

## Chapter 1: The God of *All* Comfort

We live during a time of great uncertainty. Indications of unrest and discord are everywhere – from the international level to our personal lives. The earth groans under the stress of pollution. It is a time marked with earthquakes, hurricanes, extinctions, wars between nations, pandemics, greed, litigations, privacy invasions, identity theft, drought and famine, addictions, depression, broken families, rebellion, and narcissism. Rather than the Garden of Eden intended for God’s children, we’re faced with the negative affect of pollution on our physical health. Technology wars against our mental, emotional, and interpersonal health. We’re faced with stress-induced illnesses in many forms. How do we cope? Where can we turn for comfort during these troubling times?

On the night before Jesus’ departure from the disciples, he taught that He would be sending the Comforter, the Holy Spirit – they would not be alone.

And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. After a little while the world will behold Me no more; but you will behold Me; because I live, you shall live also. In that day you shall know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you ([John 14:16-20](#)).

Jesus provided further comfort with these words: “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

The Bible tell us that God is the source of *all* comfort. Do you believe that, *really*? Or are you like so many of the rest of us – quick to recognize a truth, but slow to apply it? Do you

struggle with *ongoing* faith and trust in the Almighty? In other words, do you have faith – for the moment – only to find your faith waver and eventually transform into full-blown anxiety and worry? The good news is that finding comfort in the Almighty – for the long-term – *is* possible. The Bible provides insight to help us maintain trust in God, no matter the circumstance. What Jesus was to the disciples in the flesh, He is to us through the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Godhead is three persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – One God. The Holy Spirit is our paraclete. Paraclete is defined as helper, or one who is called upon to help. The Holy Spirit comes alongside us, as with an attorney during a trial when needing defense, or during an unjust situation. The Holy Spirit walks alongside us as we face temptations, unjust situations, wounds, and loss. Even better, for those who confess their sins and receive Jesus as their Savior, our attorney – the Holy Spirit – dwells among us and is *in* us.<sup>1</sup>

Several years ago a close loved one faced trial and ultimate sentencing. It was at that moment I understood the importance of a paraclete. The attorney was strength during a time of weakness, wisdom and direction during perplexity and confusion, and truth and peace during times of trouble. This is the gift of the Holy Spirit. In his parting words Jesus told the disciples He would not leave them fatherless, but would send the Holy Spirit: “I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever” (John 14:16). The bottom line is this: The gift of the Holy Spirit is the same ever-present help for us today as for the disciples over 2000 years ago. What Jesus was to them in the flesh, He is to us through the gift of the Holy Spirit. He comes alongside us to comfort, guide, and shelter us during times of trouble; convict of sin; and offer sweet companionship. All who have placed their faith in Jesus

Christ can learn to listen with sensitivity to the voice of the Holy Spirit – to seek His comfort, direction, and peace in our daily lives regardless of the storm.

### Chapter One Study Guide

I. Read and Consider:

“In this life, there will be trouble...” **John 16:33.**

“We wrestle not against flesh and blood...” **Ephesians 6:12.**

“God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in times of trouble”  
**Psalm 46:1-3; 10-11.**

“If you love Me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever – the Spirit of truth...” **John 14:15-17, 23 – 27.**

II. Activity: God’s Complete and Ever-Present Comfort

Read four psalms that review God’s comforting benefits - Psalm 103, 146, 91, and 23. Next to each verse, write the type of comfort God provides. If working in a small group, divide the Psalms between individuals or teams. (Answer Key in back.)

**Psalm 103: 1 – 18.**

- A. \_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 1-3a, 12)
- B. \_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 3b)
- C. \_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 4a)
- D. \_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 4b)
- E. \_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 5)
- F. \_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 6)
- G. \_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 7)
- H. \_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 8-11, 13-17a)
- I. \_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 17b-18)

**Psalm 146:3 – 10**

- J. \_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 3-6)
- K. \_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 6b)
- L. \_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 7a)
- M. \_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 7b, 9b))
- N. \_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 7b)

- O. \_\_\_\_\_ (8a)
- P. \_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 8b)
- Q. \_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 8b)
- R. \_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 9)
- S. \_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 9b-10)

**Psalm 91: 1-16**

- T. \_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 1 – 3, 14)
- U. \_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 4-10)
- V. \_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 11-14)
- W. \_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 15a)
- X. \_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 15b)
- Y. \_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 15b)
- Z. \_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 16)

**Psalm 23**

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 1 -2, 3b)
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 3a, 4a)
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 4b)
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 5a; 6)
- 5. \_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 5b)

III. Questions:

- A. When you look at the qualities above, what impression do you have about God?
  
