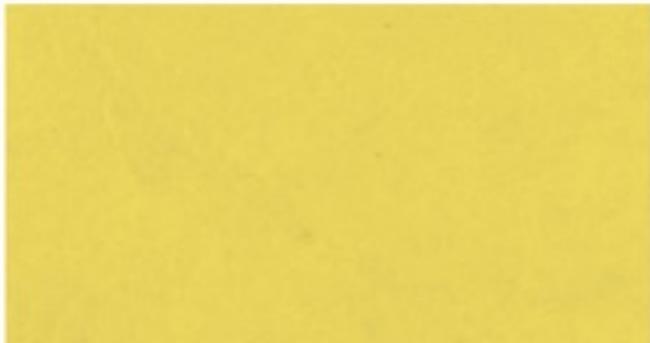




*Week 3*

**THE BEATITUDES**







*Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted...*

.....

Life on earth is difficult, and we often find ourselves hanging on by a thread. In a world filled with pain and sorrow, we hope for goodness, meaning, purpose, and comfort. That is why, perhaps, one of the most clung-to promises we will engage with in this study is Jesus' second blessing.

This beatitude is for all who grieve... grieve loss, grieve injury, grieve their sin, grieve the effects of sin...

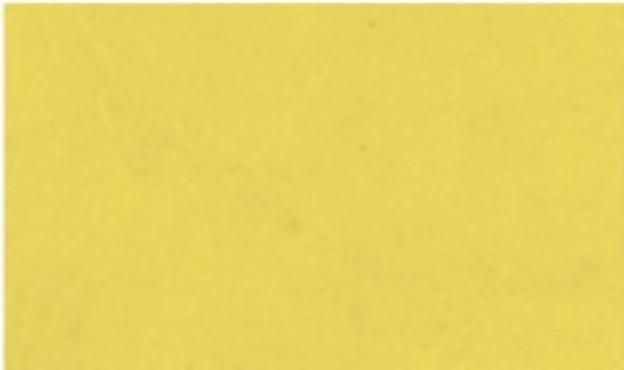
It is for those who weep... those who have been most deeply hurt and who so eagerly long for Christ to come and bring relief.

With a simple proclamation, Jesus offers good news to a sad state... speaks healing into sorrow... and soothes the aching heart with his presence and his promise. He longs for us to know and sense that relief is already here, present with us every moment and that ultimately, comfort will come in full.

But this isn't a blessing solely reserved for the person struggling through difficult circumstances. It is a directive for all who experience godly sorrow for the countless ways in which they have failed to live up to the perfect standards of God. It is for those who know their poverty of spirit. It is for all of us, the hopelessly broken.

For those who suffer, for those who grieve their own sin, comfort is given; purpose is revealed. The deepest parts of our pain are addressed, and Christ communicates life into each and every one. He looks directly at our grief, and He assures us that there will be beauty in place of ashes. For the downcast, He bends down. For those in despair, He speaks hope. For those in anguish, He grants peace and for the sinner, He saves.

Surely our relief has come. It came in the person of Christ, is here even now, and will be felt in full soon enough.



## Day 1: On Mourning

### PERSONAL INVENTORY

How would you guess that the first beatitude (poverty of spirit) and the second beatitude (mourning) might be related to one another?

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### CONSIDER

In Week 2, we looked at the first beatitude—*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*. We will begin Week 3 by going back over Matthew 5:3 in your Bible. *Circle key words and make notes in your margins* regarding things that the Lord showed you in your study last week. Not only will this process serve as a review, but, as we will see, the Beatitudes have a progression or connection about them that this process will bring to light. You will recognize them building upon each other as we move through the study. Looking back at the previous week will help as we move forward to the next beatitude.

Once you have finished reviewing Matthew 5:3, **read verse 4**.

Today we will look at what it means to mourn, and we will also consider the way that the second beatitude progresses from the first.

*Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.*

The first and second beatitudes compliment one another in that when you truly recognize your spiritual poverty, your deep awareness will cause you to grieve over your sin. That is the primary focus of the second beatitude—a grief over one's own sin. Though the concept of mourning extends beyond that point (the extension will be discussed on a different day this week), grief over one's own sin must be where the understanding of this beatitude begins.

