



CARING

FOR ONE ANOTHER

An illustration of two white hands with blue cuffs, reaching upwards towards the text. The hands are positioned centrally below the subtitle. There are also several small, orange, dashed lines scattered around the central graphic, resembling sparks or decorative elements.

INTRODUCTION

by Lou Di Lorenzo

The God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

2 Corinthians 1: 3b-4

In the church of Jesus Christ, we have been called to tell the whole world of the gospel of Jesus and to disciple all who come to know Him as Lord. These disciples are to live radically different lifestyles from the community surrounding them. Yet as we live in this sin-stained and broken world, everyone - including Jesus' disciples - struggle with broken relationships, grief, hardship and hurts.

In this community, we are to care for one another, lift up the brokenhearted, bind their wounds, be with those who are mourning, show compassion and help where we are able. Caring for one another is not a specialist activity - it is part of the everyday life of a Christian.

At church, we do this in our personal relationships, life groups, ministry teams and through disciplers. We also come together at points of significant need with practical help, mutual support and prayer. The church teaches the truth of scripture, so that we can learn to live a holy life committed to God. This will also prepare us to face the times of trouble and hurt in our lives.

This study will help us learn from the Bible that God has made us to love, support and care for one another. May this study be a great blessing to you and those lives you are able to touch with God's care.



WHEN DEPRESSION HITS

Depression is a significant and growing phenomenon in our community today. The rate of depression doubles in the Western world roughly every 20 years. It affects everyone, including Christians.

CS Lewis was a well-known Christian who was honest enough to admit that he suffered from depression. He wrote that in those dark days, his communion with God was just so hard.

“Meanwhile, where is God? When you are happy, so happy that you have no sense of needing Him. If you remember yourself and turn to Him with gratitude and praise, you will be - or so it feels - welcomed with open arms. But go to Him when your need is desperate, when all other help is vain, and what do you find? A door slammed in your face and a sound of bolting and double bolting on the inside. After that, silence. You may as well turn away. The longer you wait, the more emphatic the silence will become.” A Grief Observed - CS Lewis

How can we care and not walk away from those having an episode of depression or ongoing depression?¹

Context

1. Who was the psalmist? Why did he write it?

¹ What is depression? **Depression always involves a depressed mood and a loss of pleasure** in all activities for at least two weeks with at least three possible symptoms, which may include tiredness, sleep problems, restlessness or agitation, change in appetite or weight, poor concentration, feelings of worthlessness or guilt, poor decision-making ability, withdrawal and suicidal thoughts.

Observation

2. What were the symptoms of the psalmist's depression? What were his reasons for feeling like this?²
3. In his depression, what did the psalmist encourage himself to do?

Meaning

4. People were mocking the psalmist, "Where is your God?" (verse 3). How is this similar to what Job's friends did? What should be our answer when we are in distress?

Application

5. What questions do you ask God at the lowest points in your life?
6. How did the psalmist answer his own question (verses 5 and 11)? What do you say to yourself when you are feeling depressed?

² Some forms of depression are caused through situations and stress, but others may be chemical or biological.

7. What has been helpful or unhelpful that others have said or done when you are feeling down or depressed³?

Help and Information

- Beyond Blue - www.beyondblue.org.au
- Christian clinical psychologists, counselors or psychiatrists - contact pastors or Janet Reeve
- Lifeline - 131 114 (free 24-hour service)

³ Read 1 Kings 19: 1-7 to see how God responded to the prophet Elijah when he had a period of depression.



WHEN GRIEF OVERWHELMS

If we indulge our tears, we cultivate self-pity. If we suppress our tears, we lose touch with our feelings. But if we pray our tears, we enter into sadnesses that integrate our sorrows with our Lord's sorrows and discover both the source of and the relief from our sadness.⁴

In a fallen world where loss and grief is guaranteed, we should do all we can to help ease the pain of those needing our support. We cannot do what only God can do, for He is the "God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction" (2 Corinthians 1: 3-4). What we can do is bring God's comfort to the afflicted as He uses us.

However, our inability to deal with the pain of our own loss and grief often becomes the biggest barrier for us to support others going through similar situations.

Context

1. What did the woman in this story lose? What challenges would she face?

2. We often reflect on the true context of life and the reality of heaven and God when we are confronted by the reality of death. In Psalm 90: 1-4, how did the psalmist see death within his view of God?

⁴ Peterson, Eugene H, *Psalms – Prayers of the Heart – A Lifeguide Bible Study*, Downers Grove, InterVarsity Press, 1987. Page 37.

Observation

3. The widow lost her husband and her only son. What questions might she have about God in regards to what she felt?

Meaning

4. Since Jesus reveals God to us, how might this story encourage us about God's attitude towards those who are hurting?

Application

5. What is so different about Jesus' compassion for the widow and your compassion for people?
6. When you suffered grief, how have others been helpful and supportive? How have they been the opposite?
7. The widow at Nain received a great miracle. How can this encourage those who do not experience such a miracle during a time of grief (John 11: 25-26)?



WHEN CONFLICT STRIKES

Conflicts between people are caused by human sinfulness, particularly our desire to be in charge and in control of our lives. Our selfish desires impact us personally, as well as our relationship with God and others.

When we live with Jesus in charge of our lives, we may still experience conflicts. However, this will enable us to persevere with courage and humility, and to be the peacemaker in conflicts.

Context

1. James was writing to believers about living faithfully in relationships. How do the passage in 3: 13-18 relate to 4: 1-12?

Observation

2. What is the connection between being “at war within” (verse 1) and conflicting with others?

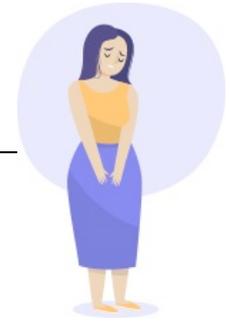
3. What causes conflicts in our lives? How should we deal with them (verses 1-3)?

Meaning

4. Why are the active commands (verses 7-12) so vital? How do they go against our own nature (verses 6-10)?

Application

5. Which commands (verses 7-10) is the most difficult for you? What are the reasons?
6. How do conflicts with others impact your relationship with God?
7. What practical steps can you take to gain an insight and understand someone else's feelings and perspectives before trying to resolve a conflict?
8. What have you learned from past and current conflicts?



WHEN DISAPPOINTMENT HURTS

Almost all of us will face disappointments at some point in parent-child relationships, dating or marriage life, or even singleness. Dealing with these heartfelt issues and supporting each other can lead to significant growth in following Jesus.

Context

Paul was writing to first century Christians on how the gospel should work out in our relationships.

1. How should our relationship with God impact our relationships with others?

Observation

2. How can a person who is not comfortable expressing their feelings become more comfortable to do so in important relationships (verse 12)?

Meaning

3. What is the difference between “bearing with one another” and “forgiving each other”? How can we know when to absorb a hurt or when we need to discuss it with the other person (verses 13-15)?

4. How should we deal with disappointments in relationships, including marriage (verses 18-19), parent-child (verses 20-21) and workplace (verses 22-25)? These scenarios are the specific outworkings of verses 12-17.

5. When should we distance ourselves from a person who has offended us? When should we try to work things out?

Application

6. Which qualities (verses 12-13) do you most need to work on? What will you do about this?

7. Is there a relationship in your life where you are not putting Christ first? What should you do about it?

8. How has God helped you through a relationship disappointment?

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS SERIES.

We do hope you have enjoyed studying this important series of pastoral care topics. They have been written to be practical, so that all of us can be more biblically informed on how to better care for one another. May you be a blessing to all those in your lives whom God has given you the privilege of being involved with in a caring and loving way.