

Mid-Week Bible Study: Hard Questions about Pain & Suffering

Week 6: Where Does Comfort Come From?

Text: 2 Corinthians 1:3-11 NIV

Introduction:

Q: What do you find comforting when you're sick?

Chicken soup. A whole lot of people have a bowl of chicken soup as soon as a head cold hits. Others will try every over-the-counter medication available! Still, some are firm believers in their grandmother's home remedy. Some home remedies might seem unusual.

But every child knows that, when you're sick, there's nothing quite like having a parent right next to you. Almost anyone's presence helps, but when it is a parent—someone who loves and cares for you no matter what—their presence makes all the difference. The comfort of someone's presence makes a difference when we suffer. God is certainly present with us and we will see in 2 Corinthians that we can be God's comfort to others when they suffer.

Point: As God comforts us, we are to comfort others.

2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-4A

For the last few weeks, we have examined "hows" and "whys" of pain and suffering. Paul informs us that we can find relief from our suffering in God.

Q: What are some ways God comforts His people?

Verse 3: Using the word *Father*, Paul wrote of the unity between God the Father and God the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

- Using the pronoun "our", Paul also pointed to the relationship between and God the Father.
 - Paul here focused on the actions God does for us as our father rather than the nature of who God is.

The word Lord stresses the relationship between believers and Jesus His position of absolute authority over our lives.

- The word Jesus reflects both His name and His mission
 - Luke 19:10 - seek and save the lost.
 - Matt. 1:20-21- Joshua and means Yahweh saves.”
- The Greek & Hebrew word for Christ is Messiah (anointed one.”)

Verse 3b: Paul goes on to call God the Father of Compassion/mercy.

- This title suggests that God is the creator of compassion.
 - The word compassion in Greek indicates that there is an action by God due to God’s deep heart-felt emotion and concern.
 - **Read James 5:11, Psalm 103:13, and Isaiah 51:12**
- The term comfort is a combination of two Greek phrases “alongside of” and “to call”. Thus, one who comforts claims to be “a person who is called walk alongside other.”
 - When you turn the Greek word for comfort into English we get the word **Paraclete** = counselor/helper.
 - This word typically refers to the Holy Spirit.
- The Greek word for Comfort also conveys the idea of encouragement and help.
 - One is helped by receiving strength from another for what lies ahead.

Paul said that God does not just give you a little support or encouragement to endure and for your future, but the text says that he provides all the comfort we need.

Verse 4a: Paul also stated that God is the source of comfort for all of our afflictions.

- Grammatically this sentence is written to suggest that God’s comfort **continually flows and never runs out.**
- This is good news because the Bible says in John 16:33 that we will have trouble/tribulations. Yet God unlike the govt and hospital and respirators never runs out of help/comfort.
 - He never gets tired or fed up, but the spirit of God able to support you in light of any problem.

2 CORINTHIANS 1:4B-7

Q: What obstacles at times discourage us from reaching out to those who suffer?

Verse 4b: Most scholars are divided about the beginning of part “so that we may be able to comfort”.

- Some argue that this means that God allows us to be afflicted so we will be able to comfort others.
- While others believe it means is that as a result of our afflictions, we are able to comfort others.

Q: Which one do you think?

Regardless of which side you land on what is clear is that as children of God we are called offer comfort to others.

- Paul states that the comfort we should provide does not come from us or other things but from God.
 - Only God provides consistent comfort not like pills, alcohol, sex, food or something else.

Verse 5: Highlights that this comfort comes from the fact the suffering Christ endured.

- Suffering & comfort are two sides of the same coin, they are connected.
- We too have experienced the overflow of the same suffering or affliction that Jesus did. A
 - **Read 1 Peter 4:13, John 15:18-20 & Psalm 34:19**
- We also are recipients of the overflow that comes from Christ.
- We then use the overflow of God’s compassion and give it to others.
 - **Read Psalm 23:4 & Ephesians 4:32**

Verse 6: Paul here suggests that our connection and unity with Christ require us to then be united with other believers. He used the phrase “if we are...” which suggests that regardless if it’s suffering or comfort that the Christians at Corinth should go through it together.

- We are called to walk with people in their journey to both endure with and comfort them regardless of our personal feelings about them.

2nd CORINTHIANS 1:8-11

Verse 8a: Paul starts this verse looking to bond with those at Corinth. He refers to them as brothers and sisters.

- I've notice that during this pandemic during my preaching I have been more prone to refer to you all watching as family than church. I didn't even realize the different until prep for today.
 - The terminology makes things less formal.

Paul then reminded them of a personal difficulty he probably had told them when during his last visit.

- One reason why we do not have unity in the church is because we are unwilling to be transparent and share our struggles with others. As a result, when it comes time to comfort many don't think you can understand their pain.

Verse 8b-9: Here in these verses Paul graphically described the results of his afflictions.

- We were completely overwhelmed - meaning they were burdened down.
- Beyond our strength - Paul suggests that what they went through was beyond his ability to endure.
 - **Read 2 Corinthians 12:9**
- We even despaired life itself- they felt helpless

Q: Why do you think story telling helps with bonding and comforting others?

Verse 10-11: Paul concludes this text stating what he believed was the importance of prayer in ones' need to be comforted.

Verse 11: Paul states that his hope is not just in God's ability to deliver them, but that the Christians at Corinth would partner with them in Prayer.

- ***Read Matthew 18:19 & James 5:14***

CONCLUSION

- **Be present.** Allow God to use you to give comfort to someone who is hurting. Simply being present is sometimes the greatest comfort of all.
- **Be thankful.** Think of someone who provided comfort in the past when you needed it. Thank God for using them and write them a note of thanks for the way they encouraged and supported you.
- **Be prayerful.** Commit to pray for your church, family, co-workers, and country. Pray for God's comfort and strength in the face of believers' trials.