John Stott explains this deduction in the following way, "It is plain from the context that those here promised comfort are not primarily those who mourn the loss of a loved one, but those who mourn the loss of their innocence, their righteousness, their self-respect. It is not the sorrow of bereavement to which

Christ refers, but the sorrow of repentance” (40-41). It is a sorrow that comes from a place of realizing the degree to which you have grieved the heart of the Father. Mourning flows out of a place of understanding our spiritual poverty.

Grief over sin is the spiritual response to the recognition of our transgressions. Look again at what Stott writes about the second beatitude, “This is the second stage of spiritual blessing. It is one thing to be spiritually poor and acknowledge it; it is another to grieve and to mourn over it. Or, in more theological language, confession is one thing, contrition is another” (41). We might be able to come to a mental awareness of our deficiencies and our dire need for salvation. But if we can get to a place where it actually grieves our heart, like it grieves the heart of the Father, there is deeper blessing to be found there.

The distinguishing feature that deepens this beatitude is the element of emotion. D. A. Carson says, “Mourning can be understood as the emotional counterpart to poverty of spirit” (19). R. T. Kendall also highlights the emotional aspect in this way, “The Greek word that is translated ‘mourn’ is *pentheo*—meaning grief or sorrow of heart that is usually expressed by tears” (29).

A grief over sin that evokes emotion, a grief that might even evoke tears, can only come from a place of sincere regret and repentance. It comes from feeling the weight of your sin and being heartbroken that you would grieve the heart of God. Kendall goes on to explain and illustrate this concept, “Mourning is an extension of brokenness. It is filling out the first beatitude—it is talking about a deeper sense of sin. It is not unlike what Isaiah experienced when he saw the glory of the Lord...” (Kendall 29).

**Look back at Isaiah 6:1-7** (We looked at this passage on Day 3 of Week 2).

What does Isaiah say in response to God’s holiness?

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How do his words display his grief?

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In Ezra 9 and 10 we see another example of mourning over sin where Ezra addresses the sin of the Israelites in their prohibited marriages.

**Read Ezra 9:13-10:1.** Describe Ezra's emotional reaction to the weight of the people's sin.

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Obviously, this is not a simple acknowledgement of wrong-doing or a flippant attempt at making peace, but is instead a gut-wrenching and dire response to sin. The response displays incredible angst and sorrow over the unfaithfulness of God's people.

Aside from the promise of being comforted, which we will look at on Days 4 & 5, there is a beautiful dynamic that unfolds as a heart is grieved by sin. This dynamic is a desire to be changed. It is a reaction against the sin that once tempted... a distaste for what was once alluring. Here is an additional blessing for those who mourn—aside from promised comfort—an aversion to the things that will derail you from the ways of God. This aversion is an outcome of heart-felt repentance.

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**Look at 2 Corinthians 7:10-11.** What are the effects of true godly sorrow?

When heart and mind are connected in acknowledging truth, we see the wondrous result of repentance and growth. This connection is only made possible through the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit alone can enable your heart to feel the weight of your sin.

Because of this, we will now engage with the *Personal Application* section by spending concentrated time in prayer, seeking the Holy Spirit's illumination in our life.

*When heart and mind are connected in acknowledging truth, we see the wondrous result of repentance and growth.*

**PERSONAL APPLICATION**

Spend a few minutes asking the Lord to show you the areas of your life that break his heart. Ask him to give you a heart that mirrors his. Ask him to allow you to feel the weight of your sin and to actually mourn it. Make some notes about what you sense from the Lord.

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Coming out of last week’s study, specifically Day 3 “Pleading for Poverty,” what emotions can you identify as you feel the weight of your sin?

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How do you practice repentance and contrition?

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When have you ever experienced godly sorrow, maybe even to the point of tears?

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**PRAYER**

Prompt — James 4:9

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## Day 2: Broader Considerations

### PERSONAL INVENTORY

Aside from your own sin, what causes you to mourn?

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### CONSIDER

Though the second beatitude has a specific focus on mourning with regard to contrition of sin, the beatitude intentionally references a passage in Isaiah 61. The implications of connecting these two passages are that the basis for mourning is automatically broadened beyond the grief one has over their own sin. Because of the context of Isaiah's passage, the mourning and grieving is consequently extended beyond grief over the individual's sin into the realm of grief over the effects of sin... grief over the implications of a fallen people living in a fallen world. In his mercy, Christ acknowledged the way to blessing through grieving our own sin but compassionately recognized the many other causes of grief that we endure in this broken world. That is the primary focus of today's study—mourning the *effects* of sin. We will walk through Isaiah 61:1-4 to see the implications of Christ's reference.