- B. Paul wrote in his letter to the believers at Corinth: God the source of *all* comfort. Can you claim it, and believe it? Can you share a time when you cried out to God for comfort, He ran to you, comforted you, provided for you, and/or sheltered you from the storm?

“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**. For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our **comfort** abounds through Christ” (2 Corinthians 1:3-5).

- C. Analyze: What do the comforting benefits have in common?
  
- D. Evaluate the four texts: What is the condition for the enactment of comfort?
  
  
- E. How does one receive the Holy Spirit in order to experience the ongoing comfort of Christ (1 John 1:9; Romans 10:9, 10; John 3:16)?

### **Chapter One Study Guide Answer Key**

#### **Psalm 103: 1 – 18.**

- A. Forgives (vs. 1-3a, 12)
- B. Heals (vs. 3b)
- C. Redeems (vs. 4a)
- D. Crowns (vs. 4b)
- E. Satisfies and renews (vs. 5)
- F. Executes righteousness (vs. 6)
- G. Teaches (vs. 7)
- H. Offers mercy and compassion (vs. 8-11, 13-17a)
- I. Keeps his covenant (vs. 17b-18)

#### **Psalm 146:3 – 10**

- J. Helps (vs. 3-6)
- K. Upholds truth forever (vs. 6b)
- L. Executes justice (vs. 7a)\*
- M. Provides (vs. 7b, 9b))
- N. Frees (vs. 7b)
- O. Enlightens (8a)
- P. Lifts shame and burdens (vs. 8b)
- Q. Loves (vs. 8b)
- R. Watches (vs. 9)
- S. Relieves (vs. 9b-10)

#### **Psalm 91: 1-16**

- T. Delivers (vs. 1 – 3, 14)
- U. Covers and protects (vs. 4-10)
- V. Keeps (vs. 11-14)
- W. Answers and responds (vs. 15a)
- X. Abides (vs. 15b)
- Y. Honors (vs. 15b)
- Z. Shows: makes known his salvation (vs. 16)

### Psalm 23

- 6. Leads (vs. 1 -2, 3b)
- 7. Restores (vs. 3a, 4a)
- 8. Comforts (vs. 4b)
- 9. Prepares (vs. 5a; 6)
- 10. Anoints (vs. 5b)

IIIC. God *actively* comforts his people: All are verbs. Comfort refers to ongoing blessings.

IIId. Comfort is a condition for faithfulness – resting in Him and obedience to God’s commands.

IIIe. The Holy Spirit is received through a prayer of confession of faith in Jesus Christ.

**“If you** confess with your mouth, **“Jesus is Lord,”** and **believe in your heart** that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with **your heart** that **you believe** and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved” (Romans 10:9-10)

**“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).**

Invite Jesus into your heart and life through prayer today: Dear Jesus, I am sorry for my sins. Please forgive me for all the ways I have fallen short. Jesus, I believe you are God. I receive you into my heart and ask for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Please be my Savior and my Lord. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

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<sup>1</sup>Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works: First Lectures On the Psalms, Psalms 1 – 75*, Vol. 10, ed. Hilton C. Oswald (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1974), 201-03.

## Chapter 2: Two Anchors

*We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure (Hebrews 6:17)*

**Read:** Hebrews 6:13-20, 7:20-8:1

Most people I know struggle with trusting God, especially during the storms of life. If you can relate to this statement, you are not alone. Anchors remind us that there will be storms. “In this life there will be trouble” (John 16:33a). The anchor signifies hope for the sailor. Fully aware of the potential for storms in the great sea, the sailor enters the ship placing trust in the mounted anchors.

As I have come to understand, ships have at least two working anchors – port and stern – weighing anywhere from 1500 to 100,000 pounds. The purpose of the anchor is to hold the ship within a limited area depending on the length of the chain. The anchor’s fork grips the seabed, holding the ship steady. When a ship is anchored with both anchors, the ship is in “open moor” or made secure. If only steadied with one anchor, the part of the ship being held with the anchor can break off during a storm. Anchors are the most underutilized tool on the ship, yet the most valued. The anchors’ value is not completely understood until put to the test. In Christianity, standing firm and steadfast in the faith is symbolized by the anchor.

Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. God did this so that, **by two unchangeable things** in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope set before us may be greatly encouraged. **We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure...** (Hebrews 6:17-19a).

