

## Comforting One Another

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What does the word *comfort* mean to you? I picture a mother rocking a crying baby who is teething or has a belly ache. I have spent many nights holding and singing to a baby who is crying and needs to be held. I recall sitting by my mother in a darkened room knowing that every breath she took could be her last. I held her hand and spoke words of comfort to her hoping that she was still aware of my presence so I could calm her fears.

A few weeks ago I read a story of a business owner who decided to walk the mile and a half distance to his office one day. At the end of the day, Christopher took a short cut and was close to his house when he heard a female voice scream from a wooded area. Fear gripped him as he thought of the implications of what was taking place. His first thought was to jog home and block it out of his mind but then without further hesitation he ran into the woods and screamed out to the assailant. The man had a girl pinned to the ground and when he heard Christopher's voice shout at him, he jumped up and ran into the woods. When Christopher stepped into the clearing where the girl had struggled to get up, he was shocked. There was his teenage daughter who was crying and shaking with fear. She said she knew his voice and knew that he would rescue her. She ran to his waiting arms and clung to him. The thought came to him, "What if I hadn't made the right decision? What if I hadn't taken this route home? What if I had driven my car to work today?" They walked home together and gratitude filled his heart that he had been able to rescue her from her attacker. Her daddy's voice brought comfort to her.

In 2 Corinthians 1: 3 it reads like this: "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is the Father who is full of mercy and all comfort. He comforts us every time we have trouble, so when others have trouble, we can comfort them with the same comfort that God gives us. We share in the many sufferings of Christ. In the same way, much comfort comes to us through Christ. If we have troubles, it is for your comfort and salvation, and if we have comfort, you will also have comfort. This helps you to accept patiently the same sufferings we have. Our hope for you is strong, knowing that you share in our sufferings and also in the comfort we receive." Paul went on to say that in Asia, they suffered so many things that they thought they would not live to tell about it, but God rescued them and as they put their hope in him, he saved them and would continue to save them. He asked them to continue to pray for them as they travelled preaching the gospel. Paul told the Corinthians that God would bless his ministry through their prayers. In chapter 7, Paul wrote about the many troubles he had gone through, but he felt comforted because the people loved him and in the midst of his problems, he felt great joy. In Macedonia, there was trouble all around him and his team, fighting on the outside and fear on the inside. But God who comforts those who are in trouble comforted them by sending Titus to them. Titus talked to Paul about the people's desire to see him and the fact that they were sorry for the way they had treated Paul in the past. When Titus talked



about the way the people cared for him, he was happier. Paul's letters made them sad because he didn't fail to point out their sins to them. Their sorrow made them change their hearts and lives. That led to salvation so in the end all was well. They realized that Paul only wanted to help them mature and become strong in the faith.

In Ephesians 6:21, Paul is in prison and he sent Tychicus, a brother in the Lord and a faithful servant whom Paul loved to the Ephesian church. He wanted him to share the news of what was taking place with Paul and to encourage the believers. He ends his letter with Peace and love with faith to you from God the father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace to all of you who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love that never ends.

The word of God brings comfort to those who are struggling with trials.

Comfort and encouragement are vital ingredients to Christian fellowship. When Christians gather together, it is not just for a social time together, but they can have an eternally significant impact on one another. The book of Hebrews tells us to encourage one another. Hebrews 3:12-14 warn us that difficulties along life's journey of obedience can weaken our determination to obey the word of the Lord. We are to encourage one another by loving others and doing good works.

Encouragement is like a glass of cold water on a hot summer day. It refreshes the spirit and gives a person strength to move forward when the journey of life gets tough.

Ephesians 4:2 exhorts us to speak words that strengthen people rather than saying harmful things that saps their joy. Say things that will help them and do well for them who listen to you. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit. Don't be bitter, angry, or resentful. Never shout angrily or say things to hurt others. Never do anything evil. Be kind and loving to each other and forgive each other just as God forgave you in Christ.

Galatians 6:2 tells us to help each other with your troubles. By doing so, you are truly obeying the law of Christ.

Colossians 3:8 exhorts us to put aside anger, bad temper, speaking hurtful things to others, and using evil words when you talk. Don't lie to each other. You have left your sinful life and the former habits. You have begun a new life.

1 Thessalonians 5:11 says this: Wear faith and love for protection and put on the helmet of salvation. God doesn't desire for us to suffer his anger, but he desires to give us salvation through Jesus Christ. Jesus died for us so we can live together with him whether we are alive or dead when he comes. Encourage each other and give each other strength. When you are present, do you bring sunshine with you or is there a dark cloud of gloom hanging over you that saps joy and peace from those around you. God wants us to have joy unspeakable and to radiate his love and kindness to those who are in our presence.