



## Discussion Guide

May 13, 2018

**Contrast:** The Church – God’s Comfort Zone

### II Corinthians 1:1-11

**Introduction:** Read II Corinthians 1:1-11

Historically, when the chips are down, the people of Christ’s church have seen times of hurt as opportunities for them to make God shine. The Roman Emperor Julian, writing in the fourth century, regretted the progress of Christianity because it pulled people away from the Roman gods. He said, *“Atheism [i.e. the Christian faith] has been specially advanced through the loving service rendered to strangers, and through their care for the burial of the dead. It is a scandal that there is not a single Jew who is a beggar, and that the godless Galileans care not only for their own poor but for ours as well; while those who belong to us look in vain for the help that we should render them.”* May we as God’s people continue to have the reputation as comfort givers in our hurting culture.

#### Discussion Questions

1. How do you most often characterize God in your mind? Is it easy or difficult for you to imagine him as caring, merciful, tender and compassionate – the God of all comfort?
2. Share a time that you feel God came through for you when you were in real need of comfort and help. How exactly did his comfort come to you? Through the Holy Spirit speaking in your heart and mind? A particular scripture? Just the right person who came along at just the right time? A sudden change in circumstances?
3. Bart suggested that asking “Why me?” in a time of suffering, though normal, misses the bigger opportunity to be the answer to someone else’s cry for help. Enduring a time of suffering with God’s help, can equip you to be a God-send in answer to someone’s prayer for comfort and help. Have you survived a crisis in your life, and found yourself equipped to help another person who was facing the same situation that you faced? Can you describe that time without disclosing the identity of who you are talking about?



4. In this passage we see that Paul was so grateful for the prayers of his friends during the near-death experience he faced while in Asia. The assurance of those prayers was a great emotional comfort to him, along with the deliverance that those prayers brought about. Could you share some of your needs within your group just now, and then move around the group praying for each other?

4. In 1:21-22, we see that God gives us His Holy Spirit as a down payment on the promises of eternity to come. How and when do you sense the presence of the reality of God's Spirit within you? How does he communicate with you? How do you know it is him that is comforting, prompting, and instructing as opposed to your own sense of things?

**Moving Forward:**

*We will let the Apostle Peter close out our discussion with an encouragement to let our comforting deeds in this world draw people to a knowledge of God.*

*Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.' (1 Peter 2:11-12)*

*Are there ways that your group could be a comfort to someone inside or outside our church family this week?*