

# 1

## Our Comforting God

*2 Corinthians 1:1-11*



Life is difficult!” With these three words Scott Peck begins his best-selling book *The Road Less Traveled*. But in 2 Corinthians Paul says this and more. Just where life is difficult, where our relationships are strained, where our competence is questioned, where our health and security are threatened, God makes himself known in powerful comfort.

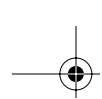


GROUP DISCUSSION. What has been one of the hardest experiences of your life? Sometimes the most difficult moments turn out to be the best—in terms of growth. How true has this been?

PERSONAL REFLECTION. Recall a time in your life when friends comforted you while you were hard-pressed and despairing. What qualities in their relationship with you enabled them really to comfort you?

In this letter we discover that one of the supreme greatnesses of Christianity is that it does not seek a supernatural escape from the difficulties of life. Instead it offers a supernatural use for them. Troubles become triumphs as God makes himself known in our weakness. *Read 2 Corinthians 1:1-11.*





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**1.** After his customary greeting and “signature,” Paul breaks into praise and then recounts his problems. What difficulties did Paul face in the province of Asia (modern Turkey), and why does he praise God?

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**2.** If you were in Paul’s situation, what different emotions might you be feeling toward God?



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**3.** Why do you think Paul loves rather than hates God because of all he has suffered?



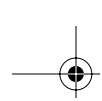
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**4.** What is the connection between the sufferings of Christ and the comfort of Christ (vv. 5-6)?

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**5.** In what ways have you experienced God’s comfort in a difficult situation?





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**6.** Some people respond to suffering by denying it or becoming so self-focused that they are isolated in their pain. What did Paul discover about the meaning of suffering in the Christian life (vv. 8-11)?

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**7.** Why do you think our experience of God's comfort enables us to comfort others who are suffering?



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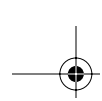
**8.** How do you think Paul's openness in sharing the realities of his Christian experience affected his relationship with the Corinthians?

How would it have further equipped them as partners in the gospel?

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**9.** Based on what you have learned in these first eleven verses, how





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can hardships draw you closer to God instead of driving you away from him?

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**10.** What must you do to allow your hardest experiences to be transformed into ministry assets?



*Think of someone you know who needs comfort. Ask God to comfort that person and to use you in offering comfort, praying that the word of the servant in Isaiah may be yours: “The sovereign LORD has given me an instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary” (Isaiah 50:4).*



**Now or Later**

Of the many solutions given in Scripture of the mystery of pain, this is not the least notable; the sufferer who feels that his sufferings equip him as a missionary of comfort to others will feel that they are well-explained. (Quoted in R. V. G. Tasker, *2 Corinthians*)

Explore the theme of being a fellow sufferer with Christ in other New Testament passages: Romans 8:17; Philippians 3:10; Colossians 1:24; Hebrews 2:9–10; 1 Peter 1:11; 4:13; 5:1.

