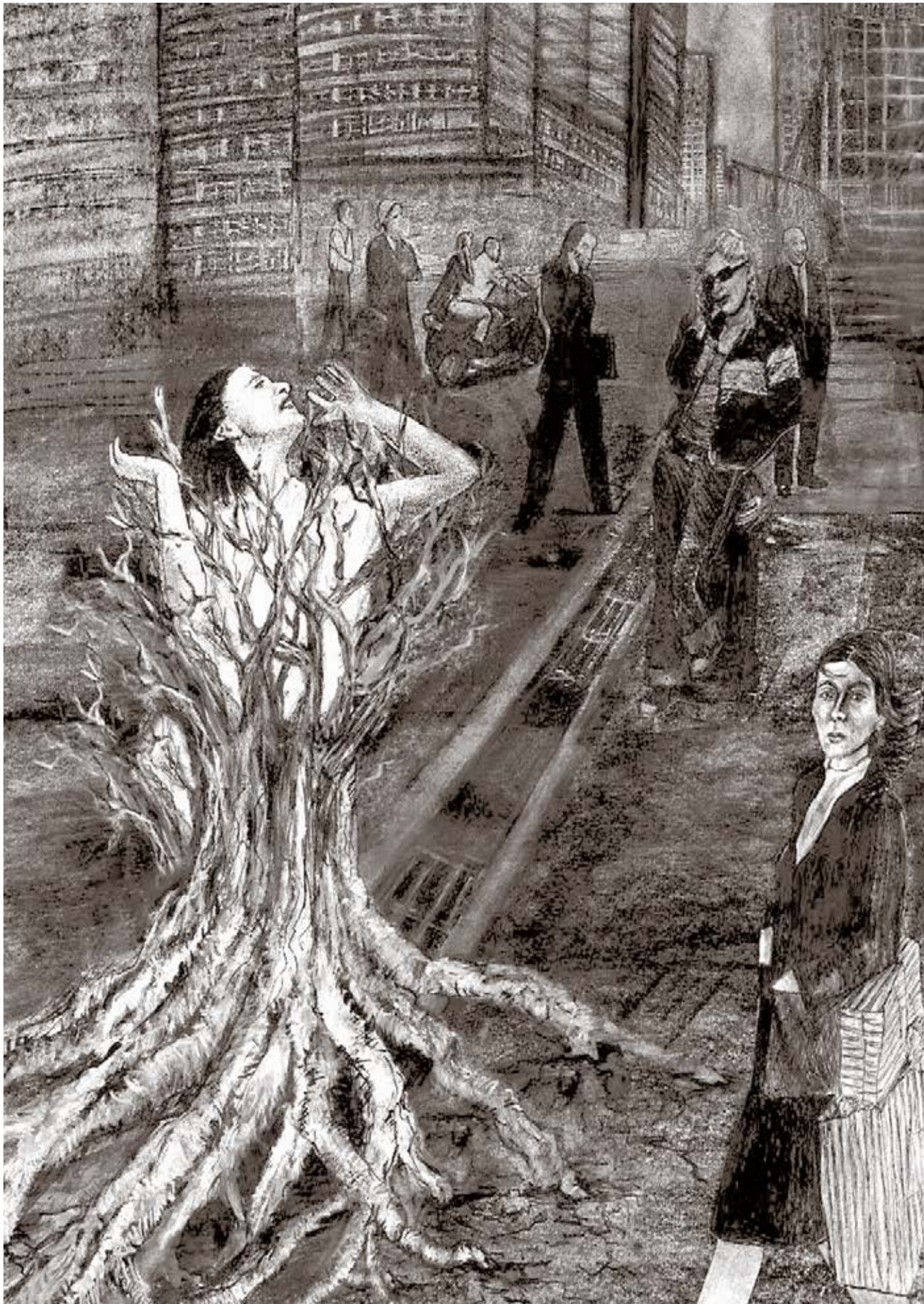
Now I'm no longer lonely.

I'm loved.

Heather



The sidewalk, college campus, cafeteria, or the subway is jammed with lots of people; but all are lonely. The party can be "jumping" with lonely people. No, it's not the number of people in one place, doing the same thing together that dispels loneliness. Loneliness is a reaction to life. ☞



Mistrust and fear are at the root of all loneliness. Like walls that separate one human being from another, they must be broken down. But where is the society that breaks down those walls? If it is to be found in the churches of Christianity, like Father McKenzie's, why could Eleanor Rigby never find a true friend?

Roots of Loneliness

*If a tree is known by its fruit
and it is fed by its root,
then what feeds loneliness?*

It was once common for people to spend their entire life within twenty miles of where they were born.

Everyone knew everyone else in the small towns that most Americans lived in. Kind people spoke to one another, and the unkind gossiped. It was a no-frills life without a great deal of intellectual stimulation. Life was based on the hard work it took to survive, and maybe, if things went your way, you could get ahead. Those who shirked their work were considered lazy, not unfortunate. The actions you took and the consequences you suffered were your own fault, not society's. Friendships were deep and the help people gave one another was very real.

Eleanor Rigby

Ah, look at all the lonely people; Where do they all come from? Ah, look at all the lonely people; Where do they all belong?

On the other hand, if you broke the moral codes that ruled society, you suffered rejection. Sexual immorality, lying, using other people, all had bitter consequences. You were no longer respectable; instead, you were an outcast unless somehow you could make it right. So everyone had some visible, obvious restraint coming from society. Hurtful and unacceptable behavior was frowned upon. In fact, people would avoid your eyes or refuse to give you the time of day. It was almost as if you had died. It was what you had to endure for the raw pain you caused others. Whether you had broken man's written laws or not, you had broken the inner law written on everyone's conscience. That law is old and true. It does not change like man's laws do.

Many things have changed since that time. People are vastly more mobile and basic relationships aren't what they used to be. They bare their souls on the Internet, but can hardly talk to each other face to face. Many go to school for a quarter of their life. There they learn that nothing is solid, no one is sincere, and only the strong survive. They come out calling it "higher" education — higher even than conscience. Every standard has fallen by the wayside. But is that really true?

If those standards are gone and people now accept one another without judging, then why is there so much loneliness? Isn't toleration supposed to produce friendship? No one faces rejection for premarital

sex, adultery, greed and lying anymore, do they? In the past, the isolation of one person stood out. Today, in this "free" society, it's rare to see anybody shunned for his immoral or even bizarre behavior. We are indeed free, unhindered by the disapproval of a healthy conscience. But it's really only a façade, a fake front for an entire society of isolated individuals.

This loneliness is a powerful testimony that the old standards of right and wrong really have not changed. Obsolete as it may seem, people still react to the pain of being used and they still feel shame about using others. Our actions have consequences, and however much we're told that the guilt we feel is unreal, it is very real. It is

the consequence of sin. Yes, old-fashioned sin. Loneliness comes from guilt, and guilt comes from sin, and it all results in death. In this life, people can experience death. You can look all around you and see that many are feeling its weight. Death is not a state of

nothingness, but the actual separation of spirit and body. When someone dies his body is cast in the grave, but his spirit waits alone in utter darkness; he is inescapably alone, with only the excuses and condemnations of his conscience to keep him company. Death, then, is a lot like the streets of our cities.

