



# Comfort Ye, Comfort Ye My People<sup>1</sup>

By Sharon Rapp

<sup>3</sup>Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, <sup>4a</sup>who comforts us in all our troubles, <sup>4b</sup>so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. <sup>5</sup>For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows. <sup>6</sup>If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. <sup>7</sup>And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort.

<sup>10b</sup>On [God] we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, <sup>11a</sup>as you help us by your prayers.

**2 Corinthians 1:3-7, 10b-11a<sup>2</sup>**

**Opening Prayer:** You came to earth, O Christ, as Lord, But pow'r You laid aside. You lived Your years in servanthood; In lowliness You died. Lord, help us walk Your servant way Wherever love may lead And, bending low, forgetting self, Each serve the other's need.<sup>3</sup> Amen.

**Opening Discussion:** Read aloud together core verses **2 Corinthians 1:3-11a** (see sidebar). What is your reaction? With a partner or small group, discuss an act of comfort that God brought to you through other people. What was the situation and how did the action encourage you?

**Note:** The author was drawn to this topic through a medical condition during which many acts of comfort were received from family and friends. A list (most certainly incomplete and intended to be a thought starter) of those encouraging, uplifting, and supportive actions is included in the leader guide (available from your leader or online).

**Comfort and Covenant:** How is God the Father described in **2 Corinthians 3-4a**? \_\_\_\_\_

**Nehemiah 1:5**? \_\_\_\_\_

**Psalms 86:15**? \_\_\_\_\_

What has God promised in the following verses that brings comfort to His people? **Galatians 4:4-5a** \_\_\_\_\_

**Romans 6:4-5** \_\_\_\_\_

**Matthew 26:26-28** \_\_\_\_\_

List some examples from the Old Testament where God showed comfort or compassion. \_\_\_\_\_

God is caring: *The Lord is faithful to all his promises and loving toward all he has made. The Lord upholds all those who fall and lifts up all who are bowed down* (Psalm 145:13b-14). He keeps his covenants: *The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off — for all whom the Lord our God will call* (Acts 2:39). God considers believers as family: *How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!* (1 John 3:1a).

**Concern and Compassion:** Read again verses 5–7 (sidebar). What consequences are possible from giving comfort?

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How might we trust good to come from trying circumstances? \_\_\_\_\_

What reassurance does our Savior offer in **John 16:33**?

What does **Philippians 2:5–8** tell us about the nature of Christ? \_\_\_\_\_

**John 14:10**? \_\_\_\_\_

**Hebrews 4:15**? \_\_\_\_\_

Name some examples from the four Gospels in which Christ offers comfort. Can you think of an instance in which He helps someone whom others had overlooked? \_\_\_\_\_

Jesus was especially drawn to those who needed comfort — including those others had ignored: “*It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners*” (Mark 2:17). We are to follow His example: “*As the Father has sent me, I am sending you*” (John 20:21b). Christ reassures the disciples: “*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth*” (Acts 1:8).

**Connection and Communication:** In verses 4b and 10b–11a of **2 Corinthians 1** (sidebar), how does Paul invite the family of God to be of assistance? \_\_\_\_\_

How are we also able to serve in this way? See **Matthew 22:37–40**; **1 Thessalonians 1:2–3**; **Hebrews 10:24**; **1 Peter 3:8**. \_\_\_\_\_

Who is honored when we comfort one another? See **Matthew 25:37–40**. \_\_\_\_\_

What other situations can you recall from Acts and the Epistles where comforting takes place? \_\_\_\_\_

How does the Apostle Paul embolden us in **2 Corinthians 1:21–22**; **Colossians 3:12–17**; **1 Thessalonians 5:11–14**? \_\_\_\_\_

How does the Lutheran Women’s Missionary League encourage us, children of faith, to follow Christ’s example? \_\_\_\_\_

Comforting, encouraging, serving demonstrate our love and are our response to salvation. When we feel ill-equipped, **Isaiah 41:10** encourages: *So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.* When faltering, we can remember Christ’s words to Paul: *My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness* (2 Corinthians 12:9). Strengthened through Word and Sacrament, we can engage, encourage, equip, and enjoy the process — *rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man* (Ephesians 6:7 ESV).

The keynote workshop presenter at a professional conference out of state, I learn from my husband’s call that my dear mother has received her eternal healing. A colleague finds me sitting alone, crying quietly, in an empty meeting room. Promising to let the co-leaders of the convention know immediately, she speaks words of empathy and sends me to my hotel room to begin packing. Two leaders arrive and, after hugs and prayers, encourage me with news that a replacement session is being readied. One returns to help with those preparations. The second contacts the airline, confirms the needed change is available, drives me to the airport — then waits until the ticket is exchanged, my husband knows when to meet me, and I’m ready to walk to the gate. What sweet comfort!

**Closing:** Making a connection is a start and can often be done quickly by sending a text, email, card, or note. Placing a phone call, writing a letter, sending flowers, or visiting take more planning and time, as does delivering a gift or meal. Each act, however, communicates love and care. And no matter how busy the day, there is time for prayer.

**Closing Prayer:** Abba! Father! You had compassion on us in sending Your Son to fulfill the law, allowing us to become Your children through faith. Holy Spirit, keep us mindful of our Savior’s command and empower us to be kind, caring, heartening servants. Lord Jesus, give us courage to follow Your example, sensitivity to the needs of those around us, and willingness to communicate Your love through prayer and acts of comfort. Amen.

**Closing Hymn:** Sing or say together “Take My Life and Let It Be” (LSB #783; LW #404; TLH #400).

**When time allows:** Think of at least one person who needs comforting or encouraging and make the connection. Reread Jesus’ words of consolation, promise, and prayer in **John 14–17**. Research the word “comfort” and its synonyms in a concordance or study Bible.

<sup>1</sup>Isaiah 40:1 KJV

<sup>2</sup>References NIV: *The Thompson Chain-Reference Bible*, 1978

<sup>3</sup>“Lord, Help Us Walk Your Servant Way” (LSB #857)

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