



COMFORT ONE ANOTHER: WEEK 7

Happy Day Ladies! I hope you have been enjoying looking at some of the **One Another**s in Scripture. Personally, I really have. It's been causing me to be more intentional on how I'm treating people, responding to situations, and honestly, seeing how I lack many of the qualities we've been discussing. Whenever I begin to study a new one, I'm immediately reminded that we can't "do" any of them until we take our eyes off of ourselves and put them first on the Lord, and then on others. They have to be done with a spirit of humility, grace, and love, rather than a heart of selfishness and self-absorption. I think that's one of the biggest lessons I'm learning each week. Why am I always making things about me?

This week we will be taking a look at what it means to "comfort one another." I'm using 2 Corinthians 1:4, but different translations use different words, such as build up or encourage, but most commentators put all the verses in the "comfort one another" category. I'm using the NLT version and I'll start in verse two to keep it in context, "May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace. All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort. **He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others.** When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us." (vv.2-4) If you'd rather memorize a different version, feel free! One version says, "Comfort those in any trouble." I like that one too.

1. How would you explain the verse above?

2. In what ways does God comfort us?
3. How does Webster's define the word "comfort"?
4. What types of "trouble" do we sometimes need to be comforted in? Name some of the many forms of "pain" that we can experience.

Don McMinn wrote this story to illustrate the meaning of comforting one another: "Where have you been?" the mother questioned. The little girl replied, "On my way home I met a friend who was crying because she had broken her doll." "Oh," said her mother, "then you stopped to help her fix the doll?" "No," replied the little girl, "I stopped to help her cry."

5. How can we "help someone cry"? What does that mean? (Such a great example of Romans 12:15.)

I have helped others cry many times. Others have helped me cry as well. I think this is such a great picture of what it means to comfort one another. One definition of comfort is "to ease the grief or trouble, to give strength and hope to someone." We will all have trouble in our lives; we will all hurt. The Greek word

for comfort is “parakaleo” which means “to come alongside and provide assistance and support.” We all need assistance and support at times. Whether we are in physical pain (like a knee surgery ... thanks, friends, for assisting me!), or emotional pain, or even spiritual pain, we need each other. Like we are reminded each week, the body of Christ was made to “One Another” in community.

6. To comfort one another effectively, we need to show both compassion and empathy. Can you describe the difference between the two?

7. I read once that we need to step out of our “comfort zone” to truly comfort one another. What does that mean?

8. Can you give some practical and tangible ways to comfort someone in the following scenarios?
 - A. A physical ailment or sickness:

 - B. A social issue (perhaps rejection, embarrassment, etc.):

 - C. An emotional disappointment:

 - D. A spiritual disappointment, failure, or disillusionment?

Remember that empathy goes one step farther than sympathy. Sympathy says, “I understand that you are hurting.” Empathy says, “I am hurting that you are hurting.” This involves actually entering into their emotional pain to try to feel as they feel.

9. Are words always necessary to comfort someone? Explain your answer.

10. Read the story about Jesus raising Lazarus in John 11:1-44. How did Jesus show compassion to His friends Mary and Martha?

11. Think of a time that you were (or are) experiencing deep grief. What did people do for you that helped? Was there anything you wish they hadn’t done?

12. I read that we should develop an “empathetic style of listening that is not judgmental.” What do you think that means? How do we do that?

13. What kind of listener are you? Intentional? Distracted? How would you rate your listening skills on a scale from 1 to 10, with 10 being the best? What changes should you make? Make an action plan. (Ask someone you trust to rate you as well ... if you dare!)

14. According to our verse, God can use our own personal suffering to help comfort others. How does that work? Why can our own suffering be such a powerful tool used to help comfort? If we are using our own pain to help bring comfort, what must we always be careful of?

I love what Dave Zuleger wrote, “One way God jogs our memory and preserves our joy in Him in the midst of suffering is through one another. It’s important that we walk through suffering in community with other believers who can point us to Christ.”

I was reading some suggestions from others about the different ways to bring comfort to others. I’m going to list a few, but please add your own suggestions to the list:

- A. Ask them how you can help them instead of guessing, and then listen.
- B. Be a safe place where they know they can unpack their “issues” and not be judged.
- C. Be a comforting presence ... just be there.
- D. Be patient and understanding. Know that comforting others can be a journey as you walk with them through their trouble, not just a one-time thing.

- E. Send encouraging texts.
- F. Validate them. Make them feel understood.
- G. Look for small favors to help. (Meals, babysitting, etc.)
- H. Don't give unsolicited advice or try to force them to cheer up.
- I. Don't always seek solutions and try to fix whatever "it" is.

When you don't know what to say, here's a few comforting words that can help:

1. This must be so hard for you.
2. I can't begin to imagine what you're going through.
3. I'm so sorry. I wish there was something I could do.
4. Do you want to talk about it?
5. It's ok to cry and be sad ... this IS sad.
6. We don't have to talk; I can just sit here with you.
7. May I bring you a meal?
8. Take as long as you need.
9. What do you need most right now?
10. Everything you're feeling makes a lot of sense.
11. What you're saying and feeling are completely understandable.

15. Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-5 again. God is called the God of **ALL** comforts.

How does this encourage you, especially if you're feeling alone?

16. How does comforting one another, sharing suffering, and bearing one another's burdens bring God glory?

17. In John 14:26, the Holy Spirit is called the Helper, or the Comforter. Why do you think that's one of His names?

18. How can the world's comfort be different than God's?

19. Although Scripture is obviously a source of comfort, how can trying to sound "too profound" or cliché be damaging? Let's talk about this ... (How can being a "profound listener" be more helpful?)

20. Discuss the need to be discerning, willing, and available.

21. It's been said that we need to try to "enter someone's world" when ministering to a hurting or troubled person. How do we enter someone's "space"?

22. Have you ever tried to comfort someone by trying to strategize and “fix” their problem? Did it help them or hurt them more? Has anyone ever done this to you?

23. I read this comment and it has stuck with me. “Do not give simplistic answers to life’s complicated situations.” What do you think that means, in relation to comforting others?

24. Can you name some examples in Scripture of someone who provided comfort “well” and someone who did not?

25. To wrap this up, why is being filled with the Holy Spirit crucial to our ability to comfort others effectively?

I feel that I may have gone a bit too practical in this lesson, but it seems like an area that we don’t always do well in, so maybe talking it through practically will help. Please feel free to bring Scripture and other thoughts into the group discussion. I love the title of the program we offer for those who have lost someone that’s called “Grief Share.” What a great name, right? I pray we learn to share the grief and suffering of others as we walk though this life. Let’s rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep (Romans 12:15). Amen??

