

small group study guide

for the week of 06 03 2018 [In the Meantime 6: Comfort Zone]

INTRODUCTION

When we're in the midst of pain and suffering, it can feel like we'll never be happy again, nothing good can come from our circumstances, and there's no reason to continue living. But those are lies. God can redeem, use, and work through our pain. And when he does, we eventually have the opportunity to comfort others. There is a "Fellowship of Suffering." People who've suffered are uniquely equipped and qualified to comfort people who are suffering.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Do you tend to learn from the wisdom of others or from your own mistakes? How has that tendency increased or decreased suffering and adversity in your life?
2. Talk about a time when you were comforted by someone who had experienced circumstances similar to your own. How did you benefit from that person's perspective?
3. Read **2 Corinthians 1:3–7**. What is the connection between praising God in the midst of suffering and being able to comfort others? Does that connection sound too good to be true? Why or why not?
4. Have you ever had the opportunity to comfort someone because you'd experienced something similar to what he or she was going through? If so, how was that experience life-giving for that person? How was it life-giving for you?
5. "Our capacity to comfort is determined by the degree to which we've suffered." Respond to that statement. In what ways is it hopeful? In what ways is it scary?
6. What can you do to begin to receive your adversity as a gift from God and leverage that gift to comfort others? How can this group help you and support you as you take a next step?

MOVING FORWARD

So what do you do when there's nothing you can do? You don't have to give in to the tidal wave of emotion. You can be happy again. Something good can come from this. There is a reason to continue living. Comfort those who need comforting with the comfort you have received. If you've been there, you're uniquely qualified to comfort those who are still there. This will bring purpose to your pain and bring life to your soul.

CHANGING YOUR MIND

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. *2 Corinthians 1:3–4*