

DAY 1 – SCRIPTURE, OBSERVATION, APPLICATION, PRAYER ("SOAP")

CONVERSATION STARTER

How do you picture God in your mind?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION (5 MINUTES)

Scripture:

I will tell of the Lord's unfailing love. I will praise the Lord for all he has done. I will rejoice in his great goodness to Israel, which he has granted according to his mercy and love. He said, "They are my very own people. Surely they will not betray me again." And he became their Savior. **In all their suffering he also suffered, and he personally rescued them.** In his love and mercy he redeemed them. He lifted them up and carried them through all the years. But they rebelled against him and grieved his Holy Spirit. So he became their enemy and fought against them. **Isaiah 63:7-10 NLT**

"The Lord will destroy the nations living in the land, just as he destroyed Sihon and Og, the kings of the Amorites. The Lord will hand over to you the people who live there, and you must deal with them as I have commanded you. So be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid and do not panic before them. For the Lord your God will personally go ahead of you. He will neither fail you nor abandon you."

Then Moses called for Joshua, and as all Israel watched, he said to him, "Be strong and courageous! For you will lead these people into the land that the Lord swore to their ancestors he would give them. You are the one who will divide it among them as their grants of land. **Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the Lord will personally go ahead of you. He will be with you; he will neither fail you nor abandon you.**"

Deuteronomy 31:4-8 NLT

Sermon Insights:

God is so big, so magnificent, and so beyond our ability to fully grasp his glory and magnitude, yet he is able to see, acknowledge, and care for us as individuals.

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

As you grow in your understanding of God (a lifelong journey):

- What is one thing about God you delight in?
- What is one thing about God you are disappointed in?
- What is one thing about God you are discovering?

Even in the midst of people betraying God, through the difficult correction, God still has a heart for all people.

- How do you see God's heart for those who embrace him?
- How do you see God's heart for those who reject him?
- How can you participate in God's work?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Lord, you are beyond my understanding, and you are always good even when we are not. Help us to be honest with you about our delights, disappointments, and discoveries so that you can lead us into a growing relationship with you!

DAY 2 – SCRIPTURE, OBSERVATION, APPLICATION, PRAYER ("SOAP")

CONVERSATION STARTER

What is your definition of *comfort*? Do you feel you need comfort now?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION (5 MINUTES)

Scripture:

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. For the more we suffer for Christ, the more God will shower us with his comfort through Christ. Even when we are weighed down with troubles, it is for your comfort and salvation! For when we ourselves are comforted, we will certainly comfort you. Then you can patiently endure the same things we suffer. We are confident that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in the comfort God gives us. **2 Corinthians 1:3-7 NLT**

Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age." **Matthew 28:20 NLT**

Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us. Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of undeserved privilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God's glory. We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love. **Romans 5:1-5 NLT**

Have you never heard? Have you never understood? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of all the earth. He never grows weak or weary. No one can measure the depths of his understanding. He gives power to the weak and strength to the powerless. Even youths will become weak and tired, and young men will fall in exhaustion. But those who trust in the Lord will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint. **Isaiah 40:28-31 NLT**

Sermon Insights:

Comfort is not always found in the absence of pain, but sometimes in the midst of it.

God not only sustains and comforts us in times of distress, but we find that once God has brought us through our grief, God then gives us the ability to use our painful experiences to comfort others.

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Who is God calling you to comfort?

How has God comforted you in the past? Was it by relieving the pain or in the midst of the pain or both?

God "gives power to the weak" and "strength to the powerless." How then should we treat those who are weak and powerless?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Lord, thank you for being the God of comfort and knowing what I need when I need it. Use me to be a source of comfort and strength for the weak and powerless.

DAY 3 – SCRIPTURE, OBSERVATION, APPLICATION, PRAYER (“SOAP”)

CONVERSATION STARTER

How much responsibility do you take over your own life and choices?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION (5 MINUTES)

Scripture: *The Apostle Paul, concerned about false teachers (“fools”), wrote instructions to the church in Corinth:* Again I say, don’t think that I am a fool to talk like this. But even if you do, listen to me, as you would to a foolish person, while I also boast a little. Such boasting is not from the Lord, but I am acting like a fool. And since others boast about their human achievements, I will, too. After all, you think you are so wise, but you enjoy putting up with fools! You put up with it when someone enslaves you, takes everything you have, takes advantage of you, takes control of everything, and slaps you in the face.

I’m ashamed to say that we’ve been too “weak” to do that! But whatever they dare to boast about—I’m talking like a fool again—I dare to boast about it, too. Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I. Are they servants of Christ? I know I sound like a madman, but I have served him far more!

