



TRANSFORMED

DEVOTIONS CONNECTING TEENS TO CHRIST

I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Philippians 1:3-6

Thankful for people

While he was incarcerated, he spent two days in solitary confinement. He had been in several prisons. He'd seen many jail cells. This tall, buff, bald, and tattooed man helped run a drug empire. This man wasn't scared of anything. But solitary confinement? That made him almost shake with fear.

We aren't made to be alone. Several studies have shown that children, teens, and adults suffer when they are alone.

Maybe you know what that's like. Does it seem like other teens have a great group of friends while you are on the outside looking in? Does it feel like you might be an after-thought when others are getting together? Or worse, does it ever cross your mind that you don't have the number of friends others do? Maybe you wonder if people even notice you.

You're not alone.

A man by the name of Paul knew what that was like. He had been persecuted and run out of cities. Worse than having only a few friends in Philippi, he had several sworn enemies. But that is where God stepped in.

Through the people of Philippi, Paul knew what it was like to have true friends who cared when few others did. He experienced the joy of having people who prayed for him, supported him, and were his partners in sharing the good news of Jesus. It was through the gospel that God gave them the joy of encouraging Paul. That joy was the source of his prayer of thanks to God.

Jesus too understands what it is to be alone. Crowds gathered for all the wrong reasons and ditched him by the thousands. Even his closest disciples left him when he asked them to watch and pray. After spending a night in solitary confinement, he was brutally beaten and nailed to a cross. And on the cross, he became more alone than anyone in the history of humanity. He was left all alone—even by his Father—as he suffered for our sins. But in this way, he paid the price so that we would never be alone from God.

Now the connection that we have with others means so much more.

We get to enjoy the company of our friends. More than that, in our faith family, we have partners who share eternal joy. Not just in this life, but as brothers and sisters in our Father's eternal family. So, every encouraging word we share, every friendly moment, and every step we step we take together is all part of God's plan in leading us to our heavenly home.

Remember that rough-around the edges character described at the beginning? He later admitted, "The only thing that got me through was knowing that I had just come to know my God and Savior. And I had a cell-mate who said he would pray for me." He was never alone ever again. Neither are we.

Take some time this week to thank God for the people he has put in your life so you are not alone and with whom you might walk to heaven.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for the gift of friends who share my faith. I get to share not just my life with them, but by your grace eternity as well. Help me to be a support to them as they are to me on our way to heaven. Amen.