Only on them people's spirits are trapped, not in death, but in the quiet despair of alienation. Unable to escape over the self-made walls of mistrust and fear, many have lost hope of actually reaching out to another human being and finding a true friend.

Instead each new person is a threat, or an object of lust, or someone to scorn, or someone to envy, or all of the above. Even friends — you know about friends. They are the groups of people walking down the streets laughing and talking together. They have been everywhere and if you look into their eyes, you can tell they've gotten nowhere. The pain of broken relationships clouds everyone's memories. The time spent with friends is etched on a background of loneliness. Nothing seems to do away with the grim secrets most people so obviously carry — "I'm not loved, there's no one I can trust, and there's no one I can love."

Every lie, every cheat, every act of unmarried sex, adultery and homosexuality actually make you unable to trust others. At the same time, others can no longer trust you. Sin is a double-edged sword, severing the ties between you and others and ruining your inner worth and dignity. It is a fatal process,

the very reason why people die. It is why everyone on this earth has ever died, except for one man. His name is Yahshua.* He is the only one

who didn't die for His own sins. He never knew loneliness until He tasted death for our sake, taking on the full measure of the agony of death so that we wouldn't have to.

Many people say they know Him, but their lonely, separate lives betray them. Those who truly know Him are no longer lonely. In fact, He makes a home for the lonely and gives them true friends. He would like to invite you in and restore your full dignity, the inner worth that you have in His eyes. You can come to an end of guilt, and then come to an end of your loneliness. In the new life He has made,

every wrong, perverted, and hurtful way can be removed from you. He will do this for all who cry out to Him. Everyone else has to go it alone, which is the very essence of loneliness. And loneliness is the very taste of death. ☞



Why is there so much loneliness?
Isn't toleration supposed to produce friendship?

***Yahshua** is the Hebrew name of the Son of God. The footnote to Matthew 1:21 in the NIV New Testament reads: *Jesus is the Greek form of Joshua*. In Hebrew, as in old English, there is no "J" sound, so the name is more accurately rendered **Yahshua**.

The root causes of loneliness are the walls that separate us from other human beings. One thing must be done before those walls can be knocked down. Nothing else you do will last apart from that. The wall between you and God must be broken down first. That is the only way to tear down all the other walls that keep us so lonely. ☞

We are members of a new society. It is a different kind of society, one in which no one is despised or unimportant, no one lonely or unwanted. The strong are not exalted and the weak are not exploited. There are no rich or poor. Love lives here.

We are learning a new way of relating to other human beings — without fear, without hostility, without suspicion. We are becoming like little children. We live in an atmosphere of trust. Love rules here.

This is a society of an entirely different order. It is a *new social order*. The peace that reigns in our midst is not due to laws and law enforcement. We do not do things out of obligation, but because we choose to. In this life of love, no one has a right to be cold to his neighbor. Malice, put-downs, and paybacks are foreign to our way of life. Love restrains us from striving to get ahead of each other, from taking advantage of one another, from turning our backs on one another when times get hard.

Everyone knows what the old social order is like. Each person is responsible for his own life and the lives of his family, if he has one. Once people have food, clothing, and shelter, they may try to be kind to their fellow human beings. But there is a limit and there are barriers — racial, religious, economic. No matter how many laws are passed, the walls between people still remain.

Even within the same family there are barriers. One brother has his set of friends, the other has a different set, the sister has still another, and they can't even sit down and have a meal together. Most social barriers are like weeds. They have deep roots. No matter what you do to cut them off at the surface, they keep springing back up.

The new society we live in is not this way. We have been given a radical solution that enables us to love. The chains of fear and guilt that hold mankind in bondage have been broken for us.

Who can love when the barrier of guilt rises up? It is the painful weight, the sudden memory that comes when you are with someone you have hurt, or someone who has hurt you. Who can give when they are afraid of losing their possessions, their time, even their own life?

Our Master Yahshua, the Messiah, has washed away our guilt with His own innocent blood. He has given us the power to forgive others the way that He forgave us. We have received His Spirit, the same Spirit that raised Him from the dead, so we can dare to suffer loss in loving others. Fear and guilt no longer have any power over those who trust in Him.

The new social order we are talking about is not *ideal*. It is *real*. Ideal societies are the territory of dreamers and intellectuals. No human being has ever thought up an ideal society that actually works in reality.

Even Sir Thomas More, who made up the word *utopia*, realized this limitation. The word *utopia* means “no place.” There is no location on earth where you can observe an ideal society at work. Man-made societies are based on laws, and laws can only limit evil, not create virtue.

So it is not because of rules, regulations, or even religious principles that we in this new social order live together and share our property and possessions. Bible verses do not have the power to cause people to love and respect each other. The Bible by itself can't even make



A New Social Order

people agree on what it says. The tens of thousands of Christian denominations are ample proof of this.

The old adage, “Birds of a feather flock together,” aptly describes every social institution of the world, including Christianity. Unless forced to do otherwise, people naturally gravitate toward others who have basically the same self-interest. So you have the white church, the black church, the rich church, the poor church, the conservative church, the liberal church, and even the “gay” church. There is a denomination for every inclination.

The saying holds true even for communal living, religious and otherwise. Whatever “intentional community” a person joins depends on his intentions. Some rally around a social cause, others a political agenda, and still others a doctrine or philosophy. But the deeply-rooted barriers of guilt and fear spring up even there. Ultimately self-preservation outweighs all other considerations and even birds of the same feather find it difficult to nest together for very long.

Yet, despite these overwhelming obstacles, the prophet Ezekiel, 2500 years ago, recorded a vision of something new and different. In his vision God Himself took a tender shoot and planted it so that it would grow up to become a mighty tree itself: “*Under it every kind of bird will live; in the shade of its branches will nest winged creatures of every kind.*” (Ezekiel 17:23)

This prophecy might seem obscure and unimportant if our Master Yahshua had not echoed its words some 500 years later: “*What is the kingdom of God like? ... It is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in the garden; it and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches*” (Luke 13:18-19).

**I am like a desert owl,
like an owl among the ruins.**

**I lie awake; I have become
like a lonely bird on a roof.**
(Psalm 102:6-7)

There is a home for lonely birds!

This new kingdom is a social order ruled by the God of love. He is the “someone” who planted that tree. It is His doing. It is not because of man's ideals or man's laws that we are able to live this life of love, but because of His Spirit.

All the prophets since ancient times have spoken of this new social order, in which all things are restored — the relationship between humanity and God, between men and women, between parents and children, between one race and another. Daniel, also writing around 2500 years ago, saw that this new social order would be established *without human hands* and bring to an end the old order:

In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall this kingdom be left to another people. It shall crush all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever. (Daniel 2:44)

Daniel did not envision a political revolution. What he foresaw was the rule of love over the hearts of men. It is, however, a revolution — against apathy, indifference, and self-centeredness. It is not an “ethnic cleansing,” but a thorough cleansing of the moral corruption in our own hearts. For to make this new order a reality, the members of this new kingdom must become like their King: self-controlled, patient, generous, loyal, always available to meet the needs of others.

