

# kyria

CHOSEN IN CHRIST  
CALLED TO INFLUENCE

## A Way Out of Loneliness

Help and hope for  
women struggling with  
loneliness and isolation.



## A Way Out of Loneliness

Help and hope for women struggling with loneliness and isolation.



Click on an article you'd like to read:

### **3 YOU'RE NOT ALONE**

No matter how lonely you may feel, remember you're never alone.

*By Caryn Rivadeneira*

### **5 ONLY THE LONELY**

How you can find comfort when you're feeling alone.

*By Verla Gillmor*

### **12 HOME ALONE—AND LOVING IT (PART I)**

Do you know the difference between living alone and being lonely? Here are 10 ways one woman keeps them distinct.

*By Naomi Johnson*

### **15 HOME ALONE—AND LOVING IT (PART II)**

From creating a home you love to embracing tranquility, here are 8 ways to live your "lonely" life to the fullest.

*By Liza Martinez*

### **18 WHEN YOU'RE THE NEW GIRL**

How to cultivate friendships.

*By Cindy Crosby*

### **25 SURPRISED BY LONELINESS**

Kim Newlen's loneliness paved the way for a new ministry—no-fuss, all-fun female gatherings.

*By Camerin Courtney*

# kyria

Introduction

## You're Not Alone

No matter how lonely you may feel,  
remember you're never alone.

*By Caryn Rivadeneira*



**W**hen my parents separated after 35 years of marriage, my mom found the loneliness harder than anything. After all those years of having someone to share experiences with—even bad ones—it was difficult making the transition to doing everything alone. I know widows and widowers who've gone through the same thing.





## A Way Out of Loneliness

You're Not Alone

My own personal bout with loneliness had less to do with being alone than it did with finding myself seemingly isolated from the world. After my son was born and I quit work to stay home with him, I struggled with the adjustment from working all day in a creative environment with friends to spending all day at home with a baby and a messy house.

Four years and two kids later, I still struggle with loneliness and isolation at times, although I've since found ways to catch it early and try to counteract it—some times this works better than others.

But that's why I love this package of articles. In it are great reminders of how to stave off loneliness and how to keep God's perspective when it hits. No matter what your situation is that makes you feel alone, I pray you'll find hope and comfort in these articles. You can use them either to study on your own or as a guide for an existing small group or group of friends. Or you can really branch out and use this as an opportunity to get to know a new group of women.

At the very least, I hope you come away from this knowing you're not alone in your loneliness. And at the very best, that you know God cares deeply about your pain (he cared so much about Adam's loneliness that he created women!) and longs to comfort you and surround you with support.

May God bless you!

*Caryn Rivadeneira*

Contributing Editor, KYRIA downloads,  
Christianity Today International



## Only the Lonely

How you can find comfort when you're feeling alone.

*By Verla Gillmor*



It was Christmas Eve, and I was still reeling from the finality of my divorce two weeks earlier after 23 years of marriage. As my teenage daughter, Lisa, and I settled into a rented apartment, I was determined to salvage some kind of meaningful celebration from the rubble of the previous year.

Christmas had always been *big* at our house. Lots of decorations. Two fully decorated trees. Lisa and I usually spent several Saturdays before the holidays decorating our home and baking dozens of fancy cookies for our annual open house. Christmas Eve was reserved for our own family celebration, and Christmas Day we often spent with relatives.





## A Way Out of Loneliness

### Only the Lonely

Obviously this would be a very different Christmas. There was no tree. Finances were tight. There would be no open house, so it was hard to get excited about baking cookies.

I strung Christmas lights around the house plants, turned on Christmas music, brought out the eggnog, and read aloud the Christmas story. Then we opened our few gifts. By seven o'clock, we were done. The whole evening lay ahead of us.

I suggested Lisa and I go to a movie so at least we would be with other people. The theater was only a block away. A short walk later, we settled into the plush seats to watch some forgettable movie, only to realize we were the only two people in the entire theater. Sitting in that dark, empty place on Christmas Eve—even with Lisa—was the loneliest moment of my life.