#### Read Isaiah 61:1-4.

Upon reading this passage, you might quickly recognize the shared concepts in the two different books. There is parallel language in Matthew 5:4 and Isaiah 61:1-4, with common themes and threads.

Make a note of some of the common words/themes here:

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By using phrases similar to “the poor,” “the brokenhearted,” “comfort all who mourn,” and “gladness into mourning,” Jesus would have caused his audience to connect his teaching with the Old Testament prophecy. His referencing this passage would have signaled the fulfillment of the promise.

Robert Guelich explains it in the following way, “Matthew opens Jesus’ teaching ministry with this deliberate allusion to Isaiah 61 in the Beatitudes. By proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom in terms of Isaiah 61, Jesus simultaneously fulfills its promise” (74).

**Read the first two lines of Isaiah 61:1.**

Isaiah 61 prophesies the coming Messiah. It begins by discussing the power his message will have... that his words will give hope, freedom, and healing. His words will have power and give life. The Israelites were awaiting a Messiah to do all of the things mentioned in Isaiah 61:1-4 and Christ’s reference to the passage meant that he had arrived to do them. Guelich explains that, “Jesus came to announce and effect the Kingdom, God’s redemptive reign, now. The fulfillment of Isaiah 61:1 includes the present. The good news of Jesus’ proclamation was that God acted in time and space; the Kingdom has come. The Beatitude announces that God is entering now into a new relationship of blessing, one anticipated in the Old Testament promise, with those turning to him in desperation” (76-77).

**Now read the rest of Isaiah 61:1.**

For whom is the good news and healing?

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**Continue by reading Isaiah 61:2-4.**

How does verse 4 help you to understand the causes of the Israelites’ mourning?

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Not only does this connection display Christ’s fulfillment of Isaiah 61:1, but it also expands mourning to include the universal effects of sin. When Jesus used the phrase “those who mourn,” he used it as a continuation of the previous beatitude. This means that in its primary context, the beatitude must be viewed in light of individual sin.

However, because of the context of the Isaiah reference, the possible causes of mourning are intentionally broadened to include national and personal loss, despair, destruction, pain, and helplessness.

Isaiah 61:2-4 is clearly not just talking about grief over personal sin, but rather grief over the results of sin in a fallen world. The weight of loss and devastation are the causes of mourning here. Fallen people living in a broken world carry with them the burdens of the effects of sin. People carry the pain of trauma from things such as death, divorce, infidelity, sickness, injustice, persecution... Just to name a few. This can be a heavy burden and from time to time, a crushing one.

In Christ's kindness, he acknowledges that he knows this—as he references Isaiah 61. He knows the sadness and the burdens that we carry. He knows the weight of them himself. We have a compassionate Savior who understands, acknowledges, validates, and feels our grief as we experience the fallout of sin.

*We have a compassionate Savior who understands, acknowledges, validates, and feels our grief as we experience the fallout of sin.*

**Look up Isaiah 53:1-4.** How does this passage demonstrate Christ's understanding of our grief?

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Throughout his life on earth, Christ suffered. He was hunted as a small child by Herod... Despised and rejected as an adult. And finally, he was betrayed, mocked, beaten, humiliated, and forsaken as he died a criminal's death on the cross.

Christ knows pain and grief. He understands each of the sorrows we endure. In tenderness, he promises blessing to those who mourn as well.

**Continue reading verses 5-12.** Take comfort in knowing that his grief became our salvation.

We can see specific examples of this sensitivity to the effects of sin in Christ while he walked on the earth. **Look up the following verses** to see examples of Jesus mourning. Write down what aspect of sin in a fallen world caused Jesus to grieve.

Luke 19:41-44

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John 11:33-36

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Though earthly life will be filled with mourning, both over sin and circumstances, as believers, we have hope for gladness.

**Read Isaiah 61:3 again.**

These verses point to what we can hope for. Reversal is coming. Transformation is coming. We know it is the way of the Lord to do the impossible. He promises gladness and we believe him for it. End today's *Consider* section by looking at another place in Scripture where mourning is mentioned.