Hope is symbolized by an anchor. Hope is absolute certainty and confident expectation. We are to trust God with absolutely no doubt. The anchor of our soul is made steadfast with *two immutable* (unchangeable) *things* (Hebrews 6:18).

**Anchor #1: It is impossible for God to lie.**

The character of God is our sure anchor, our steadfast hope. There is one thing God cannot do - He cannot contradict His divine character. God is truth, holy, and righteous. We see a symbol of His holiness in that He dwells in unapproachable light (1 Timothy 6:16). "God is light; in Him there is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:9a). God *cannot* lie.

**Anchor #2: God made a promise.**

We have a tendency. It is unfair, but we do it. We project onto God the qualities we have come to understand in flawed humanity. How many times have you been promised: "I'll be there," "I'll do it," and "I'll remember" only to find they were not there, the task was not completed, and they did not remember. It is unfair to project imperfect humanity onto a perfect God.

A covenant is a promise. It is an agreement between two parties, involving promises on the part of each to the other. God made five great biblical covenants:

1. Noahic: **Gen 9:13-17** With steadfast faith, Noah built an ark due to the pending flood. God promised to never destroy the world again with a universal flood, sending the rainbow as a sign of His promise.
2. Abrahamic: **Gen. 12:1-3** Abraham agreed to go to the land that God would show him, and God agreed to make Abraham a great nation. The covenant was repeated with Isaac (**Gen. 17:19**).

3. Mosaic: **Ex. 24:4-8** God brought the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt to the wilderness through a series of plagues. Three months later the children of Israel encamped at the base of Mt. Sinai where they were given the 10 Commandments. Later God gave Moses all the words of the covenant for the people. God gave the covenant; the people agreed to obey. This covenant is symbolized with the stone tablets.

4: Davidic: **II Sam. 7:12-13, Mt. 1:1** David was established as the seed through which Jesus, “the Son of David,” would be born in Bethlehem. As a descendent in the line of David, Jesus had the right to rule over God’s people.

5: New Covenant: **. 8:8-13, Mt. 26:28, 1 Cor. 11:25**. The death of Christ ushered in the new covenant under which we are justified through faith. Through Christ’s atoning shed blood, we have remission of sins. The Holy Spirit is given to us as a deposit for the things to come. The covenant is now written on our hearts, rather than on tablets of stone. The covenant now rests solely on the sacrificial work of Christ on the cross – the great High Priest. The just will live by faith; God holds us firm, through the work of Christ and the seal of the Holy Spirit, until the day of redemption.<sup>2</sup>

It is through trust in a *covenant-keeping God who cannot lie* that we experience an anchor for our souls – despite our circumstances.

“Be still (do not worry) and know that I am God;  
I will be exalted among the nations,  
I will be exalted in the earth” Psalm 46:10-11

“For nothing is impossible with God” Luke 1:37

“With man, this is impossible, but with God, all things are possible” Matthew 19:26

### **Chapter 2 Study Questions:**

1. How can the insight of the covenant-keeping God and His perfect character (He cannot lie) affect your ability to trust God?

2. What is it that you hold onto tightly? If you surrendered this area to a covenant-keeping God who cannot lie, how would that change your ability to experience the comfort of Christ? (God asks us to cry out to Him in our despair. Tell Him about it - let Him have it!)

3. Write a prayer of trust to your covenant-keeping God. Cast your worry upon Him. "Cast all your cares on Him for He cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7). In your written prayer include a promise from Scripture. As you meditate on his character, let God promise-you-through the storm. "You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you" (Is. 26:3).

4. For biblical balance, study and discuss the following:

- The trial isn't good. Many trials are the work of the evil one – intended for destruction, disunity, and/or discouragement.
- God's comfort through the trial is good.
- Trust in God is the single greatest vehicle for comfort – in any circumstance.
- There is no true comfort outside of basing your faith squarely in the two anchors of Hebrews 6:17-19a: Covenant-keeping God who cannot lie.

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<sup>2</sup>YunGab Choi, "To Comfort All Who Mourn: The Theological and Hermeneutical Function of Isaiah 61-62," *Trinity Journal* (2016): 251-255.

### Chapter 3: The Word

The Bible is also entitled The Word. Have you ever considered the reason? God speaks to us through the help of the Holy Spirit as we read and hear His inspired Word - the Bible – the living Word of God. Jesus is also referred to as the Word, the exact representation of God in human form – a symbol of God. As you read the Gospels and begin to understand the life and ministry of Christ on earth, you begin to understand God. God came to Earth at some point in history in visible form – He took on human flesh, became man, and dwelt among us (John 1:14). In other words, God communicates who He is through the written Word (the Bible) and through His Son in human form (the Word). That’s not all! God also speaks boldly, with authority and faith, through spoken Word. He called all creation into being through faith and the spoken Word: “By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command... (Hebrews 11:3a). God communicates his character and truths through His spoken Word, written Word, and life of His Son – The Word.