I have worked harder, been put in prison more often, been whipped times without number, and faced death again and again. Five different times the Jewish leaders gave me thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. Once I spent a whole night and a day adrift at sea. I have traveled on many long journeys. I have faced danger from rivers and from robbers. I have faced danger from my own people, the Jews, as well as from the Gentiles. I have faced danger in the cities, in the deserts, and on the seas. And I have faced danger from men who claim to be believers but are not. I have worked hard and long, enduring many sleepless nights. I have been hungry and thirsty and have often gone without food. I have shivered in the cold, without enough clothing to keep me warm.

Then, besides all this, I have the daily burden of my concern for all the churches. Who is weak without my feeling that weakness? Who is led astray, and I do not burn with anger? If I must boast, I would rather boast about the things that show how weak I am. God, the Father of our Lord Jesus, who is worthy of eternal praise, knows I am not lying. When I was in Damascus, the governor under King Aretas kept guards at the city gates to catch me. I had to be lowered in a basket through a window in the city wall to escape from him. **2 Corinthians 11:16-33 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Do you know anyone who allows someone in their life to treat them the way the Corinthian Christians were allowing false teachers to take advantage of them? (“You put up with it when someone enslaves you, takes everything you have, takes advantage of you, takes control of everything, and slaps you in the face.”) What’s the difficult road to recovery for someone who has been abused?

Paul felt a little bit of God’s anger stirring in his own spirit. God was sharing his heart of compassion, comfort, and care with Paul. Are you allowing God to share his heart for others with you?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Lord, help me to maintain healthy boundaries and wise discernment when it comes to choosing who I follow.

DAY 4 – SCRIPTURE, OBSERVATION, APPLICATION, PRAYER ("SOAP")

CONVERSATION STARTER

Name a time when you truly felt alone.

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION (5 MINUTES)

Scripture:

Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble. Likewise, two people lying close together can keep each other warm. But how can one be warm alone? A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken. **Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 NLT**

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.

For the more we suffer for Christ, the more God will shower us with his comfort through Christ. Even when we are weighed down with troubles, it is for your comfort and salvation! For when we ourselves are comforted, we will certainly comfort you. Then you can patiently endure the same things we suffer. We are confident that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in the comfort God gives us. **2**

Corinthians 1:3-7 NLT

Sermon Insights:

God's comfort gives us the ability to use our painful experiences to comfort others.

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Are you standing alone or do you have someone in your life that tells you the truth in love and helps you fight your battles effectively?

Comfort, like love, is meant to be 1) received humbly, and 2) passed on generously. We acknowledge both our needs and our responsibility to meet the needs of others. Are you good at both? Why or why not?

Many people do not grow because they shut the door on all unknown opportunities/risks. Life is better together – name a person in your life you should take a new small step of trust with. Consider inviting them to coffee or lunch this week.

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Lord, thank you for bringing me what I need when I need it, from love to comfort to trustworthy friends. Give me the power to do what my faith is prompting me to do!

DAY 5 – SCRIPTURE, OBSERVATION, APPLICATION, PRAYER ("SOAP")

CONVERSATION STARTER

What is something that you and God know about you that no one else does?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION (5 MINUTES)

Scripture:

Hagar, the mother of Ishmael, had been severely mistreated, and the Lord saw and comforted her. The writer of Genesis wrote: Thereafter, Hagar used another name to refer to the Lord, who had spoken to her. She said, "You are the God who sees me." She also said, "Have I truly seen the One who sees me?"

Genesis 16:13 NLT

"If you love me, obey my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate who will never leave you. He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world cannot receive him, because it isn't looking for him and doesn't recognize him. But you know him, because he lives with you now and later will be in you. No, I will not abandon you as orphans—I will come to you.

Soon the world will no longer see me, but you will see me. Since I live, you also will live. When I am raised to life again, you will know that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. Those who accept my commandments and obey them are the ones who love me. And because they love me, my Father will love them. And I will love them and reveal myself to each of them." **John 14:15-21 NLT**

Sermon Insights:

God sees us and longs to comfort us.

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Like Hagar, when God comes to our rescue, it changes our lives. Hagar had a personal relationship with God because she realized that God really saw her, her situation and her struggle. God gave Hagar hope for a bright future. How has God uniquely comforted you? How did that impact how you see God?

If you love God and are obeying his commandments, then Jesus promised that the Father God would love you and that Jesus himself would love you and reveal himself to you. How is Jesus revealing himself to you? Are you listening?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Lord, grief and pain have a way of finding all of us in this broken world. I have tried to use my energy, abilities, resources, and logic to help myself, and it has simply brought me more stress and frustration. Thank YOU for being the God of comfort. I ask that you teach me to delight in you, to bring my disappointments to you, and to discover how much you really love me. Thank you for your mercy and grace.