

Comfort and Hope ... to Share

Bible Study • Leader's Guide

Please provide a copy of this study, a Bible, and a hymnal for each participant.

Opening Prayer: Dear Lord, be with us as we study Your Word of comfort and hope. May the Spirit give us insight into Your messages for us today. Bless our conversation and study. Sanctify us *in the truth for Your Word is truth* (John 17:17). In the name and for the sake of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

Read together the theme verse: *Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal **comfort** and good **hope** through grace, comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word* (2 Thessalonians 2:16–17).

Comfort

Consider the word “comfort” and jot down a definition of the word. Share your definition with a partner or the small group. What would be some synonyms for comfort?

Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share. Synonyms could include: consolation, solace, condolence, sympathy, help, support, relief, strengthening, and the like.

A definition of the word “comfort” might include easing or alleviating another’s grief or distress. It could also include the concept of support or strengthening one who is weaker. (See *Oxford English Dictionary* online, www.oed.com.) Read Romans 3:23.

Why do we all need comfort?

We all have sinned and fall short in God’s eyes.

Since we all have sinned, what is our outlook on life without Christ? See Romans 6:23a.

As sinners, we only deserve God’s eternal wrath and death.

Read 2 Corinthians 1:3 and John 14:25–27. Who is the source of all comfort?

The Triune God — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Specifically identify the source of comfort in the following Bible passages: Isaiah 40:1–2, Luke 2:25–26 (“consolation”), and Philippians 2:1.

Isaiah 40: 1-2: God who sends His Son to save His people (Jerusalem) and pardon their iniquity

Luke 2:25-26: the consolation of Israel — Jesus — Who humbled Himself, became a man, suffered, died, and rose again

Philippians 2:1: Christ's love for us given to us by the Spirit.

God the Spirit — the Comforter — strengthens and supports us in the Christian life.

How does He specifically do this? See Colossians 3:16, 1 Peter 3:21, and Mark 14:22-24.

The Means of Grace — God's Word and Sacraments.

What does the Spirit do for us in Romans 8:26?

The Spirit intercedes for us.

Faith Talk: Identify various characteristics of comfort in these verses:

Psalm 46:1 - refuge, strength, help in trouble

Psalm 119:50 - promise gives life

Psalm 119:52 - rules from of old — the Word of God

Psalm 119:76 - steadfast love

Can you think of others? _____

Faith Talk: In 2 Thessalonians 2:17, Paul states that our loving Lord will *comfort your hearts*.

What does the phrase “comfort your hearts” mean to you? Share with a partner or the small group.

Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share.

Hope

Identify the source of hope in the following Bible passages: Psalm 42:5, Romans 5:1-5, Titus 3:4-7, and 1 Peter 1:3-5.

Psalm 42:5: God, my salvation

Romans 5:1–5: peace with God through Jesus and we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, God’s love in Christ is poured into our hearts by the Spirit

Titus 3:4–7: through Christ we are justified by grace, and in Baptism, the Spirit gives faith and we become heirs according to the hope of eternal life

1 Peter 1:3–5: a living hope through Jesus’ resurrection.

Read Colossians 1:5, 23, 27; Hebrews 10:23, 11:1; and 1 Peter 1:4, 13. What phrases describe the Christian’s hope?

Colossians 1:5, 23, 27: hope laid up in heaven, hope of the Gospel, hope of glory

Hebrews 10:23, 11:1: confession of our hope, faithfully promised by God, assurance

1 Peter 1:4,13: imperishable, undefiled, unfading, kept in heaven, hope on the grace of God in Christ

Read again Romans 5:1–5. Describe how these verses can be comforting to us during times of suffering and hopelessness.

Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share.

Faith Talk:

How are the gifts from our Lord of comfort and hope linked?

Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share.

... To Share!

In 2 Thessalonians 2:17, Paul says that God will establish our hearts *in every good work and word*. Read also 2 Corinthians 1:3–7 and Philippians 2:4.

What does God, our source of comfort and hope, want us to do with the gifts of comfort and hope He has given?

We should care for our brothers and sisters in Christ and comfort those who are afflicted by reminding them of the hope we have in Christ.

With the idea of comfort being supportive and giving strength, read Acts 18:23, Romans 1:11, Ephesians 3:14–19, and 3 John 1–8.

Identify who is offering comfort, to whom it is being offered, and its purpose.

Acts 18:23: Paul on his missionary journey to Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening the disciples

Romans 1:11: Paul to the Christian disciples in Rome, strength and mutual encouragement

Ephesians 3:14–19: Paul to the church at Ephesus, for spiritual strength

3 John 1–8: John to Gaius, thanks for faithfully supporting the missionaries in their midst

In 1 Peter 3:15, we are encouraged to always be *prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect*. Read Philippians 2:5–11 and compare it to the Second Article of the Apostles' Creed.

What similarities are there between the two?

It is all about Jesus' perfect life, death, and resurrection for our salvation and eternal life.

How can the Creed help you to profess your faith and hope?

Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share.

Faith Talk:

Led by the Spirit received in your Baptism, how would you boldly proclaim to another the hope you have in Christ? Be specific.

Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share.

Discuss ways that God's comfort and hope can be shared in an often hopeless world. Make a group list. _____

Closing Prayer: Heavenly Father, please continue to give to us Your gifts of comfort and hope in an often hopeless world for the sake of Your Son, Jesus, and His redeeming work. Thank You, Jesus, for living a perfect life, suffering, dying, and then rising to new life. I am forgiven of my sins and can look forward to the hope of eternal life in heaven with You! Holy Spirit, thank You for giving me faith in Jesus at my Baptism and keeping me in the faith. Make me bold to confess the hope I have as a child of God. Show me ways to comfort and strengthen those around me with the same comfort You give to me. Comfort my heart and establish me in every good work and word. In Jesus, my living hope, I pray. Amen.

Sing: "Lord of All Hopefulness" (LSB 738).

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