To truly be a part of this kingdom means to follow Messiah with total abandonment, to love as He loved. And love that is complete empties itself, voluntarily embracing poverty, for it cannot keep for itself what another needs. The result is that each one does for all what he would do for himself. No one gathers for his own future; no one's heart grows cold over his own economic survival. But this equality is not compulsory. No one is violated or forced, but rather led and drawn by the warmth of love.

Some will not be able to see the difference between what we are describing here and a dozen utopian ideals and philosophies. Some will feel that it is too good to be true. But those who are ready to do the will of their Creator will know whether this is actually God's kingdom we are talking about or just something we made up.

The new social order is not perfect. We who were raised under the old order are faulty in our love. The desires of the self tug at us, and we are continually in need of forgiveness. But our Master Yahshua gave His life to pay for our failures so that we could forgive one another and press on towards the goal — that this new order would one day fill the whole earth.

To gain this life costs you everything, but as our Master said, “*Those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it*” (Luke 9:24). All who really believe that He died as a payment for their sins will no longer live for themselves but for Him — giving all their possessions, time, and energy to see His people flourish and His justice prevail.

If you are looking for a nice community where you can do your own thing, you would certainly be wasting your time to come here. But if you desire to live a life of self-sacrificing love, to experience the deep soul satisfaction of doing what you were created for, we invite you to be a part of this new order. 🕊



A PLACE TO BELONG

in the Family of God

It is God's character to bring people together to love and care for one another. He brings the lonely into families, real families, families who care about each other and won't fall apart. These families are part of a new society, a society like no other...

There was a man who was so consumed with loving his friends, he hardly had time to eat. His mother and brothers were so worried when they heard the reports about him that they walked thirty miles to take him into their custody. They said, "He has lost his senses." Other people were saying even darker things about him. When his mother and brothers got to the city he was in, it was worse than they expected. So many people were crowded around him that they couldn't get near him. They couldn't even see him. They anxiously waited for him to respond after they sent word that they had arrived.

His response worked its way through the large crowd. After a long time his mother heard words that pierced her heart. She heard that her son had asked, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" Then he answered his painfully pointed question by saying to the huge crowd around him, "Behold, my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother." (Mark 3:31-35)

A NEW SOCIETY

That day Yahshua turned away His own mother because she wanted Him to come home and live a normal life. He wanted her to come into the new society He was establishing. He called her to do the same thing everyone who followed Him had done — leave everything behind that they had or hoped to be. In return, He showed them a completely new, marvellous way of life. In this life those who clung to Him were learning just what He meant when

He spoke of the Kingdom of God. It was so wonderful that no matter what He said to them, even when it shocked them (as it had his own mother), all they could say was, "Where else can we go? You have the words of eternal life." (John 6:53-68)

At His side they learned to judge the motives of their hearts. It hurt to have the justifications they had used to get their own way exposed. But that helped them to see the strife and contention that was in them. Yahshua caused them to face all the things they had always hidden away. When He did this they would weep in remorse. Washed by the words He spoke and the forgiveness He poured out, they found they were able to love other human beings whom they had once despised. What went on in their hearts was a greater miracle than the healing of lepers. They were becoming what human beings were originally created to be — honest, loyal, caring, always loving and being loved.

DEBTOR'S PRISON

There is another place to belong. This is much different than the family of God. You can tell you're arriving by the menacing presence of loneliness. By that time you have already gone too far beyond the boundaries of your conscience to find your way back. Too many people have been hurt by your self-centered pursuit of pleasure. Every selfish act, every bit of cowardice that kept you from standing up and doing what you knew was right, and every careless, hurtful word has damaged your ability to trust and be trusted by those around you. The loneliness that results from this is like a debtor's prison.

Once debtors were thrown into prison when they couldn't pay their debts. There was no way out unless they paid up and no way to pay. They were left to rot in jail unless someone ransomed them. That's the way it is with sin and loneliness. There's no way out unless you pay the full price, and the full price is beyond your ability to pay. The full price is death. So you live trapped in a life that brings you to death. There is no other price that can make right all the things you have done and nothing else that can release you from the selfishness that causes you to keep on doing the things that push people away from the core of your being. Ultimately you acknowledge that there is no way out of the debtor's prison of loneliness.

THE RANSOM

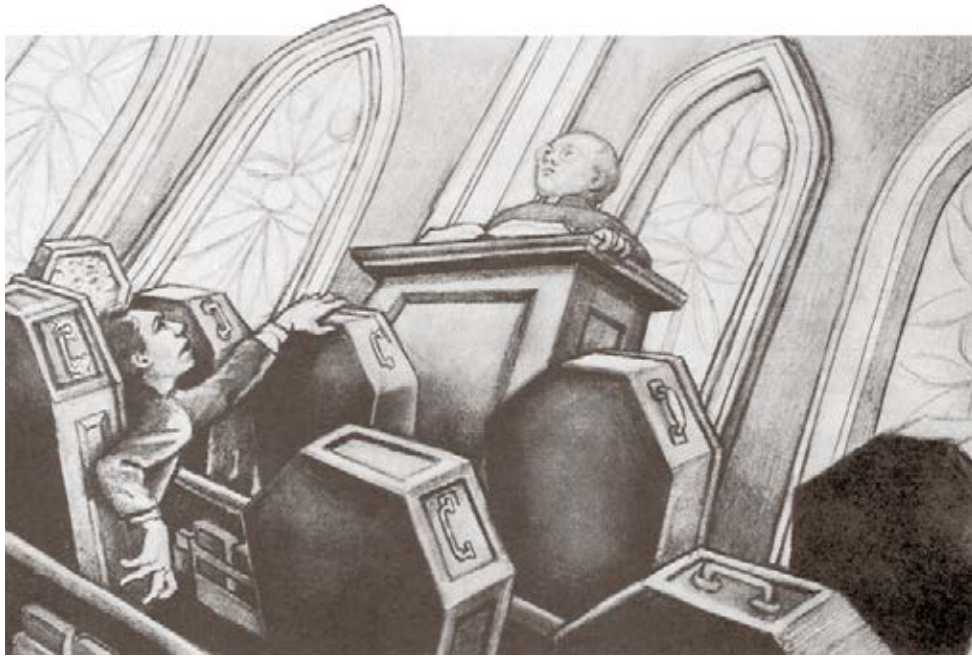
Even Yahshua's disciples needed a ransom. Even they were in debtor's prison. You see, He went right into debtor's prison

You can move into a community to escape from your loneliness, but the community must have in residence there the One who knocks down walls. Loneliness still prevails there ever the more if He is not living in the hearts of those who make up this community. "Community" is an empty word without Him. ❧

to give them hope. Then He needed to get them out. There had to be a way to break out, to bring the reality of heaven to earth. If He was going to lead them out, He was going to have to pay the full price for them all. They couldn't pay for themselves anymore than we could. But He could because there was nothing in Him of death or loneliness or sin. He wasn't guilty. We were. He died in our place.