**Read Psalm 30:11-12.** What has the Lord done for David in this Psalm?

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We can rest assuredly on this hope that is promised and we can begin praising him and thanking him, as is stated in verse 12, before we even know exactly what he will do.

**PERSONAL APPLICATION**

Jesus' words fulfill Isaiah 61 and speak life/reversal into that time and space and this time and space. How do those words speak life to you right now—in your time and space?

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**PRAYER**

Prompt — Romans 3:23-24

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## *Day 3: Treasure in Trials*

### **PERSONAL INVENTORY**

When have you experienced suffering that might have felt like a blessing?

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### **CONSIDER**

On Day 1, we discussed the blessing of mourning first and foremost over our sin. We determined that true godly sorrow drives us deeper into relationship with God. That, in and of itself, is enough of a blessing. Relationship with God is the primary comfort—both now and forever. On Day 2, we expanded upon the concept by looking at a reference that was intentionally made in the wording Jesus used. We saw that though the paramount theme in Matthew 5:4 is the mourning over sin, the reference to Isaiah 61 shows us that other causes of mourning can find blessing as well. Together, the passages showed that circumstances will be reversed, that comfort has come, and that comfort is coming.

Today, we will follow the thread of mourning caused by the effects of sin... specifically trials and suffering. A great deal of mourning comes from places of suffering. We must be aware that there is blessing and comfort here and now for this kind of mourning. Suffering awakens our grief and unearths the places where we are most raw. Blessing can be found here as the Lord gently addresses the deepest parts of who we are and speaks life and hope into these places of despair.

We will look today at suffering and trials by dividing aspects of suffering into sections. R.T. Kendall writes on suffering within the context of mourning. He separates suffering into two causes and two kinds (32). Sectioning off different aspects of suffering allows us to process our circumstances more clearly, in light of causes and purposes. We will start with causes.

## 2 Causes of Suffering

The first division we will look at is the two causes of suffering. In addressing the causes, Kendall simply states, “We suffer for two reasons: when we are in the right, and when we are wrong” (32). Look through the listed scriptures to see how God’s Word speaks to this truth.

### 1) In the Right

Use the following verses to describe how and/or why it is that we must suffer for being in the right.

1 Peter 2:20-23

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1 Peter 4:14

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Philippians 1:29

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1 Thessalonians 3:3

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### 2) In the Wrong

Look up the following verses to see how and why we suffer for doing wrong.

Hebrews 12:11

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Jeremiah 31:18-20

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We can see that either way, suffering is inevitable. However, when we suffer in the right, blessing for us and glory for God are the anticipated and joyful results.

## 2 Kinds of Suffering

Kendall further breaks down suffering into two more categories . He names these categories “effectual” and “ineffectual” (29). They are categories in *perspective only*. Because we know that God works all things together for his glory and our good (Romans 8:28), we are certain that all suffering is “effectual”. There are times, however, that we fail to look for God’s blessing in our difficulties.

When we can see trials as fruitful and productive, versus unfruitful and unproductive, it allows us to not only better endure the hardship, but also instills a sense of gratitude for the miraculous ways in which the Lord works.

Let's look at Kendall's perceived categories.

### 1) Ineffectual

Kendall describes ineffectual suffering as suffering that seems to have no bearing on the growth or spiritual maturity of a person. In reality, the suffering does accomplish its purpose by the providence of God, but the person just fails to see it. Ineffectual suffering could describe major traumatic life events that felt merely harmful and never seemed to reveal good. It can also describe everyday irritations and frustrations that appear to deteriorate our sanity but never seem to produce any fruit. Both of these scenarios are equally destructive. One flattens a person with a single blow and no hope of recovery; the other is a slow, quiet, and possibly unrealized withering away of joy and hope. Both end in despair. But there is another way to suffer...

### 2) Effectual

Effectual suffering looks for purpose and providence in the midst of the trial. Whether the suffering is devastating and life-altering, or if it is minor, continual, and wearisome, effectual suffering offers hope and purpose, and eventually is life-giving.

**Read James 1:2.** What does Scripture tell us to do when we encounter trials?

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**Continue reading James 1:3-4.** What is the purpose of encountering trials?