No one plans to be lonely. But one day you find yourself in a marriage unable to connect with your spouse, in a new city isolated from all that's familiar, or surrounded by people in a church sanctuary while you feel as though you're the only person on the planet. And you're surprised at how much it *hurts*.

The psalmist David knew what it felt like to be alone and afraid. In Psalm 25:16–17, he cried out to God, "Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted. The troubles of my heart have multiplied; free me from my anguish." The psalms that follow show how giving his heartache to God didn't necessarily change David's circumstances, but it did bring him comfort.

While comfort from God can help us through the dark moments, most of us still wonder why we're lonely. The





## A Way Out of Loneliness

### Only the Lonely

truth is, sometimes loneliness is simply the byproduct of **changing life circumstances**. For example, my best friend, Beth, moved a couple hours away to a much smaller town for a new job. She's always had close friends, but now lack of proximity makes it hard to maintain old ties. Her loneliness hit home late one night when her year-old son, Preston, developed a severe allergic reaction to poppy seed coffeecake. As a single parent with no friends nearby to call for help, she sped to the hospital—alone—in a panic.

"I'd been judgmental of lonely people in the past because I'd never really experienced loneliness," Beth admits. "Now I know how it can grip you. When the nurse in the hospital asked, 'Is there someone we can call to be with you?' I had no one to call. I fell apart."

Sometimes, loneliness is the result of our own **failure to cultivate relationships**. Thirty-six-year-old Joann is single and working in financial sales for a Fortune 100 company. She's from a small family and has a small circle of friends, so most of her social contact happens at work. The weekends, she says, are the hardest.

"Sometimes a whole weekend goes by and no one calls," says Joann. "I know I could pick up the phone and call someone—and eventually I do. But instead of turning *outward*, as I know I should, I usually turn *inward*."

Another friend, Nancy Smith, a psychotherapist, says, "Loneliness is a hard thing for most people to talk about. There's a sense of shame connected to it. The most common misconception I find in my practice is that women believe it's their fault and that it will last forever."





## A Way Out of Loneliness

### Only the Lonely

While for most of us loneliness doesn't last forever, a certain degree of loneliness is **part of the human condition**. Christian author Elizabeth O'Connor, in *Cry Pain, Cry Hope*, says, "If we could dare to face and accept the fact that we are ultimately alone, then we would know that every other person is also alone. It doesn't matter how surrounded they are by friends and family. If we could know with certainty that well-guarded secret, perhaps we would move towards others with more compassion, be less ready to judge, less quick to do those things which will cause others to withdraw from us."

While identifying why we're lonely doesn't make loneliness go away, it does make it easier to shift our focus from the problem to possible solutions. Only you know what will work best with your circumstances. However, here are a few possible antidotes:

**I. Be good to yourself.** "When you're in a good place emotionally, jot down three things you can do for yourself when you later find yourself feeling lonely and out of ideas," suggests my friend Joann. She divides them into inexpensive activities such as renting a movie, calling her sister, or giving herself a home facial, to more expensive activities such as buying a new outfit or planning a special outing.

For me, taking a leisurely bubble bath surrounded by aromatic candles and a great CD playing in the background—or reading a good book in front of a roaring fire—is a good start. I'm also a serious nature photographer, so a couple hours hiking through a nearby forest preserve with my camera always lifts my spirits.







## A Way Out of Loneliness

### Only the Lonely

**2. Be intentional about meeting new people.** "Don't go out with the agenda, *I've got to find a best friend*," Nancy says. Instead, she suggests a more realistic approach: discovering ways you can increase human contact. Nancy's always been interested in learning Spanish, so last year, when three of her closest friends moved out of state and she struggled with her own loneliness, she signed up for Spanish language classes and planned a vacation trip to Costa Rica with a tour group.

"Today I handle loneliness differently," Nancy explains. "I don't force myself to do something that doesn't feel right. Instead of desperately seeking people with whom I have a lot in common, I try to focus on breaking through my isolation by taking that first step. I also make sure I don't blame myself for the loneliness. I tell myself, *It's hard reaching out and taking a risk, but I can do it.*"

Recently I moved out of the area where I'd lived 30 years, forcing me to find a new church. To meet new people, I signed up for a few one-time service opportunities. It gave me a chance to check out various ministries and see where I might be most comfortable using my spiritual gifts. It also gave me a chance to make initial contact with several new people, some of whom I began to pursue as possible friends. I also tried to get plugged into a small group as soon as possible.

