

How God Comforts People in Pain – September 1 & 2, 2018
Follow-up Bible Studies

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Day One: Genesis 16

- Explain Sarai, Abram and Hagar's relationship dynamics (1-4). Why would Hagar grow to hate Sarai? What did Sarai and Abram argue about (5-6)? In what ways have they failed to treat Hagar as worthy of respect and care? Where do you see this sort of dynamic at play in the world today?
- What did Hagar do (6)? Who found her (7)? Summarize her conversation with the angel (8-12). How did she respond to this encounter (13)? She'd been through great trauma and the angel's words weren't exactly uplifting. So why do you think Hagar responded as she did? Even in your deepest pain, may you also recognize that God sees you and wants to comfort you.
- Read the passage again, imagining yourself as Hagar: a runaway slave, impregnated by her rapist. And yet, she knew she was seen by God. As you engage in this way, what is the Spirit speaking?

Day Two: Job 2

- Who presented themselves to the Lord (1)? Summarize Satan's conversation with God (2-6). When considering that Satan couldn't afflict Job without the Lord's permission, this may churn up hard questions about your own pain and suffering. Process through this with the Lord and allow him to minister to you.
- Describe the suffering Satan brought into Job's life (7-8). Note this is preceded by the horrific losses of chapter one. What conversation did Job and his wife then have (9-10)? What one word describes Job's wife's outlook on their situation? And Job's?
- How did Job's friends enter the scene (11)? How did they react to his plight (12-13)? How do you think Job felt to receive support in this way? Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 and ask the Lord to reveal ways *you* can bring true comfort to those in pain. Perhaps he wants you to "set out," sympathize, comfort, weep and mourn, sit alongside in silence, etc. Pray for obedience to walk this out.

Day Three: Psalm 91

- Who rests in God's shadow (1)? What does the psalmist say to the Lord (2)? When do you need shelter, shade, refuge or a fortress? What's it like to picture God in these ways? What is the psalmist sure of (3-4)? God's comfort is masculine *and* feminine – it's perfect and comprehensive. Speak to the Lord about this.
- Miraculously, what will God-followers *not* fear (5-7)? Instead of fearing, what do we do (8)? What do you think makes it possible to observe such things without experiencing fear? What happens when we commit to the Lord (9-10)? How does this play out (11-13)? Compare these stanzas to 2 Corinthians 1:10. How do these verses square with your own experience of God's comfort?
- How does God respond to those who love him (14-16)? Notice the Lord doesn't spare his people from trouble; rather, he is *with us* in the midst of it. Tell God about the impact his presence and gifts of life and salvation make on you when you're in pain.

Day Four: Luke 7:11-17

- Set the scene of this text (11). What was happening at the town gate (12)? Imagine the far-reaching devastation the woman faced: she'd lost two loved ones *and* the benefits of

having a male relative in a patriarchal society. What do you think she was feeling at this time? Why do you think such a large crowd was with her?

- What was Jesus' response to seeing the grieving mother (13)? Recall the last time your "heart went out" to someone. How did you act on this emotion; what comfort did you provide? How did Jesus act on his emotion (13-15)? Which verse or sentence in this section impacts you the most? Why? Pray you'd boldly comfort others in word, deed and prayer just as Jesus did.
- How did everyone respond to the man's resurrection (16-17)? Meditate on this part of their proclamation: "God has come to help his people." How does your life testify to this truth? Ask Jesus to help and comfort you in a current struggle. What is he speaking?

Day Five: 2 Corinthians 6:3-13

- What does Paul keep out of the way (3)? Why (3)? What negative things do Paul and his team endure (4-5, 8)? What positives have they also experienced (6-10)? Of this good and bad happening all at once, which hardship do you think caused Paul the most pain? Why? Which experience brought him the most comfort? Why? What about you; how do you think you would fare through this?
- As he ministers to them, how does Paul speak to and treat the Corinthians (11-13)? What roles do "speaking freely" and "opening wide your heart" play in comforting others? Which is easier for you to do? Why? Ask God to empower you to do both.
- How are the Corinthians failing to respond in kind (12-13)? How do closed hearts hinder engagement in what Paul describes in 2 Corinthians 1:4? Pray that whenever you comfort people, both your heart and theirs would abound in openness and affection.