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“Not Alone”

Loneliness is a widely shared experience. That statement seems contradictory, yet it's true. Many people share the common experience of being alone, but they never experience it together. Seasons of loneliness are looked over, pushed aside, or covered up, but it is time for light to be brought to the darkness. The Creator of the universe designed humans for connection. We are intended to have relationship with our fellow man, but also with God. In the darkness of isolation, Satan roams free, and his oppression weighs heavy with seemingly no way out. You are made to believe that you will always be alone. When finding myself on the other side of a season of loneliness, God pressed on my heart to use my recent life experience and current education for the impact of others. I am trained in Musical Theater, Dance, and most importantly storytelling. How could I connect with those feeling unseen, unheard, and lost in the darkness of isolation and loneliness? How could I use the gift of dance and the communication of the body to share with others the hope and relational foundation I found in Jesus Christ? This choreographic dance and storytelling piece was under way, but through the backup of research I discovered the most effective means of communication. “Not Alone” was created through a theological, psychological, and artistic lens of research for the message to be clearly portrayed.

With every piece of art created as believers, there is a goal of redemption to found in the storytelling. When looking at “Not Alone”, I understood the main theme was one that does not compatibly fall in line with God's design. In Genesis 2:18 it says, “It is not good that the man

should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him” (*ESV Bible*, Gen 2.18). God did not create man for isolation, yet the enemy oppresses us with it all too often. In Proverbs 18:24 it says that a man of many companions will find ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother and that is Jesus (*ESV Bible*, Prov 18.24). He desires connection and relationship with us that is intimate and personal. When we are brought to ruin by our earthly relationships, Jesus promises to stick closer than a blood relative. The power in the word choice shows how committed and pursuant he is. Another verse that really propelled the ending of “Not Alone” was James 4:8 which says, “Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded” (*ESV Bible*, James 4.8). While Jesus desires that relationship with us, we must make the conscious choice to draw near to him. He is always present, but we must humble ourselves and accept the free gift of a relationship with him. With Jesus as the perfect friend, no one is alone if they accept him.

Psychologically the creation of “Not Alone” was completed with the understanding that most of its audiences would feel a universal connection to the message. Harvard completed a study in February of 2021 on the effects of loneliness in America. While 36% of Americans said they feel extreme loneliness, 61% of young adults feel the same (Cashin, 2022). There are millions of people in this world, yet so many feel alone. As the younger generations grow up, the value of connection and importance of physical relationships, not digital, is dwindling and the studies agree.

With the theological understanding of how Jesus wants to redeem the message of this piece, and the psychological circumstance that this nation is facing, the next goal was to develop the piece artistically through training and choreographic devices to ensure clear storytelling. The primary influence of my choreographic research was Isadora Duncan. A world-renowned

modern dancer who is also known as the “mother of modern dance”. Isadora Duncan believed that all emotions were to be displayed from the Solar Plexus (Jewitt, 1989). This is the area between the navel and heart; centered at the diaphragm. In other words, emotions are felt in the gut. This understanding translated into a heavy use of contraction and directional emphasis from the storyteller’s core. After finding the Solar Plexus as my central focus, the choreography needed artistic devices to enliven the movement for it to also be pleasing to the eye of the audience and supportive to the storytelling needs. Blom and Chaplin, two professors of dance, write in their book “The Intimate Act of Choreography”, a list of comprehensive choreographic devices to aid in visual appeal and to function as a storytelling propellant. In “Not Alone” the devices of repetition, size, tempo, and force were utilized (Blom et al. 103,104). Repetition was used to showcase the seemingly never-ending cycle of loneliness. When one is trapped in it, there seems to be no way out. Size was used to show the variety of mediums that loneliness may appear. It may feel like a large blow to the stomach, a small pinch, or an apprehensive reach for help. The use of tempo in “Not Alone” is utilized to showcase the speed of the mind when being conflicted with loneliness and the desire for connection. At moments, the mind is racing, flooded with thoughts and anxieties, yet at other moments, it is frozen and unsure of what to do next. The use of force, however, has an interesting switch in the piece. The motif within the choreography is repeated several times in the beginning as a heavy and labored motion, but when Jesus is encountered by each storyteller, the motif is repeated with a lighter, more freeing release.

“Not Alone” was created through a theological, psychological, and artistic lens of research for the message to be clearly portrayed. Through the intended goal of this piece, it is my prayer that it will impact its audience to find connection with others if they seek it, but most importantly to find connection with Jesus because it is necessary and life-giving.

## Works Cited

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- Jewitt, D. (1989) *Expanding through Space and into the World, Accelerated Motion: towards a new dance literacy in America*. Available at: <https://acceleratedmotion.org/dance-history/modern-motion/expanding-through-space-and-into-the-world/> (Accessed: March 7, 2023).
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