The Greek word Logos means a word, or act of speaking, a revelation of God to His people. Logos also encompasses the revelation of God through His Son, Jesus. The most famous use of Logos: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through Him all things were made. In Him was life, and that life was the light of men” (John 1:1, 2, 3a, 4). *Morning Has Broken*, a beautiful hymn written in 1931 by Eleonor Farjeon, depicts the first morning of creation. Creation came into being through the spoken Word (Genesis 1).

Morning has broken like the first morning  
Blackbird has spoken like the first bird.  
Praise for the singing! Praise for the morning!  
Praise for them springing fresh from the Word!

God demonstrates great respect for His revealed Word - spoken, written, and in human form. A word is a symbol. It carries meaning; it has tremendous power. The Lord asks us to be careful with our words:

- “Be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry” (James 1:19).
- “When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise (Proverbs 10:19).
- “Do not be rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven and you are on earth. Therefore, let your words be few” (Ecclesiastes 5:2).
- “The tongue has the power of life and death” (Proverbs 18:21).
- “But the tongue no man can tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison” (James 3:8)

Through the spoken word, you possess a two-edged sword: “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword...” (Hebrews 4:12). This is the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God (Ephesians 6:17). In Revelation 2:17 we see that a two-edged sword came out of Jesus’ mouth. In the Greek, the word for two-edged sword is *distomos* (di = two; *stomos* = mouth). God plants the Word in our hearts as we meditate on His truths. The two-edged sword occurs as we agree with God and proclaim His Words. When we come into agreement with God, this agreement releases His mighty power in the situation at hand.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>*Sparkling Gems from the Greek*, Rick Renner, Feb 22, 2017, accessed April 10, 2020 <https://renner.org/you-have-a-two-edged-sword/>

Are you beginning to understand the power of words? This is the reason we are admonished to think on that which is true, pure, honorable, just, and of good report (Phil. 4:8). Our thoughts produce our emotions, and eventually our behavior follows suit. The mind is the battlefield: The Word (God's truth) vs. the enemy's lies.

What does agreement with God's Word have to do with comfort? Faith is dialogic. *God's comfort is enacted in response to the spoken Word.* In other words, God responds to our faith. There is an action that makes way for God's power: *Speak up!* Speak in accordance with the will of God. Speak and pray Scripture. God taught us how to do this when he walked on earth in human flesh. Jesus commanded the wind and waves to be still. He proclaimed the lame to walk and the blind to see. He spoke boldly when confronting the unclean, commanding the evil spirit to leave (Mark 1:25). When on earth, Jesus taught a hyperbole: If you have faith like that of a mustard seed (tiny!), you can move the mountain (Matthew 17:20). Jesus taught the disciples that they would do even greater things than these (John 14:12-14). This is the power of agreeing with and speaking the Word of God in faith. The comfort of God follows.

The battleground is in the spirit realm. You may believe your conflict is with a person or situation, but the Bible teaches that we do not fight against flesh and blood, but against principalities, powers, and rulers of the darkness of this age (Ephesians 6:12). In other words, the spirit realm must be the focus of our prayer life – not the person or situation. The spirit realm is active but holds no ground nor authority against the spoken Word of God. Pray that the Lord will break off and silence the true enemy at work (i.e. spirit of fear, pride, rebellion, judgment) – proclaim it fearlessly and unapologetically.

At your point of need, cry out. Speak aloud with authority – claim the very Words of God. Come into Jesus' throne of grace with boldness. As a believer, Christ is in you; you are in Christ. Faith is dialogic - conversational, responsive, and relational. God's comfort is enacted as you speak back the Word of God. Use the voice of authority God gave you to unflinchingly proclaim His promises.

### **Chapter 2 Study Questions:**

1. What is your mountain?
2. As it pertains to the mountain you are facing, write a prayer to God with authority and boldness, claiming the promises from His Word. Pray it daily:
3. In the quietness of your spirit, ask the Lord to reveal words you have spoken (and believe) that are untrue and/or rash. Confess this as sin. Ask the Lord to break off the lies, and replace these words with His truth. Below, write down the truth God revealed to you. *What thought are you making obedient to the mind of Christ (Colossians 3:2)?*

