You Are Not Alone

You Are Loved

Help for young people who feel alone, lonely, abandoned, and without love and support

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INTRODUCTION

My nephew, Meryll, recently completed high school with high honors. He was an athlete and a great one at it. He played baseball (the Palau National Sport), volleyball, and basketball. He had many friends from those sports and appeared to be on his way to a bright future. He had good grades and had many girls wanting to be his girlfriend. My auntie and her husband were proud of him, as shown by the amount of attention they showered him. He got everything he wanted. But soon after high school, he got into trouble and ended up in jail. Everybody who knew him was wondering what went wrong. This extremely talented young man who seemed to get whatever he wanted all of a sudden was on the south side of life. It wasn’t long after he was released from jail that he took his own life—this shocked all of us, his family, his friends, his classmates, and everyone else.

Many young people seem to walk through life without a clear vision, clear goals, or a clear direction in life. They seem to wander into youth groups, social groups, and other gatherings. They do not seem to have a sense of urgency that they are growing old and need to have some security in their lives. Then we hear of someone taking their own lives, like my nephew. We also hear of youths being radicalized to commit horrific terroristic
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acts. We learn that many were depressed, felt betrayed by someone, or felt rejected by their family. It is a horrible situation to be in at such a young age. My nephew began to have these problems when his parents got separated.

Many people in the world are afraid to die, so for one to decide to take their own life must mean the person was so troubled that death would appear to be a welcome relief from their troubles. Palau has a local population of about 17,000 people. The number one cause of death for teenagers and young adults is reckless driving, followed very closely by suicide. When we cover entire Micronesia, including the Federated States of Micronesia and the Marshall Islands, suicide takes over as the number one cause of death for young people.

Altogether there were approximately 14 suicides in Palau in the last 3 years. Still, based on the ratio per population, it has one of the highest rates of suicide in the world. I have three relatives in their early to mid-twenties who took their own lives in the last two years. A fourth one was in his thirties. All of my three relatives who committed suicide came from broken homes where the father and the mother no longer lived together. The very last one entertained the notion of suicide as early as when the father moved out of their home. When he finally committed suicide about a year or so after the parents were separated, his friends and relatives found his writings where he indicated that life was too hard and not worth living. He clearly referred to being lonely without a father, concluding that if things didn’t change, he
would soon be six feet under. His friends didn’t figure what *six feet under* meant until it was too late.

A father figure is a key to the family unit as he is the head of the entire household. He provides for the family in more ways than just monetary provision. He gives a sense of security, stability, purpose, direction, comfort, discipline, and advice. These are essential to a young child, a teenager, or a young adult who is trying to discover their purpose and sense of worth in the world. Without a father, a child is lost, and when they continue in such a stage for a while, they lose purpose or a reason to live.

What is being observed in the islands are young people who come from homes where either the parents are separated and the father is not there, or from dysfunctional families where there is no unity with the father serving as the head of the household. Many of the suicide teens come from such homes.

But an equally alarming trend is unfolding in the islands where many youth and teens die of vehicle accidents. Vehicle accidents are caused mainly by reckless driving. With the size of the island, where from one end you can reach the other in an hour at an average speed, why are there so many accidents? In Palau, every weekend, there are cars that are turned over, run off the road, or involved in head-on collisions.

Observations in Palau reveal that many of such teens and youth are from families that lack family gatherings, family fellowships, or family discipline. The parents failed to consider their children when they made deci-
sions. They demonstrated a lack of care and even love for their children because they are either too busy with businesses (some are wealthy business people), their jobs, social groups, or their customary connections. They have very little time to bring their families together for dinner, where they can talk and explore life together. They spend little time teaching their kids about their family ties, clans, or lineages and what they value most in life. Often times the parents do not live according to faith or close to known Christian standards but rather live secular lives, occasionally attending church on Sundays. They neither understand, nor do they live by what they hear in church.

Often, we take parenting for granted, hoping that the schools, the churches, and the extended families would help our children grow up to be responsible and have a set purpose that will guide their behavior and growth. In Palau, many people think that the schools and the church institutions are responsible for teaching their kids their culture, their language, their traditions, and their cultural practices. The parents are often unwilling to take the responsibility and make the home an institution of learning of traditionally accepted practices or in line with Christian faith. Some parents even blame the church for not training their children in Christian ways, which is why they are problematic in society. So, the big question is, whose responsibility is to ensure children know their language and culture and are proud of it? Whose responsibility is it to build in children a sense of worth based on set goals and accomplishments
towards those goals? Whose responsibility is it that a child comes to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ and builds a sense of purpose around his or her faith?

