

## “Lonely”

by Carol Daniels Boley

God, what loneliness surrounds me now. It consumes me. I am caught up in its grip, enveloped by its suffocating cloud of emptiness.

It paralyzes me. It gnaws at me, tears at me, eats away at my self-esteem, drains my incentive and energy. It controls me.

Is there no one who cares? No one who understands? No one who loves? Trite little phrases and parroted Scripture don't help me now, God, nor does just being in a crowd of people.

“Loneliness is being in a group where no one knows where you are coming from . . . and no one really cares,” writes Ann Kiemel. I know. It just makes it worse; it just accents the fact that I am lonely.

My tendency is to withdraw, to nurse my wounds, to dwell on my pain . . . and so for awhile I do. Until I get so tired of it, so very tired of it all and I am provoked into action.

When I allow myself to wallow in my misery, I am focused only on myself—my feelings, my pain, my pitiful plight. How selfish, Lord; forgive me.

Talking it out like this with you helps. You are capable of meeting my every need. I know that. Help me to act upon it, taking responsibility for my life and my feelings, not just responding to situations but taking an active initiative in my life.

Perhaps I have not been willing to be honest with others, and let them know of my loneliness. Perhaps I have expected them to read and understand my heart, and instinctively know how to minister to me. I confess this is sometimes so.

Father, forgive me for expecting the super-human from others, who struggle with the same weaknesses and failures as I.

Father, I forgive those who either purposefully or unintentionally have slighted me or ignored me, and added to my feelings of alienation.

In my need, let me reach out. Because I know the very real pain of loneliness, let me be sensitive to it in others. Father, you are sensitive to it in me.

When I look at your Son Jesus and look—really look—at his cross, I see the

loneliness and the pain included in his suffering.

Jesus understands.

Jesus understands what it's like to feel unwanted, unloved, rejected. He understands what it feels like to be betrayed by a friend, to be falsely accused, to stand alone for a cause.

Jesus understands what it's like to live without a mate, or children or a home of his own.

Jesus understands what it's like to do things for others and not be appreciated or thanked.

He understands what it's like to give until it hurts, and receive spit in return.

He knows what it's like to be deserted in his time of deepest need, to discover no loyalty in his dearest friends.

He knows what it feels like to be abandoned by his Father. He knows the desperate terror of having God turn his back. “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?”

All this Jesus knows and understands and feels with us. Thank you, God, for a Savior so caring. Thank you for his prom-

ise to be with us always, and for the fact that nothing—not even my feelings of intense loneliness—can separate me from his love.

“The loneliest people I know are not those without wives or husbands or children or financial security or challenging jobs. They are those who have never allowed Jesus into their inner souls . . . and who have never learned to look at themselves as they really are . . . who have never let the process lead them to a higher, better place.” (Ann Kiemel.)

O Lord, hold me close and feel my pain. Hold me close and give me the sweet joy and wonder at the miracle of living life with you.

Lord, help me see pain in others and identify with them. Help me then to show your love.

O Lord, let me hold them close and feel their pain; hold them close and share the sweet joy and wonder at the miracle of living life with you.

I love being able to run to you, Lord, to run into your arms for your strength and comfort and love and assurance. But please, Lord, don't let me be selfish with your love. Let me love you when my skies are sunny and clear, when my future is bright, when all in my life is good, as much as when I have no place else to go, when there are no flowers to smell, and no joy in my life but you.

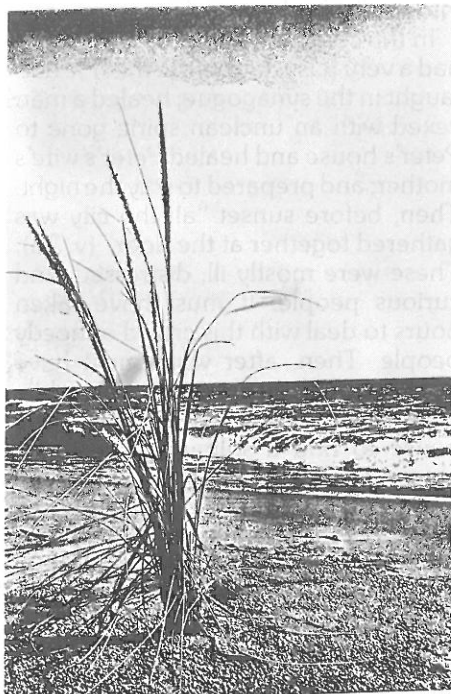
But you know what, Lord? It's in those times I know you are sufficient, you are able, you are King. Thank you for making me one of your own, your beloved.

