

The God Who Is

Leader's Guide

The God of All Comfort

2 Corinthians 1:1-7

Background

2 Corinthians is a letter written by Paul to the church located in the city of Corinth (in modern day Greece). Paul helped found the church while on one of his missionary trips, and ministered there for a year and a half. He was about to return to Corinth to visit them, and so writes to prepare them. 2 Corinthians is the most personal and intimate of all of Paul's letters—his great care and concern for the believers in Corinth is very evident.

Read 2 Corinthians 1:1-7.

God is described three different ways in v.3. What are they?

1) Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 2) Father of compassion, and 3) the God of all comfort

Today we are going to be focusing in on one of these descriptions: the God of all comfort. What does it mean to "comfort" somebody?

Some dictionary definitions: "consolation in time of trouble or worry" – "to give strength and hope to" – "to ease the grief of"

WORD STUDY: Comfort ("parakaleo" in the original Greek language)

This word literally means, "to be called alongside." It is the idea of someone being there with you, especially in times of need. In John 14-15, Jesus describes the Holy Spirit as the Comforter ("paraklete"), or "the one who walks alongside." This was a new concept, for only in New Testament times has the Holy Spirit lived inside every believer, and so truly lives alongside us. In Hebrews 13:5 God said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." This promise has brought comfort to Christians for 2000 years now.

Sometimes the loneliness we feel from our suffering is the hardest part to cope with. How does it make you feel that God always "walks alongside" you?

In v.5, Paul writes "the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives." In what ways did Jesus have to suffer?

To name some of the ways: physical beatings and torturous death, being misunderstood by His family and friends, being betrayed by his friend (Judas), having lies told about Him, enduring an unjust trial, friends letting Him down (Garden of Gethsemane) and abandoning Him (the cross) in His time of need, being tempted by Satan himself, having religious leaders constantly attacking Him verbally and attempting to discredit His ministry, having to leave heaven to live in a sin-cursed world in general, bearing the wrath of God on the behalf of the sins of all humanity (even though He lived a perfect life)

What does it look like when Christ's sufferings flow over into our lives? How do we sometimes suffer like Christ did?

Will our suffering ever be too great for God to comfort us?

No! The construction of v.5 explains that even though our suffering might abound, God's comfort always abounds AT LEAST that much

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Is there any suffering that Jesus cannot relate to?

No. His suffering was on a much larger scale than ours will ever be. Although He may not have had an experience EXACTLY like ours, He has certainly suffered in the same way. Make sure and read Hebrews 4:14-16.

Jump down to v.9. What does Paul say is the purpose of suffering?

*So that we will rely on God, not ourselves. ***Ask: "What is the benefit of that?" The answer is that as we rely on God, that's how we experience Him in all His goodness, power, mercy, peace, grace, holiness, etc. The verses describes God as one who "raises the dead"—this speaks of His power over sin and death, the hope we have of eternity in heaven, etc.—relying on Him is how we experience these things*

Another way to translate v.7 might say "Just as we had fellowship in our sufferings, so also we have fellowship in our comfort." How does sharing hardships with others and giving comfort to others increase the depth and intimacy of our fellowship with them?

It allows us to see into each other's hearts. This is what allows us to move past the superficial. As we comfort others (through prayer, hugging, listening, or whatever) we can't help but grow closer to them. As we share with others and allow them to minister to us, a bond is formed.

Why is it sometimes hard to share our sufferings with others?

We get scared in thinking that if someone sees our sadness or weakness, then we will be rejected. This is a ploy of the Evil One to keep us isolated from each other and from experiencing God's comfort through other believers

After God has comforted us, what are we then free to do (v.4)?

Comfort others (with God's comfort)! We become a vessel of His comfort. God doesn't intend for us to hoard His blessings (like His comfort), but to pass them on to others!

****Additional note: the "Footprints" story might be appropriate to share at the end of this lesson.*

Questions for personal reflection:

1. Are you trying to carry a burden all by yourself? Pour your heart out to God and receive His comfort. Make sure and read the "Passages for further study".
2. Is there some kind of suffering in your life that you need to share with another Christian in order to be further comforted?
3. Is there someone you know who is suffering? Pray and ask God to show how you can be a comfort to them today.

"There is a God we want, and there is a God who is—and they are not the same God.

The turning point of our lives is when we stop seeking the God we want and start seeking the God who is."

Passages For Further Study:

Psalm 42
Isaiah 53
John 14:16-15:27
Philippians 4:6-7
1 Peter 4:12-16