My answer came from my son Anzic Alexander, the boy in the book, “The Miracle of the Hermit Crab.” My one and only son, whom I longed for and prayed to have, came with Cerebral Palsy. He does not have a normal life but is plagued with severe disabilities. In my relationship with him, I began to see the true needs children have of their father. My beloved and dear son cannot live without help from someone. He needs someone to help him get out of bed, use the restroom, clean him up, bathe him, brush his teeth, feed him, clothe him, take him to school, do most of his studies for him, do his work for him, put him up and take him down from his wheelchair, comb his hair, change his clothes, prepare him for bed, sleep with him, and wake up with him to begin the routine all over again. His case is severe, and I can see his constant need for someone. We have to provide him with a helper who can be with him practically 24/7. But she is just a helper. My wife and I understand that we have to commit ourselves to play a significant role in his life if we want him to be safe and live a peaceful and joyful life.

In Palau, before formal education was established, traditional and non-formal education was put in place. Boys were students of their fathers and the elders in the community. Young girls were students of their mothers and aunties. The boys learned how to provide food for the family, build homes, learn about their families, their
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clans, and their status in the community. It helped the boys to know their family history and their status in the community and in their own clan. It helped them know their roles and responsibilities and what one must do to be self-sufficient and a contributing member of the community. This helped build in the boys a sense of worth and dignity. It was the same for young girls at home.

Young girls would learn from their mothers and aunts how to cultivate farms, harvest for the family and for customary events, and they would learn about their families, their clans, and their status in their clans. A girl would understand her roles and responsibilities in the family as well as in the community. She would also learned that she must get married and, when she does, her role, the role of her husband, her responsibilities to her parents while married, to her husband, to her husband’s family and relatives, and to her children. This is where the knowledge of traditional values and practices are planted and nurtured by the parents. The girls learn from their mothers, and the boys learn from their fathers.

This non-formal education helped build a sense of purpose in the children. It taught them important values that they must adopt to maintain their status in the community and earn respect from their peers. Thus, the social health of a child depends on the father or the mother to serve as a teacher and role model. The family as a unit relies heavily on the father to guide it, provide for it, and organize it so that the children can
learn these valuable lessons and be prepared for adulthood. It teaches and prepares them for their future role as head of their household, rearing their families in a responsible and dignified manner. Otherwise, the children will grow without a sense of direction and become a nuisance to the community or end up seeking self-harm to end their miseries.

People often feel like the relationship with God is for salvation and one-track support from Him to us. Many pastors and preachers have stressed that it is a very intimate relationship between God and us. But often, people resort back to old traditions where God serves only as a Savior and a provider in times of need; in the meantime, He should stay afar and let us be. While He provides all that, I believe that God deeply desires to reveal His passion for a much deeper relationship with us. He does this through the Gospel of John. I believe that many pastors and church leaders sense this as well and tell new converts that they must begin their Christian journey by reading and meditating on the Gospel of John. This is most certainly the right way to go. In my studies of the Bible, not just the Gospel of John but the entire Bible, I have concluded that God has always longed for a very intimate relationship with us, just like the one between a father and a son.

I am also convinced that John was led by the Holy Spirit to convey this message in his Gospel and in his three letters, I John, II John, and III John. I began by wondering why there are four gospels, all relating to the biography of our Lord Jesus Christ. Isn’t this a bit rep-
etitious? Is there really a need for all four gospels? Why did John have to write the Gospel of John when there was already the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke? It is said that the Gospel of Matthew was written in AD 50 during the early church period when the church was mostly Jewish. So, the main audience of the book was the Jewish Christians.\(^1\) The Gospel of Mark was probably written around AD 50 to early AD 60 or perhaps shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.\(^2\) The Gospel of Luke is dated AD 70 to AD 80. The Gospel of John was at the turn of the first century or around AD 85 or shortly thereafter.\(^3\) Dr. Charles Swindoll says, “John certainly knew of the other Gospels and probably taught from them for many years before deciding under the guidance of the Holy Spirit that the biography of Jesus was still incomplete.”\(^4\) If John knew about the three Gospels and was using them to teach, why was he led by the Holy Spirit to conclude that an additional gospel was needed?

