



Links Players

ALL WE HAVE GAINED 5: COMFORT

For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. (2 Corinthians 1:5, ESV)

DESPITE YEARS AND YEARS OF PLAY, I can definitively say I have never been given a hug on the golf course. Well, that may not quite be right. I have certainly leaned into a hug with Tracy Hanson and a few other female friends in that same way that I shake hands with my male playing companions in those moments of thanks after a round. But I have never been given a hug when it mattered.

It's a funny picture, isn't it? As grown men and women, we can be a doleful sort right there in the middle of a round. We mourn over flubbed chip shots and grieve over yipped putts. Over and over we "lose opportunities" out there. Do it often enough, and what we need is not so much a lesson as consolation. There, I said it: We could really use a hug.

Hugs are a universal sign of comfort, aren't they? And we're quick to give them out to children with skinned knees and teenagers who've lost their first romance. But among adults, we're more reticent. Men will give "bro hugs," sure, but in friendship, not solace. So here's another thing that women are mostly better at—or at least we allow them to be.

I'm not going to dictate your method of comfort (though hugs really are good for this sort of thing). What I will say is, you'll need it. And especially if you're living the typical Christian life.

Now what do we mean when we say "a typical Christian life"? Well, don't think right here, right now, in the 21st century Western world. That's only been typical of one time and place. Instead think of Paul's first century Europe and Middle East, or think of today's persecuted church in China, Iran, and parts of India and Africa. What was typical then, what *is* typical there, is that the men and women of God share abundantly in Christ's sufferings. They pay a severe price simply for what they believe: that Jesus alone is our salvation.

In such arenas of suffering, though in the suffering we incur in others ways too, we need even more than a hug. We need the tenacious assurance that God is with us. We need comfort in our soul that the suffering we endure now will be worth it all one day. This is the comfort Paul offered the Corinthians; this is the comfort of Christ for us, yet another divine gift we have gained by knowing him.

Opening questions How easily discouraged are you on the golf course? What causes this discouragement? Have others tried to help you get out of your funk, or are you usually left to do this alone?

READING Psalm 71:19-21; Ecclesiastes 4:1-3; 2 Corinthians 1:3-7

Out of trouble (Psalm 71)

What troubles in life has God "made you to see"? Did you call on him to help you out of these troubles? If so, in what ways did you see him answer your cry so that you were comforted?

A desperate call for comfort (Ecclesiastes 4)

This is a despairing passage based on the writer's observations of the world around him. What troubled, un comforted people do you see in our world today? As followers of Jesus, what role do we have in providing comfort for these people?

The communion of comfort (2 Corinthians 1)

How does this passage improve your answer to the question just asked above? How does Christ's comfort of us empower our comforting others?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2021 Links Players International. A video introduction for this study may be found here: <https://youtu.be/Md4ynPDNUx4>.