**3. Ask for what you need.** Even though I only moved 35 miles, it felt as though I'd moved 500 miles away! Suddenly I felt adrift, without the anchor of old friends and familiar surroundings. As I shared with an old friend how I hadn't expected a short-distance move to be such a major adjustment, she systematically began to "solve" my problem with a long list of recommended solutions.





## A Way Out of Loneliness

### Only the Lonely

"Wait," I said. "I don't need you to 'fix' my life. I'm already taking steps in that direction. I just need you to listen. I'm hurting and I need a sympathetic ear. I may not solve the problem the way you would, but I need to know you love me anyway. If you want to do something besides listen, call me up and ask me to go to a movie sometime."

Often there's no getting around asking for what you need. "I told my sister yesterday, 'I'm going through a hard time in my life right now,'" Joann reveals. "I said, 'I know your life is busy, but I need to hear more from you for a while.'"

**4. Keep your loneliness in perspective.** Beth says dealing with her loneliness taught her about the resilience of the human spirit. "I've realized I *will* get through this. I have survived. I have something to contribute to others. And because I was alone with no one to rescue me during the hospital experience, I've realized I'm responsible—with God's help—for rescuing *me*. Once I got past the self-pity of being alone, then I got serious about doing something about it myself. Plus, I've been more willing to dump those difficult situations in God's lap and say, 'This is your problem.'"

Coming to grips with loneliness is a life-long process; God doesn't always provide a quick fix. Sometimes he wants us to face it, to see what it's telling us about our life. After all, God is an expert at turning wilderness experiences into growth opportunities.

I've always considered myself a strong, competent person. I hate feeling vulnerable. So when I had to sell my home, buy a new one, and make dozens of important decisions in





## A Way Out of Loneliness

### Only the Lonely

a short time—alone—it left me feeling insecure and a little off balance. But God used that time to draw me closer to him.

Ultimately, for believers, that may be the secret blessing of loneliness. Psalm 34:18 says, "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." In our loneliness, we're once again reminded through Scripture and prayer that God's been there all along—as he promised.

*Verla Gillmor is a TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WOMAN contributing editor and freelance writer who lives in Illinois.*

*This article first appeared in the November/December 1998 issue of TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WOMAN.*

## Reflect

- *In what ways have you experienced loneliness?*
- *We read here how the psalmist David knew what it felt like to be alone and afraid. Verla Gillmor writes: "In Psalm 25:16–17, he cried out to God, 'Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted. The troubles of my heart have multiplied; free me from my anguish.'" How have you experienced God's comfort in your loneliness? Have you ever felt abandoned by God during these times? What happened?*





## Home Alone—and Loving It (Part I)

Do you know the difference between living alone and being lonely? Here are 10 ways one woman keeps them distinct.

*By Naomi Johnson*

I've lived alone for almost 15 years. In that time, I've learned several insights that have made my solo dwelling experience a great one.

- 1.** There's a difference between living alone and being lonely; I live alone, but I'm not lonely—God is with me every step of the way. He keeps me company like a friend does. I talk to him constantly.
- 2.** I keep a stock of basic medicines handy, even when I'm not sick.
- 3.** Even though there isn't much closeness within my family, I make an effort to reach out to them.



## A Way Out of Loneliness

### Home Alone—and Loving It (Part I)

- 4.** I cultivate meaningful friendships and maintain a handful of reliable and trusted friends. They've become my family when my true family isn't there for me.
- 5.** I don't listen to or watch programs that promote sex. What's the point? I don't need the temptation or frustration.
- 6.** Weekly exercise keeps me feeling good about myself, and reduces stress, aches, and pains.
- 7.** I've kept my mind busy by completing my bachelor's degree; and I'm almost done with my master's.
- 8.** Having pets not only keeps me company, but it's like having my own little family to care for. I have two guinea pigs, and they make great pets. They're lovable and sociable animals (and live eight to ten years).
- 9.** I live in a safe neighborhood and on a third floor so I don't worry too much about break-ins through my windows.
- 10.** "Trust in God, but lock your car."

