



Week 2 Leader Guide



The win for this week is for members to elaborate on a time when they were overwhelmed, to thank God for His care and comfort during that experience, and to look for ways to turn that gratitude into action by reaching out to comfort others in similar experiences.

Leader's Tip: *Toward the end of the session, you will hand out cards to all group members that say:*

*Bring someone into my life who needs Your comfort.
Help me see the need and reach out to them as You have reached to me.*

You will want to have these cards printed and ready to hand out before the session begins.



Say This: We learned this week that God allows overwhelming experiences in our lives not only so that we can receive comfort from Him in our time of need, but so that we can reach out to others in their time of crisis and extend similar comfort to them, as well.

10-15
minutes



Have someone read this:

2 Corinthians 1:3-7

3 Praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort. **4** He comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any kind of affliction, through the comfort we ourselves receive from God. **5** For as the sufferings of Christ overflow to us, so through Christ our comfort also overflows. **6** If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation. If we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which is experienced in your endurance of the same sufferings that we suffer. **7** And our hope for you is firm, because we know that as you share in the sufferings, so you will share in the comfort.

Say This:

On a piece of paper, write down a time when you were completely overwhelmed.

- List 3 words that would best describe your state of mind during this season.

Leader's tip: Help them break these descriptions into thinking, feeling and doing. Examples: "distracted" is a feeling, while "at loose ends" relates more to doing (in this case, not knowing what to do), and perplexed relates to the thought process, or not being able to come up with a plan of action. You may want to write all of these down in 3 separate lists where everyone can see them.

Also, if you wish, draw a stick figure, give him/her a name, say this person is a composite of everyone in the group and say that he/she is thinking _____, feeling _____, and doing _____.

- Now write down how God extended mercy to you in that experience and brought you a measure of comfort.

Leader's Tip: Possible examples are: by receiving some understanding as to why the experience occurred, by realizing a plan of action, by bringing a Scripture to mind that helped bring you through, by bringing a friend into your life, etc.

- Now write down 3 words that characterized your state at that point.
Leader: Apply these traits as above.

Say This:

Let's look at a couple of Scriptures together.

Would someone please read 2 Corinthians 12:7–9 and James 1:2–4 for us?

As you listen to these passages, note some of the traits that God wants to develop in us in times of trial.

[verses are read]

Now, imagine that you are friends with Paul and James

Imagine they are having lunch with you, talking you through a time of testing.

What would they say God is wanting to do in your life?

Leader's Tip: Allow for discussion here.

Do This:

Allow time for people to share at this point.

Encourage them to even specify what Paul or James might say specifically.

Say This:

Now, let's return to our main passage in 2 Corinthians 1.

Notice in verse 3 that Paul praises God for His comfort.

Let's give thanks and praise to God for the comfort He provides us.

Worship Him for His care for you as we listen to this worship song:

<http://tinyurl.com/qwwng5v>

Leader's Tip: You may want to pause and offer a prayer of thanks to God for providing strength and comfort—even when deliverance does not come right away.

Do This:

Read verse 3 of the primary passage, plus the first 7 words of verse 4 again.

Ask This:

- Who is the source of our comfort? (God)
- When you are faced with suffering, how do you react right away?
- Where do you run for comfort?

Do This:

Ask everyone to look at the following verses, and note how quickly David turned to God for comfort in his distress:

Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am alone and afflicted. (Psalm 25:16)

Draw near to me and redeem me; ransom me because of my enemies. (Psalm 69:18)

May Your compassion come to me so that I may live, for Your instruction is my delight. (Psalm 119:77)

Turn to me and be gracious to me, as is Your practice toward those who love Your name. (Psalm 119:132)

Ask This:

- What are some ideas that would help us to grow in our dependence on God when experiencing suffering?
- As a group what are some ways we could encourage each other in developing endurance through suffering?

Now look at verse 4.

- How often is Paul saying we can draw comfort from God in our trials?
- If the trials may not end right away, but comfort is guaranteed, how does that change our expectations when we are overwhelmed?
- How does this change the way we pray when we are inundated by adversity?
- How does this change the way we pray for one another and talk to one another when we are distressed?

Say This:

These verses help us to deal with our own trials, but Paul also gives us more instruction on how to handle them.

Let's press in further:

30
minutes



Say This:

Read verse 4 again.

Keep that verse in mind, while listening to the following verses:

You must not oppress a foreign resident; you yourselves know how it feels to be a foreigner because you were foreigners in the land of Egypt. (Exodus 23:9)

You also must love the foreigner, since you were foreigners in the land of Egypt. (Deuteronomy 10:19)

Ask This:

- Based on these verses, what does God want us to do as a result of our own overwhelming circumstances?
Leader's Tip: Be prepared to say something like, "Return our gratitude by extending the same comfort we needed in our own distress."
- Based on verse 4 of our main passage, what exactly are we to offer to others? (The comfort only He provides)
- When we are reaching to others in comfort, who is actually providing that comfort—God, us, or both?
Leader's Tip: Let the group talk this out. Try to lead them to the truth that God sends it to us, then through us.

Say This:

Look at the first part of verse 6.

Ask This:

- What is the reason Paul mentions for his own afflictions?
- This is hard but, if you realized in the middle of your trial that God might be bringing this affliction into your life so that you can in turn comfort others, what would your reaction be?

DIGGING DEEPER

Say This:

Think about someone you know who is overwhelmed.

Leader's Tip: Ask for people to share examples of people they know who are overwhelmed.

Take time to pray for each of these people.

Help the group members who have shared to identify ways they might want to extend comfort to these people.

Ask for suggestions from the group for more ideas.

Ideas will likely include praying, talking with and listening, sharing your own story of receiving comfort, etc.

Also, feel free to share the following verse, as far as the role of having a meal together can play:

"Then all [Job's]brothers, sisters and former acquaintances came to his house and dined with him in his house. They offered him sympathy and comfort concerning all the adversity the LORD had brought on him." (Job 42:11)

Now let's pray again.

Ask God to place people in your path this week who need God's comfort.

Commit to be prepared to extend God's comfort to them.

[Lead in prayer or ask someone else to]

Ask This:

- What are some practical ways we as believers can share God's comfort with others?
- Why do we often not respond right away to reach out to others in their time of need?
- What is going through our minds?
Describe the thoughts you have at moments of opportunity that prevent you from reaching out.
- What can we do to retrain ourselves and our thinking?

Do This:

Hand out the cards mentioned at the beginning of the guide to all group members.

Say this:

Place the card you received somewhere in your home or car or place of work, as a reminder to be aware of needs and to respond to them right away.

Ask God specifically to help you push through those thoughts that keep you from reaching out, to be proactive in sharing the comfort that you yourself have received.

Leader's Tip: If you think you will have time next week, tell the group before they leave that you will be asking for people to share their stories of how they were to share God's comfort with others during the past week.

CLOSING THOUGHT

The Scriptures we have discussed emphasize that we extend the same mercy we have received. Keep in mind that Jesus also taught that those who extend mercy also receive it (Matthew 5:7). Be ready to both give and receive mercy this week as God extends it to you and through you, and to you again.

STUDY NOTES

The passage we have studied contains the word "comfort" 9 times. A nearby passage, 2 Corinthians 7:4-7, also uses the same word a lot. Read that passage, noting especially the role that the mere presence of a believer can play in providing comfort. Remember that your merely being with a distressed person can make the difference for them. When a crisis develops, be willing to drop by and be the presence that is so deeply needed.