Since He died for us, we all died. And the life we now live, we no longer live for ourselves, but for Him who died in our place. He rose from the dead so that we could live just as He did, bringing the same love to others that He brought to His disciples and that He poured out on us. That is what we have devoted our lives to. That is why there are no rich or poor among us. Since we died to everything in the waters of baptism, there is no prejudice between blacks and whites. Women are not sex objects, they are human beings of equal dignity and honor as men. The tremendous gap between parents and children is closing in the Community. As our children grow up, they don't see us saying one thing and doing another.

We live in what the Bible calls the Kingdom of God. It is a new social order that offers hope to everyone who will obey the words of our Master to leave behind everything for His sake and the sake of such precious good news. (Mark 10:29-30). He calls you to abandon your life and take the way out of this perverse society, entering His kingdom with the trust of a little child. That is the only way to enter the family of God. ❧



*Father McKenzie, writing the words to a sermon that no one will hear;
No one comes near. Look at him working, darning his socks
In the night when there's nobody there; What does he care?*

was considered the model Christian family. I taught Sunday school, led worship, preached in the pulpit, was faithful to tithe, etc. No one knew that I was dying inside. I had everyone fooled except myself, my wife, and the counselors we quietly paid to help us come to terms with our brokenness.

Do you realize that there are millions of people just like me in churches everywhere who convince one another, and even themselves, that they have a “satisfying walk with the Lord”? Yet in fact, in the darkness of their own lives, hidden from their “brothers

and sisters,” they harbor all manner of lustful and debased thoughts, gratify their selfish and worldly desires. Unable to trust their pastors or Christian friends with the intimate details of their lives, they resort to professional counselors to help them cope with the contradictions in their lives and the resulting havoc in their personal relationships.

It was a long time before I would give in to my wife’s pleading and agree to see a counselor. That was for weak people. From time to time, we would hear about Christian acquaintances of ours who were going through divorces. I would shake my head and wonder how they could consider something so contrary to Scripture. Why didn’t their pastors help them? Why couldn’t the counselors they went to set them a right? Then, my own wife’s quiet desperation began to find a voice and my self-righteous stand began to weaken. If I would not go with her to counselling, would I pay for her to go alone? Shame and insecurity and anger flooded over me.

Why couldn’t she just talk with her friends, or other women in the church, or even the pastor? She had a couple of friends whom she trusted enough to share her deep struggles with, but they were not in any better place themselves. They urged her to seek professional counselling, just as they were in the habit of doing. As for other women in the church, there was no foundation of trust there — we hardly

knew them. And as for the pastor and his wife, they were our friends and our peers. We didn’t see them as having wisdom or experience beyond our own.

We gutted out the next ten years on some combination of Christian counselors and Christian self-help books. Our hopes were raised and dashed so many times we became numb to our own pain. Our growing family and our ever-increasing standard of living gave us enough distractions to continue on in quiet desperation.

The first counselor my wife saw was a Christian woman who had her office in downtown Boston in a building owned by one of the larger conservative Evangelical churches. For her time she charged three times my wife’s salary as a Registered Nurse. On her second visit, my wife happened to step into the elevator with her counselor, who coldly ignored her until they arrived at her office. There my wife asked her, “Did you even recognize me in the elevator?” She shrugged off the question and redirected the focus to my wife’s problems. Somehow my wife did not have confidence to continue her therapy with this “sister in Christ.”



In the years that followed, we became aware that more and more of our friends were seeing counselors. One dear friend of ours went to seek help for his failing marriage from a man who left the pastoral ministry in his conservative Evangelical church to strike out on his own as a professional counselor. The “care” he received for his hard-earned dollars left him hopeless, his marriage ending in divorce. Shortly after he quit going to this counselor, he learned that the counselor himself was divorcing his wife and had “come out of the closet,” admitting his homosexuality.

DYING

in the Church

MANY ARE DYING IN THE CHURCHES OF CHRISTIANITY TODAY. Perhaps you are one of them. I was. I sat in a pew, Sunday after Sunday, year after year, listening to sermons. I would try to focus my mind on what I was hearing, sometimes with delight, sometimes with an overwhelming tiredness, almost always with a desire to surrender my life to God, but not knowing how to do it. I would get up from my pew, stirred by the words I heard and the final hymn I tried to sing with all my heart. Sometimes I’d make my way to the front to “re-dedicate my life to Christ,” but usually I’d make my way to the rear to shake hands with the pastor and to greet as many people as I could before plunging headlong into another busy week. My resolve to be a different person that week would begin to erode as soon as I stepped out the door of the church. The reality of my life would come crashing down upon me and I would switch into survival mode, coping as well as I could to hold my marriage together, provide a comfortable living for myself and my family, and maintain my sanity in the process. Who would know that the condition of my private life was such a contradiction to the lofty ideal I embraced each Sunday?

No one would know. I was considered a model Christian in every church I was ever in. My family

*Eleanor Rigby died in the church and was buried along with her name; Nobody came.
Father McKenzie, wiping the dirt from his hands as he walks from the grave; No one was saved.*

Many other Christian friends of ours have had similarly devastating experiences, going to counselling year after year with no relief from their condition. They have become virtually addicted to the counselling itself, so starved are they for deep, honest, and personal relationships. For lack of caring shepherds and trusted friends, they pay self appointed counselors to hear their confessions and forgive them of their guilt.

These “professionals” sort their “clients” into well-defined categories: adult children of alcoholics, codependent and addictive personalities, victims of sexual abuse and incest, etc. Each receives reasons for his maladies, goes off to the nearest Christian bookstore for the latest book on his condition, joins a “support group” with other broken people who share the same malady, and tries to cope. Another Christian friend of ours learned that she belongs to the Adult Children Of Alcoholics category. She has been faithfully going to her ACOA Support Group for more than six years now, learning more about her problem and meeting more people with problems like hers. She loves it. She loves it to death. She is dying in it.

Shortly after we first met the Twelve Tribes, my wife described the life that we had seen to a Christian counselor she had come to know. She described the simple common life, the good authority, the respectful, obedient, happy children, the similarity to the early church described in the Bible in Acts, chapters 2 and 4. With a resigned look in her eyes, this counselor told my wife that if the church was really being the church, she would be out of a job. My wife replied that surely there would always be a need for counselors. But this woman insisted that no, if the church were real, there would be no need for her profession. She admitted to being a parasite, living off the pain and suffering of her “brothers and sisters in Christ.”

Like Father McKenzie, the so-called priests and pastors of Christianity live separate lives, disconnected from the daily lives of the Christians who they try in vain to direct with their weekly sermons. Truly, no one comes near. And like Eleanor Rigby, the Christians in today’s churches learn to put on a mask to hide their inner torment. They cling to memories of stimulating experiences in their churches — weddings, musical events, and presentations of visiting missionaries — in a

desperate effort to convince themselves that it is not all a sham. They hold on to the hope that at least some are making it — the Sunday School teachers, the “deacons” or “elders,” the music directors, the pastors — so maybe someday they also will get their lives together. They live in a dream.