Let’s look at what the other Gospels provide. We know that Jesus is referred to in the Gospel of Matthew as Messiah the King; the Gospel of Mark portrays Jesus as the Servant who came to serve; the Gospel of Luke describes Jesus as the Son of Man, and the Gospel of John portrays Jesus as the Son of God. I believe the Gospel of John conveys a deep insight into the heart

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1. Zondervan NIV Study Bible, page 1463
2. Zondervan, NIV Study Bible, page 1522
3. Zondervan, NIV Study Bible, page 1623
of God, His love for humankind, and His desire for the type of relationship God had longed for and sought to have with man. It is a love that is different from the love for nature, creatures, the ecosystem, the universe, and His other creation. It is a special love for the one whom He created in His very own image. I believe that he loves humankind just as he loves himself. That is why John talks more about love than any other gospels or books in the Bible. He writes, “For God so loved the world that He gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him will not perish but will have eternal life” (John 3:16). He also writes, “And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love, whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him” (I John 4:16).

But more significantly, John brings it down to human terms where we can understand the feeling and emotion that goes into the passion God has for us, a father-son relationship, or a parent and child relationship. John writes it very clearly: “Yet to all who received Him, those who believed in His name, he gave the right to become children of God” (John 1:12). He also writes, “How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called ‘Children of God!’ And that is what we are” (I John 3:1). John was well into his elder years, but the Holy Spirit led him to convey the emotion and deep feeling of intimacy God desired for us. The key word in the Gospel of John is ‘believe.’ It appears more than 90 times in his Gospel. This characterizes the relationship between a child and a father built on trust and faith. A child will always, regardless of the circumstances, be-
lieve in their father.

Belief is only a tool or a mechanism to connect and build an intimate relationship. The fact that it is mentioned many times in the Gospel indicates how much John wanted to stress that requirement so that we can achieve the relationship that God desired for us. This relationship is fulfilled and made possible through His Son Jesus Christ and by placing our faith in Him.

Exploring the Gospel, John reveals many insights into how God views us, His desired interaction with us, and His response to our needs as a father would his own child. There are many promises in the Gospel of John. Some he talked about, and others he relates as coming from Jesus himself. When we examine these promises, we realize that they all point to one main promise given to us at the beginning of the Gospel. That promise is that God longs for a father-child relationship. Understandably, a father loves a child unconditionally and endlessly. As earthly fathers, we can examine our relationship with our children and get a glimpse of the type of relationship that God wants with His children.

A father looks at his child as the most beautiful, the smartest, the most athletic, and the best child in the world. Their child is always right, always honest, always on the good side of behavior, while the rest of the children are on the other side longing to be like their child. What happens to parents when a child is born with a disability? Many parents, while still loving their children, begin to question what went wrong (as though it is a curse), if there are evil sins in their lives that
caused the child to be disabled. They are ashamed to be seen in public with the child, especially if the disability is significant. Some will dislike the child (blaming them for this unexpected situation). Worst of all, some would stop the flow of love.

If we lose the love, compassion, security, and support of our earthly father, it pushes children to drugs, the wrong crowd, negative behavior, and even self-harm. This book aims to inform us that there is one remaining option; our heavenly Father will never stop being the most loving ever. This book will look into that relationship, as I believe John aims to clarify and demonstrate the kind of relationship God wants us to have. We will explore several promises found in the Gospel of John, which clearly speak of this aim and present a clear message to us all, that God desires to build a loving, most intimate, most rewarding father-child relationship with us regardless of our physical or spiritual condition.

I believe very strongly that God was pained by our desire and choice to sin and disobey Him. I believe that I could see that because he allowed me to have a son, Anzic Alexander, who is severely disabled with cerebral palsy. God enabled me to experience the joy of having a child (Anzic is my only son, whom I longed to have) but to experience the pain because of his disability. Having Anzic helped me to see the joy a father would have by having a son who continually depends on him, fully trusts him, and relies on him to provide all his needs.

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5 The Miracle of the Hermit Crab. Dove Christian Publishers, 2019
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because he cannot do anything on his own. But it also helped me experience the pain of him being disabled and not able to do the things I wanted and planned for him. I believe that God has endured the pain of wanting a father-child relationship with us but could not fully have it because of our disability. Our disability is caused by our sins separating us from the wonderful plan he has for each of us. It is caused by our disobedience because we seek help and fulfillment with other gods or from other sources.

Therefore, he worked out a plan: the sacrifice of His Son for our sins and His resurrection to ensure that we will have that if we accept the Son’s sacrifice. And those who believe and accept the Son can get back on track with God’s desire from the very beginning, which is to have people he could call His children. That is why John writes in I John 5:12, “He who has the Son has life. He who does not have the Son of God does not have life.” It is very plain to me—and I hope you will see it, too—that God wants us to be considered His children, not merely Christians or His people, but His children. This truly reflects a very gracious, merciful, and loving God and ensures we will never be alone in this life and the next if we choose to accept Jesus into our lives.