



THE GOD OF ALL COMFORT

Be sure to observe and recognize any new members in your group. Make sure they are welcomed and introduce them to everyone. Since we're still in the early stages of groups season continue to make time for catching up with each other. Maybe "go around the room" and ask everyone how their week has been or what we did over the weekend. Allow plenty of time for "small talk" before jumping into discussion of the message.

TALK ABOUT IT

Read 2nd Cor 1:3-4

When people are hurting, one of the most common questions is "Where is God?"

As you wrestled with that question, what helped you during that season?

According to verse 4, God comforts us "so that we can comfort those in any trouble."

Why do you think God often uses people who have experienced similar pain to help one another?

What is the difference between saying "God caused this suffering" and saying, "God can use this suffering for a redemptive purpose?"

What are some ways people have "confused" the two concepts?

Read 2nd Cor 1:5-7

The sermon asks a second question beyond "Where is God?" It asks, "Where are we?"

How does that question help reframe the way we think about and respond to human suffering?

Brainstorm some areas where compassionate Christians would make a real impact by providing help, encouragement, and comfort.

Read 2nd Cor 1:8-11

Paul says his suffering became so severe that he "despaired of life itself."

What does that tell us about the reality of suffering even for mature believers?

In verse 9, Paul says his suffering taught him “not to rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead.”

What does self-reliance look like in our lives?

What does dependence on God look like instead?

APPLY IT

The following question may be asked rhetorically with brief time given for reflection, or some may feel uncomfortable sharing their answers with the group.

Think about something difficult you have experienced.

Without minimizing the pain of it, is there a way God might use what you learned or received through that experience to help someone else now?

PRAY

Ask God to help your group:

- Seek him as their primary source of comfort and learn to see him as the “Father of compassion and God of all comfort.”
- Seek to use their experiences (both good and bad) as opportunities to point others to the comfort and deliverance they have found through Christ.