But the Christian stars are not making it either. Ten years ago, I attended a “Pastor’s Breakfast” in preparation for a Billy Graham Crusade in Boston. Among the men at my table was the pastor of a large suburban Evangelical church. He was a well-known radio preacher and the author of several popular Christian books on “making it” as a Christian in your marriage, family, and social life. His charisma was immediately evident at our table, and we all felt privileged to be with him. He was the very picture of Christian success. A few months later, his picture was in the papers across America. He had resigned his position, confessing his adulterous relationship with his church secretary. Sadly, this is far from unusual in Christianity today.

The reality is that no one is “making it” in Christianity. All are slipping away into death, clergy and laity alike. Whether or not they have fallen into gross immorality, they are abiding in death because they are not vitally connected to one another. They are divided from one another in countless ways: physically, emotionally, economically, theologically, politically, and so on. They cling desperately to their own independent lives because they do not believe the words of our Master: Whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it (Luke 9:24).

Because they do not lose their own lives, they don’t receive Messiah’s life, which is able to save them. They are not vitally connected to Him; therefore, they dwell in death, cut off from the only source of life.

When we met the Community, we saw the reality of life in Messiah that fifteen years in Christianity had taught us was impossible. We saw ordinary people living together in unity, laying down their lives for each other every day, working together, eating together, teaching their children, teaching each other, and being healed. They had all given up their independent lives — careers, homes, possessions, opinions, etc. — for the sake of Messiah, and received His life in return. The shepherds among them lived the same life as the rest — open, accountable, and trustworthy. They

didn’t become shepherds because they had earned a degree in some institution. They were recognized as shepherds because they had demonstrated their character, their faithfulness, their stability, their wisdom and their love by years of laying down their lives for their brothers and sisters. No one was going to “professional counselors” because their needs were being met in their own households by people who truly loved them.

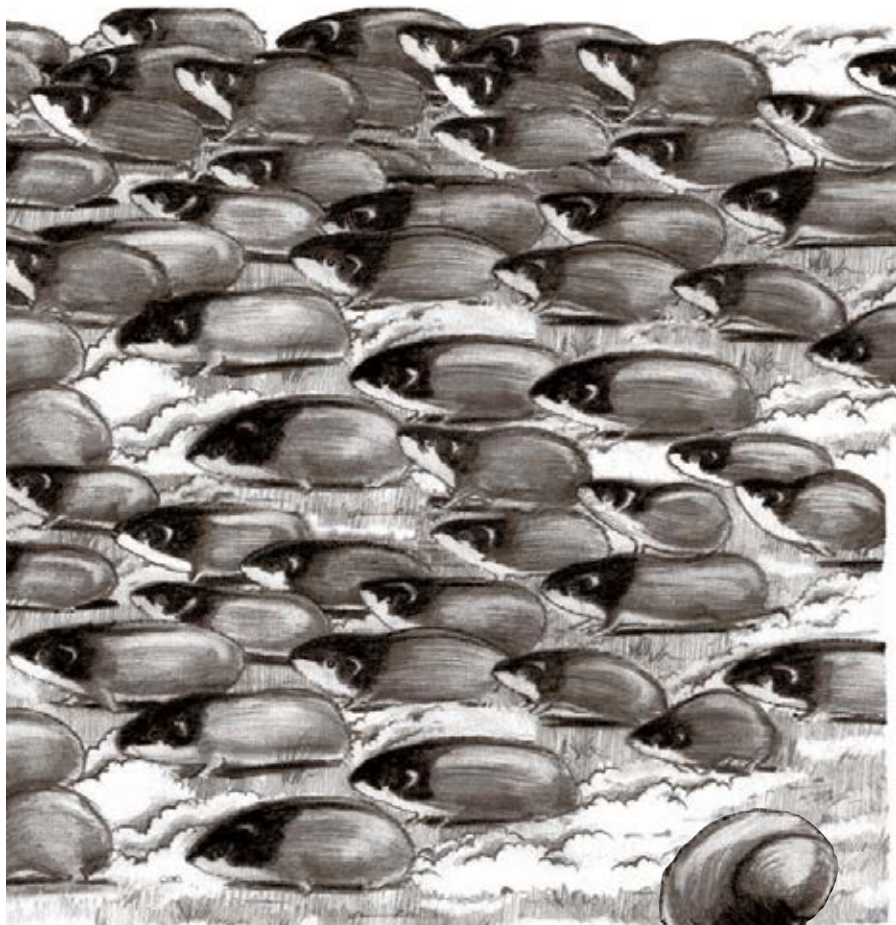
I was dying in the church — in Christianity — and I knew it. Despite my pride and my unwillingness to give up my Christian “salvation,” I came to see that my intellectualized faith was an empty husk. When divorced from an open and simple life together with others who were living that same life, I could see that my salvation was really no salvation at all. I heard the words of Yahshua from the lips of someone who had obeyed them: No one of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions (Luke 14:33). I came to see that there was a death I had to give myself to, a total surrender of my life and possessions, in order to gain eternal life in Messiah (Philippians 3:8). As it was, death was overtaking me in my relationships and in the turmoil of my own soul. Finally, I saw that I was faced with a choice: death by decay behind my mask of pretense, leading to eternal death, or death by the voluntary act of my will, leading to eternal life.

I am so thankful that the God of heaven stopped me on my journey to death and led me to where I could see a demonstration of His life. (Eleanor Rigby never got that chance.) Here I live with people with whom I can share the deepest things in my heart. I can trust them because we have entered into a covenant together, a blood covenant, sealed by the blood of our Master Yahshua. We were able to reach His blood because we actually gave up our lives in the waters of baptism. Now we no longer live for ourselves, but for Him who died and rose again on our behalf (2 Corinthians 5:14,15). He is making us into His royal priesthood. Rather than wiping the dirt from our hands as we bury one another with neglect and selfishness, we are being saved as we learn to love one another as Messiah loved us.



David

Ah, look at all the lonely people. Where do they all come from?



LEMMINGS

Being left out is a terrible feeling.

*But there is a sense of security in going with the crowd,
at least for a while.*

Do you remember that overpass? Someone had painted “Good Morning Lemmings” on the side of it. When I first saw it from the back seat of my mom’s car, I didn’t really understand what it meant or why someone had gone to such efforts to paint that on the side of a bridge.



I wondered what that person who wrote on the bridge was trying to communicate. Were we the lemmings? All following one another in our cars, separated but going to the same place, headed for the same destiny. Okay, so what if they were right? We were all lemmings. Would it have been better to paint a solution on the side of that bridge? Or maybe whoever painted that was as much a lemming as we who were driving down the freeway. Sure, anyone can see the faults, but who can give the answer?

And where are you now, Mr. Bridge Painter? Won’t you come back and paint for us what the way out of being a lemming is – or maybe you don’t know, either?

There are two inclinations that work in humans. One is to *follow others* and the other is to *be followed* by others. So, which is better? If the ones you are following are going somewhere good, then it makes sense to follow and call others to come follow, too.

