

Daily Devotional, July 30, 2021 Together in Service Again

Jesus said, "I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you." John 15:15 (NIV)

WARNING: Reading this devotion may make you appreciate church more than ever and encourage you to return to live worship and to have greater involvement in church activities.

Dr. Vivek Murthy was America's top doctor. He served as U.S. surgeon general from 2014-2017. In this devotion is a summary of a conversation he had about his book, "Together", which discusses the dangers of loneliness and the importance of community.

A 2018 Kaiser Family Foundation report found that 22 percent of American adults say they often or always feel lonely. That's 55 million Americans, twice the number that are diagnosed with diabetes. About this, Dr. Murthy said, "Loneliness is a subjective state. It's not determined by the number of people around you, but by how you feel about the connections in your life. People who are surrounded by hundreds of others may be lonely if they don't feel those are people with whom they can fully be themselves. Others who may have only a few people around them may not feel lonely at all if they feel good about those relationships. People who are a part of an organization (like a congregation or a Rotary Club, YMCA, etc.) experience a strong bond because of their deep sense of mission and sacrificing together."

What is powerful about the church is that it is a community of diverse people rooted in service. Dr. Murthy continues, "Service shifts our attention from ourselves, where it increasingly is focused when we feel lonely, to other people. Service reaffirms that we have value to add to the world. Loneliness, if it is long-lasting, can chip away at our self-esteem and make us start to believe that the reason we are lonely is because we are not likable. But service short-circuits such thinking." Organizations like the church that provide service opportunities and connection with other volunteers are very powerful because they create meaning and help us build relationships.

He adds, "People may come to the table for the mission, but then they stay at the table for the people. What keeps us engaged in the organization is the strong sense of connection we have with other members." The good doctor then gives his Rx: "We all need to re-center ourselves and refocus our lives on relationships."

My advice is to: Stop. Ponder. Share with others. Then reread this and put it into practice! Doctor's orders.

Prayer: God of love, we give thanks that Your Son calls us friends. We praise you for the blessing of our sisters and brothers in our church family. Strengthen the ties that bind us, we pray, and help us daily to invite and welcome new friends into our household of faith. Amen.