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For those that mourn, this kind of suffering is seen as an occasion from God. It is for their good and for his glory. They trust the hand of the Father and surrender their heart and understanding to the process the Lord has put before them. They take each step forward with a resolve and deference that only faith can produce. Kendall explains, "The best thing you can do when in the midst of trial is to say, 'God, I know you have allowed this trial for a reason. I pray for grace to take this trial with both hands, so that I will receive the maximum blessing You intend for me in this'" (30).

Kendall goes on to explain his own process during a season of suffering. He says that he came to a place where he decided that, "Either James 1:2 is true, or it isn't." He said that he "had the presence of mind to *dignify* this trial" (30).

If we can trust that a good God will only give us what is best for us, we can believe that even in our suffering, good awaits us there.

**Look at Romans 5:3-5.** What does suffering produce?

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**Look at 1 Peter 1:6-7.** What does suffering prove?

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Suffering is always difficult but the Word of God does promise miraculous results. As we walk through life, through the hardships, suffering, sin, and mourning, we

can so easily miss the goodness that the Lord has for us in the midst of these trials and the wonders that he has for us at the end of them. Kendall says it this way, "It does not mean that you feel joy. You only consider it joy. What you initially despise, you eventually treasure" (31). When you position yourself to endure suffering effectually and you walk faithfully, seeking the Lord, in time, you see God's goodness and blessing in and through the suffering.

*When you position yourself to endure suffering effectually and you walk faithfully, seeking the Lord, in time, you see God's goodness and blessing in and through the suffering.*

### PERSONAL APPLICATION

What significant suffering have you endured? Did you see it as effectual or ineffectual?

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What less significant “sufferings” do you tend to overlook on a continual basis? Maybe it’s an everyday annoyance, sadness, or frustration... consider minor daily issues that wear you down.

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Consider your present circumstances. Can you “dignify a trial” that you are currently experiencing?

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**PRAYER**

Prompt — 2 Corinthians 12:7

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## *Day 4: The Present Comfort*

### **PERSONAL INVENTORY**

What are some ways that you have experienced comfort during times of suffering?

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### **CONSIDER**

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. There is great longing for the day when there will be no more sadness, but there is also great solace in knowing that as believers, we have Divine comfort extended to us here and now.

### **Comfort for Repentant Sinners**

For the grief of the repentant sinner, there is extended immediate and gracious comfort through the atonement given in Christ Jesus.

**Look at Acts 3:18-20.** What does it say follows repentance?

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Martin Lloyd-Jones explains this comfort in the following way, “If we truly mourn, we shall rejoice, we shall be made happy, we shall be comforted. For it is when a man sees himself in this unutterable hopelessness that the Holy Spirit reveals unto him the Lord Jesus Christ as his perfect satisfaction. Through the Spirit he sees that Christ has died for his sins and is standing as his advocate in the presence of God. He sees in Him the perfect provision that God has made and immediately he is comforted. That is the astounding thing about the Christian life. Your great sorrow leads to joy, and without the sorrow there is no joy” (49).

*Jesus is the great comfort for the grief of our sin.*

Jesus is the great comfort for the grief of our sin. He was the consolation that Israel had longed for and the answer to thousands of years worth of prayers—as Simeon declared when Jesus was presented in the temple (Luke 2:25). He was the answer to their great longing then, as well as to our great longing today. The person of Christ and the works of Christ are our great comfort now and always.

In the sovereign and good grace of God, the comfort was supplied and extended before the awareness of our need was even realized. Before we could possibly know our need for Christ, the Lord sent his Son to bestow an immediate comfort for the sinner who mourns, turns, and repents. He provided salvation for that very moment. The sweetness of this comfort reaches beyond the deepest grief and shame of the repentant sinner. Look at what D. A. Carson says about this experience, “But he will be comforted! And what comfort. There is no comfort or joy that can compare with what God gives to those who mourn. These people exchange the sackcloth of mourning for a garment of praise, the ashes of grief for the oil of gladness” (20). Comfort, peace, healing, and wholeness are promised to those who mourn their sin. The sorrow, disappointment, shame, and emptiness of sin is replaced with gladness and praise. This is the immediate comfort for the repentant sinner.

### **Comfort for the Effects of Sin**

There is comfort, too, in the midst of the trials and grief. As believers, we know that there is a supernatural comfort extended to us even in the most difficult of circumstances. In faith, we can find treasures right in the middle of our trials. Blessings such as trust, restoration, and even the very presence of the Holy Spirit, are offered right now to those who mourn.