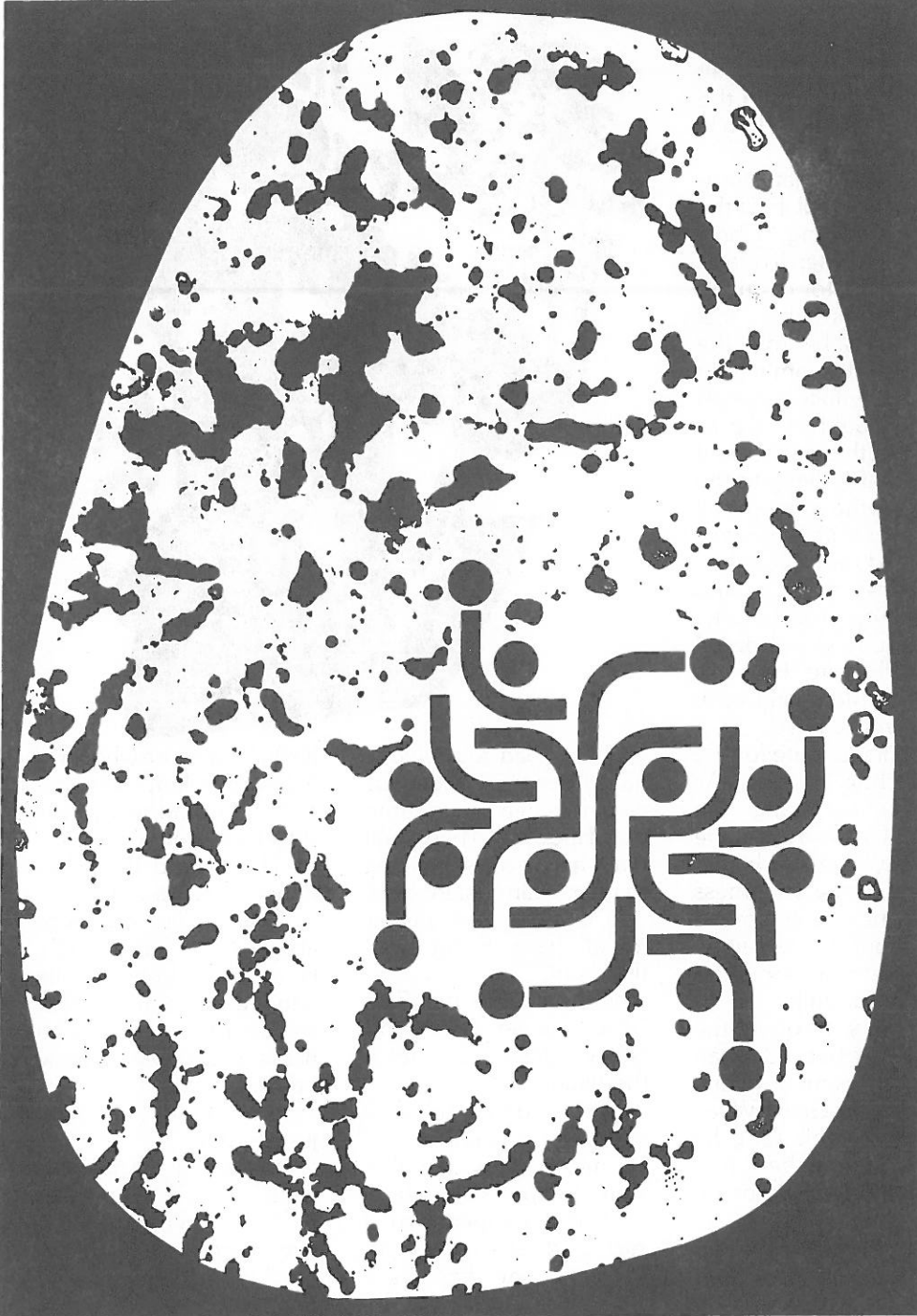
Teach me, Lord, constructive ways to deal with my loneliness. Let it be used as an instrument to draw me closer to you first of all, and also to others.

“Come,” you say. “Be with me, spend time with me, talk to me, listen to me, praise me, thank me, worship me, love me.”

