



## Are You Living in Isolation?

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Have you heard this one recently: we're living in the most wired society ever yet we're more disconnected than ever? It seems to resonate with our present reality. I've heard this one a lot too: it's lonely in leadership. Neither of these are scientific claims, but they do seem to reflect the reality of the world in which we live.

### Author

The weekly eNews is provided by CGGC Executive Director Lance Finley



A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away, I used to teach a class called The Ministerial Person. I typically introduced the class as an experience designed to help you understand yourself: who you really are, what are your strengths and weaknesses, your baggage, and what do you bring to the table as a leader. It was a class designed to help future leaders take a serious look at their own person and how their "who" would impact their future ministry and leadership.

I required the class to read a short book on ministerial support systems by the Alban Institute. It wasn't the most exciting read and that was often duly noted by my students (it was about as stimulating as watching paint dry). The main reason I had them read the book was for the benefit of a brief exercise in the middle of the book where it asked you to list everyone in your life that you might call upon in a moment of crisis. Name the folks who would support you when you need help the most.

After the students took time to make their lists, the exercise went on to remove categories of people from the list. Remove anyone who is in your immediate family: spouse, parent, child, brother or sister. Remove anyone who lives further than 25 miles away from you: your childhood best friend, your college roommate or another peer who lives several states away. Remove anyone who is a pastor in your community. Remove anyone who is a pastor in your denomination. There were several other categories before you ended the exercise. Who is left on your list?

Typically, by the second or third category, most of the room had no names left on their lists. People were often furious with the "stupid" exercise. "Why would you have me list the names only to tell me I have to scratch them off my list?" The point wasn't that you shouldn't continue to rely on those folks, the point of the exercise was to demonstrate that most of us don't have a broad enough support system in place. Many of us don't have a many close friends or supporters. There were some experiences where students might have only had one or two names on their list of people they could

rely upon in a moment of crisis. I actually had one student offer that his spouse was his accountability partner and that was really all he needed (I'm convinced that part of the reason so many pastoral spouses are burned out is the result of pastors not having a broad enough circle of support leaving the spouse to bear the full burden of support).

Leadership can be difficult and demanding. Leaders who finish well know that they can't do it all alone. They need others around them who will go deep with them, support them, challenge them and who will encourage them to not grow weary in doing good. Here's the catch: those kind of relationships don't develop quickly and certainly don't develop in the midst of a crisis or storm. You have to be intentional about building these kind of friendships, investing in one another over time, and earning and offering trust.

Are you leading in isolation? Do you have a circle of friends, supporters, trusted counselors and advisors to whom you can turn in order to share the burdens you carry?

If you have those kind of friendship, I think you probably realize what a gift they really are. When was the last time you thanked them for their friendship? When was the last time you let them know how much their friendship means to you?

If you don't have those kind of relationships, you can still start to build that team today. It won't happen overnight. It won't happen quickly, but you can start today. Two of my richest friendships developed because someone else had the courage to reach out and say "I'm struggling here, could we connect and see how we can help each other?" I thank God for the brothers He's placed in my life to help me become a better leader and weather the storms that life brings, I don't know where I'd be without them. I'm grateful that they had the courage and took the steps to reach out and offer their friendship and support.

Perhaps there is someone you need to reach out to today and set up a lunch appointment soon. Find someone that you can invest in and support. Find someone who can help you make sense out of the challenges that you are facing. Don't live and lead in isolation. Don't try to go it alone. We need each other.

Christ's Peace,

**Lance**