#### *The Treasure of His Presence*

The Lord promises to be with us always, but there often is a special note to those who are suffering. Perhaps the blessing is a more acute awareness of what is always true. There can be no sweeter occurrence than this experience of knowing the Lord to be so very close beside you. The comfort found in this second beatitude is meant to allude to this promised closeness. Kendall explains the wording in this way, “The Greek word is the verbal form of *parakletos*—Jesus’ name for the Holy Spirit. ... Various translations include Comforter (KJV), Counselor (NIV), Helper (ESV), Advocate (NEB). *Parakletos* means ‘one who comes alongside’—taking the place of Jesus. What Jesus was and is, so is also the Holy Spirit: He comes alongside to uphold us”(33).

Read Psalm 34:18. What does the Lord promise to the broken-hearted?

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*The Treasure of Your Growth*

All things are purposed. Our good, all-knowing, all-powerful Father does what is best for us. In his mercy, he grows us up in maturity so as to become more and more like Christ. Being able to look back and see where he has stretched us and grown our faith gives us encouragement and boldness to continue. Seasons are ordained. Trials are ordained. We can believe in full faith that nothing is wasted and nothing escapes God's purposes.

Every aspect of a trial is under the sovereign hand of God. He reigns over each part of it. We can rest even in the middle of our suffering knowing there is purpose in the trial and meaning in every moment of the experience. Whether we can sense it or not, he is growing us and moving us forward. Read what Kendall says about enduring a trial. He says, "Every trial has its own built in time-span. The trial will end. While it lasts, we think it will go on forever. Wrong. It will end. God who started it will end it. This is why James said, 'Let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing' (James 1:4 ESV)... don't try to rush it" (33).

**Read 1 Peter 5:10.** What does God promise to do after you have endured your suffering?

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There is a myriad of treasured promises in the Word of God for those who mourn. Spend some time in Psalm 119:25-32 and pull out anything that you can see as blessings that might emerge from grieving.

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*A Comfort that Keeps Going*

A last note on comfort is that the gift of comfort extends beyond what we receive directly from the Father. There is a fellowship that comes in suffering...

**Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-7.**

What can we see happen as we look to God for comfort?

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**PERSONAL APPLICATION**

How have you experienced comfort from the Lord?

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How have you been comforted by the people of God?

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How have you extended to others the comfort you have received?

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**PRAYER**

Prompt — 2 Corinthians 1:5

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Day 5: The Coming Comfort

PERSONAL INVENTORY

What do you hope heavenly comfort involves?

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CONSIDER

Mourners are blessed in that they are comforted now by the working of the Holy Spirit and the fellowship of believers. They also, however, look forward to a day when all will be as it should be. Sin will be no more. Death and sadness will be a thing of the past. Gladness and rejoicing will replace suffering and grieving. This is the hope and conviction of every believer. Look at how D. A. Carson explains our future comfort, "But even this great comfort will be surpassed: one day in a new heaven and new earth, the kingdom of God will be consummated, and God himself will wipe away all the tears from the eyes of those who once mourned. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things will have passed away (Rev. 21:4)" (20).

Part of our comfort now lies in the hope we have for the future. **Read Romans 8:18-23.** *Underline in your Bible* anything mentioned that we can look forward to in future glory. List at least three of the things below.

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**Continue reading verses 24-25.** What helps us as we wait?

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How do these verses promise comfort?

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We can see allusions in other places in Scripture to the comfort that is to come. Look at the following verses and answer the questions.

Isaiah 25:8- What will happen to the tears?

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Isaiah 35:10- What will replace sorrow and sighing?

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Jeremiah 31:12- What will the people of God be like?

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Rev 21:4- What will have passed away?

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What do you think it means in Romans 8:21 that creation will “be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God”?

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What is the comfort of this promise?

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**PRAYER**

Prompt — Isaiah 25:8-9

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**WRAP UP THE WEEK**

Re-write the second beatitude in your own words

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**PREPARE TO DISCUSS**

1) What do repentance and contrition look like in your life?

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2) Isaiah 61:3 foretells of great reversals. What are you longing to see God reverse?

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3) Have you ever experienced effectual suffering?

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4) Describe a time when you have experienced the truth of one of the verses listed on Day 4 about suffering and grief.

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5) Which aspect of eternal comfort do you most long for? (Use a specific scripture to answer)

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