*Noami Johnson is a pseudonym for a contributor to CHRISTIAN SINGLES TODAY. This first appeared in the March 23, 2005, edition of CHRISTIAN SINGLES TODAY.*





## A Way Out of Loneliness

Home Alone—and Loving It (Part I)

### Reflect

- *Which of these suggestions might help you keep your loneliness at bay?*
- *In the past, what types of things have you tried that worked? What things have failed?*





## Home Alone—and Loving It (Part II)

From creating a home you love to embracing tranquility, here are 8 ways to live your “lonely” life to the fullest.

*By Liza Martinez*

- 1.** Own or rent a space you love. If you love your space, you don't mind spending your time there. If you own your home and can redecorate, change the furniture around on occasion or maintain a yard. Doing this leaves less time available for loneliness.
- 2.** Have a number of friends. This may sound obvious, but a lot of middle-age singles in particular isolate themselves or maintain just one or two friendships, and this just isn't enough. Having several different friends or groups of friends to socialize with gives you something to do every weekend.





## A Way Out of Loneliness

### Home Alone—and Loving It (Part II)

- 3.** Consider a second job. Not only does it give you extra money for socializing, having that second job also will expand your social circle.
- 4.** Volunteer. If committing to another job isn't for you, volunteer your time to a good cause—especially if you're helping the less fortunate. After seeing others' plight, loneliness may seem like a blessing!
- 5.** Create traditions. If you're blessed to have family members living nearby, make a tradition of weekly meals or get-togethers. A Sunday evening dinner with your son, parents, or sibling or a shoe shopping evening with your daughter gives you something to look forward to. This also works well with friends. Something to look forward to weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly allows for a plan to set your sights on.
- 6.** Entertain at home. The rules for entertaining as a single are pretty much the same as for couples. Organization is the key. Cook a simple menu or one main dish, and have your guests bring sides. Invite smaller guest lists when you need to. Everyone having fun is the main objective here! Talk to that best friend you can depend on to either come early to prep or stay after to help clean up.
- 7.** Find a passion truly your own. Reading, painting, redecorating, knitting, woodworking, weight training, walking, cooking (which also can't hurt when entertaining!). Take classes to learn something completely new (like cooking or golf).







## A Way Out of Loneliness

Home Alone—and Loving It (Part II)

**8.** Embrace tranquility. While loneliness occasionally rears its ugly head late at night or on some particular holidays, I rarely allow it to creep in. Instead I try to embrace it as an opportunity for peace and tranquility, or uninterrupted time to delve into my favorite hobby. I think allowing loneliness once in a while sparks creativity, opens your mind, gives you the opportunity to explore who you really are, and allows you to get to know yourself, what you want, and what makes you happy. We're better and happier people for knowing ourselves. In a world where we're constantly plugged into people and things, we often can go through life not really knowing someone very important—ourselves!

*Liza Martinez is a pseudonym for a contributor to*  
CHRISTIAN SINGLES TODAY.

*This first appeared in the March 23, 2005, edition of*  
CHRISTIAN SINGLES TODAY.

## Reflect

- *How has your sense of loneliness kept you from participating in life?*
- *What are three practical steps can you take to change this?*



## When You're the New Girl

How to cultivate friendships.  
*By Cindy Crosby*



I stood hesitantly by the industrial-strength coffeepot, nervously juggling a Styrofoam cup of bland hot brew with my Bible and trying to make eye contact with potential female friends in the adult Sunday school class. Inside, I felt that intense aloneness that can grip you most in a big crowd. Most of the 50 or so class members huddled in their little groups, secure in their shared activities. However, I must have looked pathetic enough for one woman to break away and throw a morsel of conversation in my direction. "Is this your first Sunday here?" she politely inquired.



## A Way Out of Loneliness

When You're the New Girl

I'd been in the class for a year.

After a move to a different state, and a year in our new church, I hadn't connected with anyone. Worse yet, I wasn't even a familiar face, although I'd attended the class faithfully every Sunday. Somehow, I hadn't figured out how to build relationships in a new place—and I was losing touch with my friends back home.