Of course, Lord, for it is in you I live and move and have my being. In you is my fulfillment, my dream, and my goal.

And thank you for your promise, “I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you” (Heb. 13:5, NASB). Thank you that, through Jesus, I can be more than a conqueror—even over loneliness.





# GIVING THE GIFT OF LIFE

by  
Carol  
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Blood.  
People respond to it with varying emotions. Some get sick at the very thought of it. It can mean tragedy.

Disaster. A wound, a stab, trauma. But this miraculous fluid contains essential elements of life.  
Blood. It is life.

One of the fun parts of my job in hospital community relations is heading our quarterly blood drives. I have learned much about the donating

process, and what happens to the blood afterwards.

Blood cannot be manufactured, neither can it be artificially produced. It must be supplied by human beings. They are the only source. From each unit donated, four persons can be helped, each using a different component to meet a specific need.

Blood cannot be stored indefinitely; it must be on hand when the immediate need arises. Supplies are often low, sometimes depleted—and lives are lost because of it.

I have received many different responses from people when asking them to donate. Some are glad—even eager—to help; yet one woman, who worked in a doctor's office no less, spit venomously back at me, "You are a vampire! You're always asking for my blood!"

The first blood drive I coordinated, I did not donate myself. I was afraid. There's something spooky about the process, especially when you don't know anything about it.

But three months later, when I was preparing to make calls for donors again, I knew I wanted to make an appointment to give, for several reasons: 1) I couldn't ask people to do what I wasn't willing to do myself; 2) I couldn't relate to their feelings about donating if I didn't experience those feelings myself; and 3) My nephew Eric had received the blood that some caring person had contributed, and it had sustained his life. He would not have lived the two years that he did without it. I wanted now to do the same for someone's little nephew, or mother, or son.

And so, armed with noblest intentions, I began the donating process. Personnel from Blood Services took my blood pressure and temperature, asked questions about my general health, and pricked my finger to test for anemia. After I assumed the posi-

tion on the couch for donating, the phlebotomist probed for the vein in my elbow and gave me a little bar to squeeze. Then the needle went in—almost painlessly—and I watched as the thin plastic tube sped away my blood into a "unit bag" on the floor.

"There goes my life's blood," I thought, as almost a pint was pumped.

I settled back and closed my eyes, waiting for some pain that never came. I lay there wondering about who might receive my blood, hoping it wouldn't be a drunk knifed in a bar-room brawl. The thought that my blood might go to someone who had gotten himself into such a mess was disgusting. I wanted my blood to help a child, or at least someone "worthy," someone innocent of his circumstances.

I began to feel very Christ-like when I compared the similarities of my blood donating process to the crucifixion of my Savior—sharing your own life's blood, willingly, so that another might live.

"My gracious!" I thought. Even the position was similar—arm extended and pierced, then the flow of blood. Life-giving blood.

I was sharing, albeit in a minute way, the experience of sacrificing precious blood for the life of someone else. What a special time with the

Lord! How much more I appreciated what he went through for me.

Then I was struck with a severe case of the "spinners"—a thought or realization that hits you so strongly that it almost spins you right out of your chair, or bed, or in this case, blood-donating couch.

"Thank goodness Christ didn't give his blood only for someone worthy, someone who hadn't gotten himself into his own troublesome situation." He had willingly shed his life's blood in order for the vilest of sinners to gain eternal life.

The very blood that flowed from his veins, allowing him to die, is the same blood that saves me—in all my self-righteousness and sin—and buys back my life.

I felt ashamed of my previous thinking. The second time I donated blood, three months later, it was a humbling experience to give—just give—without choice of who received. And indeed it was a Christ-like experience.

If you have ever donated blood, I'm proud of you, and hope it was a satisfying, rewarding experience for you. If you have never given blood, please consider it. Giving your own blood to save another's life is a very Christ-like experience.

Blood. It is life.



# GOOD-BYE, DEAR BABY,

"But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first.

Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

"Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thes. 4:13-18).

I've heard and read these words many times, but never have they carried the meaning as strongly to me as they did the afternoon of March 1, when we buried my little nephew, Eric.

For Eric was now one of "them which are asleep," and I was one, as Paul wrote, to be comforted by those words.

Now, having lost part of my dearest treasure—one of two nephews I love as though my own—I ponder the second coming of Jesus Christ in a new, profoundly personal way. The mighty day of resurrection cannot come soon enough for me.