But, if the ones you are following are headed for death and destruction, it’s obvious that it would be really bad to follow them. But then, who can stand up and say, “Hey, follow me, I know the way out of here”? Many have tried and have brought so much

confusion and ultimately disappointment when you see they never really got you out. The freedom they promised was nothing more than an elusive dream.

People like people, we’re social and following is a good, normal and childlike quality. But, if you’re the one who always fell for the jokes, got called gullible, and became skeptical of following others, I make my appeal to you. Trust just once more — *one more time*.

It’s really a nice quality to *follow* and there’s a place where you can trust the heart of the One who will lead you. And if you were the one leading others, just realize this: nobody’s independent — everybody follows somebody. Either way, the solution is the same. His name is Yahshua. He is the good Shepherd and I’m not ashamed to be a follower of His.



Tehorah

IMAGINE

*Imagine no possessions
I wonder if you can
No need for greed or hunger
A brotherhood of man
Imagine all the people
Sharing all the world*

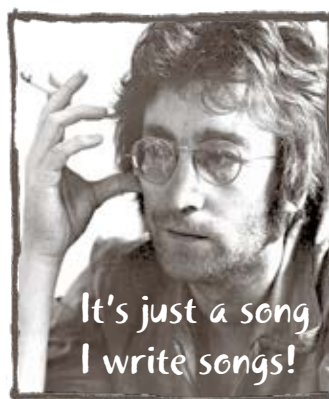
A long time ago, I saw John Lennon’s 1971 documentary *Gimme Some Truth*. It was filmed at his mansion, and there was a ragged young man who came wanting help, hoping John Lennon would have the answers. Could John, the guru with all his great words, tell him the big secret, his purpose, even free him, give him life? I am sure a lot went through

the young man’s mind before he built up the courage to go and see John Lennon.

I’m sure the man would have been thinking things such as, “Would John be able to tell me? What about if he doesn’t know, what then? But what if he does, surely somebody has to know, there has to be more than this.”

*Imagine all the people
living life as one.*

So he overcame his fears and went to see John Lennon. John told him, “I’m just a guy that writes songs... I was just having fun with words.” Then John gave him some breakfast.



I remember even though it had been just a song, surely it came out of John’s heart, and so many people liked it because it spoke to their hearts. What else could John Lennon do? Could John be freed, to give up what he wanted to do, to take this man in and care for him? What things were inside him anyway? Could he trust him with his house, his family, his money, his life, and what about all the others? Lost, alone and without hope in the world, with the possible evil that is within man. Did John Lennon have it together anyway? To help that man, care for

him, and turn him into what he was created to be, to do the purpose he was created to do? What if the whole world wanted to come? If the story got out... there’s a place, everybody come, a true brotherhood of man, the greatest community ever!

And the world will live as one...



Abraham

P.S. I write songs, too. Yet I live a real life with other people that backs up the words. In our communities, you don’t have to *imagine*.

The MASK



IT WAS OLD NOW, AND ITS SHRIVELED INSIDE PINCHED AND SCRATCHED HIS STINGING FACE.

But as he glanced in the full-length mirror, he could see its outside still peacefully smiling. Ever since he put it

on, it had been smiling exactly that way.

When he had arrived at the party and someone had handed him the mask, he had politely declined, saying he didn't care for it. But someone in a huge grinning mask said that if he didn't

put it on people might not think he was enjoying the party. And if they thought him unhappy they might even ask him to leave.

At first the mask seemed tolerable. It felt good, looked real, and made him feel like one of the crowd. Once behind it, it didn't matter whether he liked the party or anyone at the party. Nobody would know.

But as the party progressed, he noticed all the masks beginning to look more and more alike: smiling, happy, self-satisfied. He glanced in the mirror. Even his own mask was beginning to look that way.

Suddenly he was afraid. What if his mask should slip down in an unguarded moment? What if everyone should discover that behind the mask he wasn't really having fun at all?

He stared at his peaceful, smiling reflection in the mirror. It was nauseating. Behind him some masks were whispering among themselves. A masked voice was saying they should try harder to spread more masks around.

*Waits by the window, wearing a face that she keeps
in a jar by the door; Who is it for?*

But something inside gnawed at him. Perhaps they wouldn't dismiss him after all. Perhaps, if he took it off, he could start a trend. Perhaps others would follow and they could all just be themselves again.

He had worn his mask too long already, and it was getting old. Its drying, shrinking inside chafed and pinched his face. Suddenly it lost all meaning. It hadn't changed the real him at all. It was a sham, a facade, a mockery. He would tear it off and throw it away!

He reached for it, no longer caring what anyone else thought or said or did. He despised it. He wanted his face to be his — not some grinning mask. His fingers searched for the string, for the edge — but the string was gone, and he couldn't find where the mask left off and his skin began.

Looking in the mirror, he clutched frantically at the shriveled mold and pulled until his whole face stung and burned in pain. A scream escaped his smiling lips. The mask had grown onto his face.



Where Lonely People Belong

When you see those who believe in the God who is love living together, dwelling in unity, then you have found the place where the walls are broken down. Loneliness cannot dwell in the light of love. Through faith in Yahshua, you can come into God's holy habitation, the community where we find a real home with real people. It is God's character to bring people together to love and care for one another. If is there that the lost and lonely ones start becoming part of the solution to loneliness.

The solution is that God has wiped out loneliness, totally done away with it. God has taken loneliness away from those who

are His. How has He done this? The solution is simple. He brings the lonely into families, real families, families who care about each other. I mean, really care. Families who are committed to you. Families who are not isolated, but instead dwell together as a people. Those who want to be His people will no longer be lonely, that is, if they really want to be His people.

So why are you still lonely? You are living in sin — a life of loneliness. Loneliness is the demonstration of the unbelief of the whole world. No matter how many lonely people you bring together, two or two hundred, you

cannot end the pain of loneliness. It doesn't take a marriage, a commune, or a dormitory to end loneliness. Surprisingly, it takes just one person to end loneliness — **you**. The way out is to accept the solution and leave your lonely life behind you forever.

"A father to the fatherless and a defender of widows is God in His holy dwelling place. God makes a home for the lonely. He leads out the prisoners into prosperity. Only the rebellious [the lonely] dwell in a parched land."

Psalm 68:5,6

The cure for loneliness is forgiveness and the life of love that results from being forgiven; It is found in the place where God dwells. ☪



I woke up to the still and quiet, just before the first light of dawn. After such a deep sleep, my body was completely relaxed, so relaxed that I didn't want such sublime rest to end. My mind was alert and my thoughts were crystal clear. It was the kind of clarity that can only come when there is nothing to distract, nothing to interfere with hearing the very deep things in your heart.

It was amazing to see how easily I could focus on every detail of the events of the day before. The motivation of every act and every encounter, how I treated people, what I did and why, was vividly clear to me as I watched the instant replay of these things in my mind over and over.

It was impossible to escape the judgment of my thoughts as I considered how my behavior had been. In some instances, my mind defended me, but in others it accused me. I could not deny the accuracy of these inward judgments and it made me want to quickly make right all the wrongs I had done.

