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# Loneliness: A Cradle for God's Living Word

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**Loneliness: A Cradle for God's Living Word**

Arnold D. Weigel

Vancouver, BC: The Centre for Study of Church and Ministry,  
Vancouver School of Theology, 1993

iv + 24 pp.

*Loneliness: A Cradle for God's Living Word* represents a strong ray of hope for all those who have ever despaired over their feelings of loneliness. As Arnold Weigel points out, "loneliness is intrinsically part of what it means to be human" (p. 22). Thus, this is a book that at some point touches the experience of all who read it. The subject matter will touch even more particularly those who are numbered among the clergy. In his preface to *Loneliness*, William J. (Bud) Phillips notes that "either through conditions of their own making or choosing, or because of the nature of the work itself, they [i.e. clergy] often feel alone."

*Loneliness* begins with a description of the author's own experience, from which the image of the cradle emerges. This is the cradle that contains "God's love in human skin" and reflects the potential that loneliness has "for being a cradle for God's living Word" (p. 2). Weigel then continues with a definition of loneliness in terms of people's experiences. This exploration of experiences of loneliness leads to an examination of the particular experience of the prophet Elijah.

In exploring the loneliness experienced by Elijah, Weigel finds "three distinctive and interrelated movements" (p. 11) that are helpful in allowing loneliness to become a cradle for God's living Word. The first of these movements is "naming the experience of loneliness". As Tim Timmons indicates, loneliness "will never be handled effectively without calling it what it is" (p. 14). The second movement requires "exploring the meaning of loneliness, and in so doing learning how to live with it". This movement is in direct opposition to the meaninglessness that is often so characteristic of loneliness. The final movement is "choosing options amidst loneliness".

The crux of the matter is that loneliness, as a cradle of God's living Word, "drives us not only into our innermost being but through that being into the innermost strength of God" (p. 21). For many who feel lonely, the prospect of the journey inward seems quite terrifying. As Weigel observes, the meaninglessness which so characterizes loneliness translates for many people into "a deep-seated fear of even facing it" (p. 15). The trick is to find through the experience of loneliness the kind of solitude that means being in possession of one's heart, identity and integrity (p. 18).

“Loneliness has the potential for God to meet me there and for me to encounter God there” (p. 3). It is this often unexplored potential that exists in the experience of loneliness to which the reader is directed. *Loneliness* points beyond the often painful experience of loneliness to the possibility of both meeting and being transformed by God in that experience. The reader is invited to journey with Elijah and to discover that the wilderness truly does have within it “the living Word of God” (p. 16).

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