There has been a time when I wanted the Lord to delay his return—so I could graduate from college. Start a career. Write a novel. Get married. Have children. Travel the world.

But I had not been personally touched by death then. I had not lost someone whom I would have given my own life to save.

Everything pales now in the light of losing little Eric. What matters, really, in this life but sharing and growing in love for God and each other? I look forward to, yearn for, the day when God will grant us the great joy of living in love with him forever. The resurrection. It means I will get to hold little Eric again.

**E**RIC, dear Eric, I've come to tell you good-bye.

It's the hardest thing I've ever done, seeing you lying in your little casket, wearing your Christmas suit with the bow tie.

This isn't right. You shouldn't be there. Wake up, Eric, wake up; it's time for you to get up. Don't be dead, Eric, please don't be dead.

But you are. You do not hear me. Death, for now, has won. You are gone from me in all but my memory, and I do not think I can bear it.

I feel the gentle curve of your ear. It is cold. I brush your lips with my own and they do not respond. I, too, am dead inside.

My arms will never hold you again,

my lips never kiss you. I'll never feel your tiny hand pat my shoulder, nor receive your gentle hug. Your smile is mine only to remember.

My hand on your chest cannot rouse you. I cannot will you back to life. My mind calls, "Eric, Eric, come back," but you do not answer. Only a trumpet one day will awaken you.

I have ironed the blue shirt that you wear—the last thing I will ever get to do for you.

"It isn't very big, is it?" asked your mother when she handed it to me, and no, it is not.

For that, I ache. I grieve for the fact that you will never play baseball or ride a pony or swim into my arms at the ocean.



*We shall meet on th*

# GOOD-BYE

by Carol Daniels Boley

I will never hear you sing in a Christmas program. We will never look for Easter eggs together, or sit by a fire and tell stories, or eat popcorn at the circus. I will miss us being us, miss being part of each other's lives. I feel robbed and cheated and angry.

Do you know how much Aunt Carol loved you? Loves you now? Yes, I think you did. I'm sure you knew. A part of my heart belongs to you alone, and always will. Time, I know, will dull my pain, but never my love for you.

What I wouldn't give to have you back. My dear little love, you have meant more than life to me. Gladly, gladly would I have exchanged my life for yours, if only that had been possible.

What you added to my life cannot be expressed in mere words. I only know that being your aunt has been its highlight.

My greatest joy the last two years has been loving you—watching you grow, thrilling over your every new victory and advancement, telling everyone about you and showing off your picture, buying you little gifts, saving articles and clippings to make a scrapbook for you, planning the things we'd do together when you were older.

Oh, Eric, there's such a void without you.

I know I speak even now as a proud and biased aunt, but your ability to touch lives awes me. What powers within you called forth such tenderness and compassion and love in others? What forces commanded such respect? Never have I known a two-year-old to inspire such loyalty and love.

You of limited ability showed unbounded courage. You were a fighter, determined, unwilling to accept what seemed so sure a fate. You had come so far—crawling, stacking blocks, even sitting by yourself, all things that at one time or another doctors said would be beyond your accomplishment.

But then, all of a sudden, you just couldn't take any more.

I know you suffer no longer. For that I am grateful. I know you are spared now from the cruel and callous treatment of unthinking or unfeeling people. For that I am glad. I know you sleep now in the Lord's safekeeping, entrusted to him as my dearest treasure. The next thing you will know will be Jesus. One day—one day soon—you will run and walk and play and be perfect. You'll be perfect, Eric! I long for the day!

But my darling nephew, I ache with the emptiness of losing you. I am hurt and angry that I am denied the joy of your presence.

I follow your casket outside the chapel and watch as they put you in the back of the hearse. There is a band playing in the distance. The music I hear is lively, almost victorious, and I claim it for you.

Death, you have not won forever. This little one sleeps now, but he will live again, and we will dance in the kingdom of our God.

But right now, dear Eric, your family is crushed and devastated by your leaving us. We grieve for what we have cherished and now must bury.

I do not want to put you in the ground and leave you there alone.

God, give me understanding where understanding is possible, and faith where it is not.

"Wonderful to love you, wonderful to know; however far you wander, there my heart will go." (Pearl S. Buck.)

So many flowers here for you, Eric. Everyone loves you so. And now, good-bye, dear baby, good-bye.

"Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20).



beautiful shore.