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**LOCKED OUT**  
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Have you ever met someone that although you have offered yourself to them they never seem to respond? Oh sure they are pleasant enough, and if they are Christians they say all the right things and do all the right things, but the love of God is not apparent in their lives. I see these people frequently, and I am not able to help them. The reason for their unresponsiveness is that they have emotional isolation. They lock out persons who try to relate to them intimately.

Emotional isolation occurs for a variety of reasons. The most severe is caused by schizophrenia, a very debilitating mental disease. It is not this kind of emotional isolation, though, that I am writing about here. I am writing about a personality disturbance that arises out of the nurture of the person. The reasons that it occurs are as follows. The first is that the person grows up in a home where there is no affirmation. As I have written elsewhere, affirmation is unconditional love. If a person does not receive this from both parents it may distort their ability to relate to a person of that sex. In many instances if the parent who is cold and undemonstrative is their mother they may not be able to relate intimately to a person of either sex.

Another cause of emotional isolation is desertion by one of their parents, or desertion by separation or divorce. Many children are so devastated by the loss of a parent that they turn inside themselves and don't allow themselves to love again. Two of my patients made vows that had to be broken for them to be able to love again. The girl remembers standing at the window watching her father leave and feeling a terrible loss. She wanted her father to stay, but he had been repeatedly unfaithful to her mother and the mother threw him out. The other, a boy, was devastated when his mother packed his father's clothes, put them on the front porch and would not let him back in the house. He too had been repeatedly unfaithful to the boy's mother. Both of them made vows that they would never love anyone again enough to let themselves be hurt like they had been when their father left.

Interpersonal relationships outside the home are another cause. Many people are traumatized by teachers in school or leaders in boy scouts, the church, or their peers at school. If their parents do not defend them from unjustified abuse by persons outside of the home they too can turn inward and develop emotional isolation.

Others develop it because of neglect in their parental home. Very frequently their mother is an alcoholic or mentally ill, and their father is physically or emotionally absent. Some are raised by servants. If there is no affirmation from their

extended family, the child cannot learn how to give and receive love and turns inward. I have seen several persons, primarily women, who have had this happen to them. One of my patients had an alcoholic mother and a workaholic father. She lived in a rural area and the only adults she had any contact with were the family servants. After school her only contacts were with her friends. She only talked to them on the phone. She became a Christian, but continued to have problems with people. When she matured she was pleasant and related well socially on a superficial level, but she did not have intimate relationships with anyone in her life.

Not infrequently sexual abuse gives rise to this syndrome. These individuals are usually women who have been incestuously abused by their father. Many of them find it impossible to believe that their father could do anything like that and love them. In those instances where their mother is a collaborator in the abuse, or did not protect them from it, they decided that they cannot love anyone and again turn inward.

In many instances when love withdrawal is used as a way to punish a child they may develop this personality distortion. One of my patient's father would refuse to speak to his daughter when she did something that he disapproved of. On one occasion when she left home without his permission he refused to speak to her for an entire year. In her childhood he would often go for weeks turning his back on her or refusing to speak to her. This resulted in intense emotional isolation that is impossible to break down. No treatment technique has dented this stronghold in her life.

I am sure that there are other reasons for emotional isolation, but these are the common ones.

Why is this so difficult to treat? The answer lies in the fact that the only way to treat it is to break down the stronghold with love. Since the efficacy of psychotherapy is dependent on the love of the therapist for the person being treated, it is obvious that their stronghold makes it nearly impossible to bring about healing. It is here that Christian interventions can play a role. One of my patients, in desperation, went to a charismatic church in a distant city and was prayed for by one of the elders. She was baptized in the Holy Spirit and was healed. God broke down the stronghold. Others have confessed their anger, sorrow, shame and emptiness and asked God to fill them with His love and He did. Sadly a number of them find it impossible to trust even God to love them because they have prayed to be loved and nothing happened. If they are abused and they ask God to deliver them from the abuse and He does not, they cannot believe that He will love them, and nothing they do to get deliverance works. I have always hoped that prayer visualization would work, but it rarely does. Even there they cannot trust God to love them unless they really get desperate. It is most often only in desperation that they can finally trust.

All intimate relationships require trust. Trust is defined as assured reliance on the character, ability, strength or truth of someone. It is obvious as we look at the reasons people develop emotional isolation given above that they have never learned to trust because they had no one to trust, or because their trust was betrayed by one or several significant persons in their life. It is difficult to believe in a God who has not answered prayers. A patient of mine was being sexually abused by her father. In pain she cried out to God to bring the abuse to an end. It continued unabated for years. Finally the patient turned inward. She was never able to trust God after that. She knows that she has to trust God to be healed, but she has verbally accepted Christ many times and nothing has happened. She has lived a life of emotional isolation every since.

I have felt frustrated and sad that I have not learned how to penetrate the stronghold in these peoples lives. I have asked God over and over again to give me the wisdom to deal with the problem, but he has not answered me. If anyone who reads this commentary has an answer I would appreciate your comments.