Between 1999 and 2000 the United States Census Bureau estimates more than 43 million people—16 percent of the population—moved. Of these, almost 19 percent moved to a different state. In our mobile society, chances are good you'll move at least once.

If you move a lot, you may instinctively shy away from making new friends because you're tired of investing in relationships, then packing your bags again. And you may find old friendships falling apart in the absence of day-to-day attention. So is friendship really worth the effort?

Yes! Carol Kent, author of *Six Keys to Lasting Friendships* (NavPress), says it well: "How much we owe to friends! They bring out the best in us, and challenge the worst in a loving way. They get us through tough times and help us make difficult decisions. They help us relax and laugh, cry and heal, hope and dream."

When a job change moved us again a year later, I was determined to make some changes. I echoed Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone with the Wind*, "As God as my witness, I'll never be lonely again!" Okay, maybe that wasn't exactly what she said. But here are a few friendship lessons I've learned along the way:





## A Way Out of Loneliness

When You're the New Girl

### 1. Don't judge a potential friend by her manicure

She was so together—blond hair cut to perfection, nails immaculately manicured, makeup artfully applied. I run toward no makeup, Birkenstocks, blue jeans, and ragged nails I can't stop biting. When our husbands began meeting for breakfast regularly, I told mine flatly to enjoy his friendship with Jack, but I was sure Jan and I'd never be friends.

I was wrong.

When we cautiously explored a relationship by spending two nights at a women's retreat together, we stayed up till 3a.m. laughing so hard our sides hurt the next morning. Her children are a bit older than mine, so I've gained wisdom from her about parenting. And I'm a good listening ear for her challenges with her extended family.

Moral of the story: Opposites *can* attract. Don't necessarily rule someone out because she's different than you!

### 2. Consider May–December friendships

When I attended a special arts elective at our church, the speaker for the morning was a lovely, white-haired woman in her seventies who made a presentation on the value of good books. Being a book junkie myself, I raced up to her after the class and blurted, "Could we please have coffee sometime and talk?" Somewhat taken aback, she graciously agreed and gave me her phone number. The next week we met, and the age barriers fell away as we discussed everything from mysteries to fiction to a surprising shared love of ecology. By the time we parted, I knew I'd met a soul sister. Although there's a 30-year difference in our ages, Florence has become a dear friend.





## A Way Out of Loneliness

When You're the New Girl

Never rule out a potential friend because of an age difference. You might miss a blessing!

### 3. Know when to hold 'em, know when to fold 'em

I thought Melinda would be the perfect friend. We both loved the outdoors, we were in several church groups together, and we shared many mutual interests. Yet, although she was always kind, she was also always too busy to go out for lunch or too tied up to get together on the weekend. After the fourth re-buff, it hit me she wasn't in the market for friendship—at least not mine. I felt completely rejected.

That is, until I realized Melinda was in the middle of a marriage difficulty and only had the energy for people who knew her and her situation well. She had nothing left over for a brand-new relationship. Did it still hurt? Yup. But I moved on.

### 4. Make new friends ...

I work in a home office, where it's easy to be minimally involved in outside activities. If you hibernate, as I did after my first move, you'll likely find yourself battling loneliness. Try these tips instead:

*Ask someone for advice.* By putting the other person in the position of "expert," you set her at ease and make her less intimidated by the idea of getting to know you. Good questions include, "Where's a good place to go walking?" or "Who makes a dynamite cappuccino?" Before you know it, your potential friend might be offering to meet you at the little café that serves "the best coffee in town."





## A Way Out of Loneliness

When You're the New Girl

*Get involved in a church.* If you're a life-long Christian, this may seem like a no-brainer. Yet, if you do what we did—attend church services and Sunday school without getting involved—you'll likely find yourself as I did: a stranger to everyone.

*Join a group.* A great place to make friends is in a club or group of people interested in the same things you are. If you love to plant flowers, try a Master Gardener program. In my neighborhood, I've found new friendships within book groups.

*Try something new.* The great thing about a move is being able to shake off everyone's expectations of who you are, and start afresh. Always wanted to ski? Take some lessons. Thought about volunteering for Habitat for Humanity? Now's your opportunity. Chances are, you'll meet some potential friends along the way.