How different it was to see and perceive things about my life so clearly! I rarely take the time to really consider the outcome of my thoughts and actions. My life is filled with so many interesting things to do that I hardly ever consider the consequences. My mind is bombarded with so much information every day that it is never clear enough to speak to me about the things in my life that bother me inside.

Then, as I lay there, continuing to ponder these things, the most startling and shocking thought entered my mind. What if I were confined to this darkness and silence with no way to get out? What if I were in a place where the light of day never came? What if I were left alone with no one to talk to or nothing to do but listen to my thoughts as they constantly analyzed every aspect and every detail of everything I had done since the day I was born?

Could this be what death will be like, having to deal with the fact that you really did have a conscience which was the voice of the instinctive knowledge of good and evil within you? In the absolute darkness, confinement and silence of death, will every person wish that he had listened when he had the opportunity? How will you reason your way out of the crystal-clear judgment within you? At this point you will realize that your conscience really was your friend, trying to warn you many times of the things that were leading you to this place of death.

Perhaps the greatest agony will be the realization that you had a chance and you ignored it. You will know that you are guilty, and in the silent agony and lonely isolation of death,

you will learn to admit the guilt of every infraction of conscience until you have admitted everything, until you have paid every last cent you owe. The power and clarity of the voice of your conscience will outlast every cry of your most complex reasoning to justify your guilt.

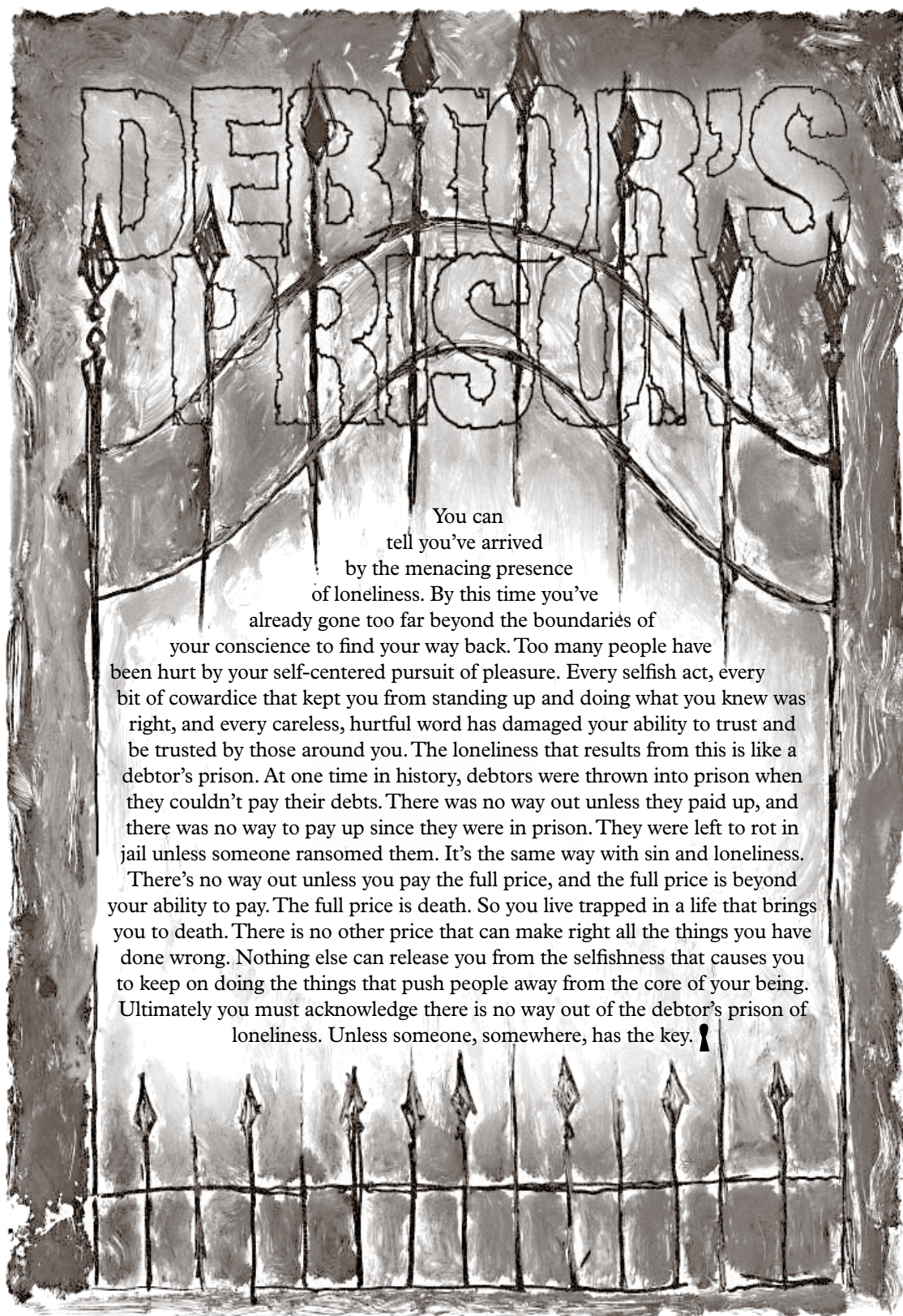
Can you imagine remembering every selfish act, every wrong motive, every hurtful thing you ever did? Can you imagine the torture of not having any way to undo the things that you finally admit are wrong? This penalty will make everyone who experiences it weep with loud groanings. Some will be broken-hearted by this discipline of death. At the great Day of Judgment for all mankind, they will find mercy and forgiveness, for they will have paid in full the penalty for their guilt. Others will only harden their hearts beyond remedy. They will never find mercy, for they will persist in loving evil and will not accept the penalty for their guilt. Therefore, at the great Day of Judgment they will go to a second death, the Sea of Fire. From this place there is no release, not ever, for all eternity.

As I consider these things, it thrills me to know that there was a man who once lived on this earth who had compassion for all mankind. He realized more deeply than I ever could the sentence of death that we are all facing for our guilt. He gladly took it upon Himself and willingly died for us. He experienced the loneliness, the darkness, the agony of separation from life and He was completely innocent. He made it possible that through His blood we could be forgiven in this life right now. We can be set free from the sentence of death and live a life of love for Him and for His people. This is the greatest news, the most profound headline that could ever be seen or heard. He dealt with the source of loneliness for all of us, when His blood covered our guilt and removed every barrier that separated us from our Creator. Whoever keeps His word will never see death. ❧