*Make a memory.* A new friend and I made it a tradition to walk together for an hour once a week and to have breakfast once a month. This gives us a comfortable framework to explore a deeper relationship.

### **5. ... But keep the old**

One of the most difficult things about moving is leaving behind close friends. Accept that some relationships you leave behind won't endure without the day-to-day touch points you had before, and grieve those losses. (Of course, the flip side of this is you get to lose those difficult relationships you couldn't quite figure out how to get out of!)

Here are some maintenance tips that can help keep the long-distance friendship fires burning:





## A Way Out of Loneliness

When You're the New Girl

*Express your love, grieve your loss.* Our tendency is to wall ourselves off from the pain of leaving. Before you leave, don't be afraid to cry and tell your friends how much you'll miss them.

*Stay connected electronically.* My former college roommates and I rarely see each other. Yet, we stay connected by e-mailing each other about the big events in our lives.

*Drop in.* When we travel, my husband and I try to connect with friends at different places across the country where we've lived. It may be as simple as stopping by to say hello, or as extended as a weekend spent at an old friend's home.

*Realign old friendships.* One of my friends was the music minister at my previous church. She couldn't share many of her personal struggles with me because my husband was one of the elders. Now that we've moved, she has the built-in listening ear of someone who knows her situation but isn't actively involved in it.

### Now what?

You may not have the kind of friendships portrayed in *Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood*—fostered by childhood, forged through the college years, nurtured by living down the street from each other, lasting into old age. Get over it! Whether you move once or often, you can find deep, long-lasting relationships. Go on. Pick up the phone. Now's the time to give new friendships a chance.

*Cindy Crosby, a TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WOMAN regular contributor and author of Waiting for Morning (Baker), lives with her husband and two children in Illinois.*





## A Way Out of Loneliness

When You're the New Girl

*This article first appeared in the January/February 2002 issue of TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WOMAN.*

## Reflect

- *Cindy Crosby shares her lonely experience as the shy "new girl," afraid to make connections only to get burned. Do you have any fears that are keeping you from the companionship you crave?*
- *How can the Holy Spirit help you overcome those fears?*





## Surprised by Loneliness



Kim Newlen's loneliness paved the way for a new ministry—no-fuss, all-fun female gatherings.

*By Camerin Courtney*

If you could see the scores of women chatting and munching on yummy desserts on Monday nights in Kim Newlen's Richmond, Virginia, family room—wearing funny hats, bidding in a "clutter auction," or mugging in an impromptu fashion show—you'd never believe this gentle southern woman ever was desperately lonely. But seven years ago, when Kim, now 45, left her teaching job to stay home with her then two-year-old daughter, Kali, Kim was home all day *every* day. And for the first time in her life, she experienced loneliness.



## A Way Out of Loneliness

### Surprised by Loneliness

"I asked my husband, Mark, if he thought there was something wrong with me because my best friend was our 72-year-old neighbor across the street," says Kim. "As a Christian, I know God loves me, but I couldn't understand why I had these deep feelings of loneliness."

Kim thought about inviting people over, but the effort involved in entertaining seemed daunting, especially with a toddler at home. "I was raised in South Carolina, where you prepare a five-course meal when you entertain," Kim explains. "In the past, I'd work myself to the bone cooking and cleaning to get ready for company. Right before my guests arrived, I'd wish they weren't coming. I hated feeling that way, and I knew it didn't please God either."

Driven by her need for friendship, Kim decided to scale back on her concept of entertaining. She dreamed up a monthly gathering for women to munch and mingle that didn't require an RSVP or the need to extend a reciprocal invite. Her proposed get-together would provide women with time for brief spiritual encouragement and the opportunity to learn from each other. But simplicity, she knew, was key to making this work.

Kim looked at her family's schedule and decided the first Monday of each month throughout the school year worked well. She figured it wouldn't take too much work or break her family's budget to make one dessert a month and invite some women over to enjoy it. Kim decided to call this new, no-fuss monthly gathering "Sweet Monday."