WHAT DEATH IS LIKE

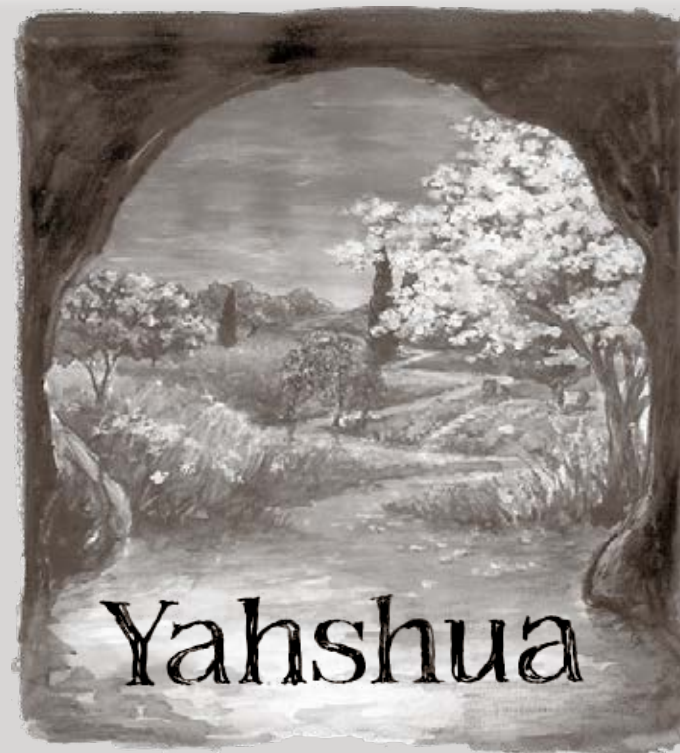
You are finally alone with your conscience. You are forced to face your sin, with nowhere to hide and nothing to distract your mind from the awareness of your own guilt. Every evil deed, every base thought, every selfish motive comes out of hiding to torture you. Like a worm burrowing into the recesses of your memory, eating away at your every excuse, so is the path of your thoughts as your conscience fully awakens. The unquenchable fire of your self-inquisition leaves you either weeping in remorse or gnashing your teeth as you resist the truth about yourself.

Will it ever end?



You can tell you've arrived by the menacing presence of loneliness. By this time you've already gone too far beyond the boundaries of your conscience to find your way back. Too many people have been hurt by your self-centered pursuit of pleasure. Every selfish act, every bit of cowardice that kept you from standing up and doing what you knew was right, and every careless, hurtful word has damaged your ability to trust and be trusted by those around you. The loneliness that results from this is like a debtor's prison. At one time in history, debtors were thrown into prison when they couldn't pay their debts. There was no way out unless they paid up, and there was no way to pay up since they were in prison. They were left to rot in jail unless someone ransomed them. It's the same way with sin and loneliness. There's no way out unless you pay the full price, and the full price is beyond your ability to pay. The full price is death. So you live trapped in a life that brings you to death. There is no other price that can make right all the things you have done wrong. Nothing else can release you from the selfishness that causes you to keep on doing the things that push people away from the core of your being. Ultimately you must acknowledge there is no way out of the debtor's prison of loneliness. Unless someone, somewhere, has the key. 🔑

Loneliness is sin. Sin is something that you know you should not feel or experience or do, but you are caught in its trap anyway. Sin always separates you from others. Death is the culmination of all the other separations we have brought upon ourselves. We cannot expect in death other than what we choose in life. That's why the Bible says that the wages of sin is death. ☞



It is twilight, the time between the lights. The edge of the sky fades into violet, and above it hangs a veil of deep blue. Behind both waits a heaven of black fast approaching, and the second set of lights: the small, dim stars of evening.

In a tomb, a man's body is left to rot. Three nights drag by. Three mornings come and then three long days. Now it is twilight again and his spirit returns to his body. Death flees away like a frightened crow.

Suddenly his eyes flutter open. His nostrils fill with air. His first sharp breath rushes into his chest like a flood of fire. It's charged with the sweetness of twilight, the cool of the evening, the delicious fragrance of plants growing in a garden. Like a sword, it cuts the strangling noose of lifelessness. Soon every cell in his body is surging with new life. A smile fills his lips and well-being springs up from his guts, up the entire length of his chest and escapes his parted lips like the beginning of a triumphant cry.

He sits up, bolts up, throws off the blood-stained linen. The newborn power of life fills his every movement. It wells up like a fountain as his feet swing down from the rock and touch earth. He is on his feet, standing, walking, springing into the twilight.

Did you see his eyes when they first opened, after his eyelids had flung off the air of the tomb? His first glance pierced upwards through the graying light and the sullen rock around him. It broke out into the violet and blue of the twilight until his sight captured the trembling, unseen universe beyond. He saw triumph. He saw death's cold limbs shake like twigs in a gale. He saw the fleeing serpent pinned head-down beneath a staff. And the stamp of a heel crushing its head. Little wonder he smiled. Or leaped. Or danced. Or shouted. Or praised his God. Or went to meet those he loved. Wouldn't you? ☞

***Yahshua** is the Hebrew name of the Son of God. The footnote to Matthew 1:21 in the NIV New Testament reads: *Jesus is the Greek form of Joshua*. In Hebrew, as in old English, there is no "J" sound, so the name is more accurately rendered **Yahshua**.



Ah, look at all the lonely people. Where do they all belong?

WE USED TO BE DESPERATELY LONELY, even though most of us had a lot of friends. Some of us were successful in what we did, and some of us were failures beyond hope. We came from everywhere and we have done everything trying to make sense out of our lives. But no matter what we did, we were left feeling dirty inside. We were scarred deeply from the effects of mistrust and hurtful relationships. We strove for acceptance, money, and whatever else could give us comfort. Some of us had dreams of a better life, but most of us had given up the struggle, settling instead for compromise and consent to the way things are. We were lost, scattered, without direction, doing our own thing.

Then we heard a voice that spoke to us right where we were, exposing the emptiness of our lives. This voice matched up fully to the longing of our hearts. Somehow a lifetime of being unable to trust was overpowered by this voice of hope. It came from a people who had their dirty conscience washed clean. They had a clean slate and an absolutely new life. This new life they eagerly offered to all who wanted it.

So now we have a life together. We no longer have to be separated by race, education, appearance, position, status, or where we came from. Instead, our days are filled with seeking first the needs of our brothers and sisters. In so doing, we find our own needs are met. This new life has given us the power to care.

We hate the death, war, strife, hatred, starvation, murder, injustice, greed, and selfishness that is leading the whole world to destruction. We want to see all of this come to an end. We want many, many more people to hear the voice of hope we have heard, to come and see the life. We are thrilled to be able to invite you to come and see that it is a reality.

We are a messianic community, and by *community* we do not mean a town or locality. Nor do we mean a loose association of individuals living near one another. And we surely do not mean a religious organization centered around meeting in a building, otherwise called a church. *Community*, as we use the term, means those who love one another so greatly that they are of one heart and mind, holding all things as common property, living together, taking their meals together, devoted to one another because they're devoted to the One who saved them from death and misery. ☩

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The Commonwealth of Israel

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THERE IS A PEOPLE who woke up this morning with one thing on their minds — to love their Creator with all their heart, mind, and strength, and to love one another just as He loved them. Being just ordinary human beings, we are far from perfect in our love, yet, in hope, we persevere. Our goal? That the kingdom of God would come on earth as it is in heaven, so that love and justice can rule on the earth. Sound impossible? It would be, were it not that the Son of God came to earth to redeem mankind, to set us free from the curse of sin, and to enable us to love. Because we have come to see His worth and our own desperate need, we have surrendered everything in order to follow Him. Our hearts and our homes are open night and day to any who are interested in our life or are weary of their sin and want to know the purpose for which they were created. ☩

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