## A Way Out of Loneliness

### Surprised by Loneliness

Kim whipped up a simple invitation and passed it out to all her neighbors—many of whom she didn't know well. Then she stood in front of her small, growing church that Sunday and invited all the women to attend. While outwardly she was enthusiastic, inside she was a nervous wreck. "The night before my first Sweet Monday gathering, I dreamed I was sitting on my front porch waiting with my dessert ready, and nobody came," Kim admits.

But the next night her dream proved untrue: Thirty women packed into Kim's kitchen and family room to chat and snack their way through the inaugural Sweet Monday. That night Kim couldn't sleep for a whole different reason: She was so jazzed from the buzz of activity in her home, the new friendships she was developing, and the obvious blessing from God.

Seven years of monthly Sweet Mondays later, Kim still has a difficult time falling asleep on the first Monday of the month.

### **Monday Night Ministry**

On that first Sweet Monday, called a "Beauty-Full Evening," Kim asked all the women to share their favorite beauty tip (and offered a "sweet" tie-in by passing around Brach Peppermint Kisses). She was pleasantly surprised to see most of the women taking notes throughout the evening and talking excitedly about the tips they were learning from one another. "Another thing I missed as an at-home mom was learning from other women," Kim says. And the diversity of women at the Sweet Monday gatherings allows for great interaction and sharing.





## A Way Out of Loneliness

### Surprised by Loneliness

At her most recent Sweet Monday get-together, Kim says the ages ranged from early 20s to 76. Often single working women sit in Kim's family room next to stay-at-home moms. And those who may never have darkened the door of a church find themselves sharing tea and beauty tips with women who've taught Sunday school for decades. The common thread, Kim says, is the need for meaningful relationships that are hard to come by in our increasingly isolated society. "Our lives are so busy! Sweet Monday gives us a place to connect every month with people we normally wouldn't see because of work schedules and family activities," says Kim. "My life has been so much richer because of gathering with these women."

Kim's been delighted to see women take the initiative to invite new people to come to Sweet Monday. Her sign-in book's had newcomers' names in it every month except one in the seven years Sweet Monday has been meeting in her home. "When a woman meets someone new, she probably won't ask her to go to church with her the following Sunday, but she's much more likely to invite her to come into a home," Kim explains. This mixture of Christians and non-Christians in attendance has given Kim a unique opportunity to share her faith.

Looking back seven years, she realizes God was with her even in her loneliness. Not only did he answer her prayer for friends, he also gave her a ministry of connecting women to each other and to the Best Friend they ever could find. Today she loves sharing this example of God's amazing grace. How sweet the sound!





## A Way Out of Loneliness

Surprised by Loneliness

For more information about Sweet Monday, write to Kim Newlen at P.O. Box 29603, Richmond, VA 23242, or go to [www.sweetmonday.com](http://www.sweetmonday.com).

*Camerin Courtney is managing editor of TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WOMAN.*

*This article first appeared in the September/October 2002 issue of TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WOMAN.*

## Reflect

- *Kim Newlen believes God was using her loneliness to further his kingdom. What are ways you think God may be using your time of loneliness? What may God want to come out this?*
- *Could God be using your loneliness to soften your heart toward others who might be experiencing loneliness? How can you reach out to them?*



A NEW DIGITAL WORLD FOR THOUGHTFUL,  
INFLUENTIAL WOMEN WHO WANT MORE  
FROM THEIR FAITH AND WHO WANT TO  
MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF OTHERS.

# kyria

CHOSEN IN CHRIST  
CALLED TO INFLUENCE

BECOME A MEMBER OF  
KYRIA.COM AND RECEIVE:

- FULL ACCESS TO **HUNDREDS OF THOUGHTFUL ARTICLES** ON SPIRITUAL FORMATION, MISSIONAL LIFE, AND WOMEN'S MINISTRY
- THE **MONTHLY** KYRIA DIGIZINE
- CONNECTIONS WITH A COMMUNITY OF INFLUENTIAL CHRISTIAN WOMEN
- 20% DISCOUNT ON ALL OF THE **DOWNLOADABLE RESOURCES** IN THE KYRIA STORE

A ministry of

**Leadership**

  
CHRISTIANITY TODAY  
INTERNATIONAL

»Join [Kyria.com](http://Kyria.com) today!