**Planning to LEAD an Exercise of Comfort**

Teachers, a Power Point presentation is provided online under July 29th Enjoying God’s Comfort.

If you do not or cannot use Power Point, you could walk them through the first 3 slides but list the responses on Slide 4 and 5 on a marker board.

* Slide #1

Let’s be doers of the Word:

“All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort. 4 He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others.” 2 Corinthians 1:3-14

“Weep with those who weep.” Romans 12:15b

* Slide #2

Think of a time when you felt sad, hurt, alone, or disappointed – a time when you needed comfort.

This needs to be a memory that doesn’t have anything to do with someone in this room – a time when you needed comfort but no one in the room caused your hurt.

* Slide #3

*There was a time when I felt sad/hurt/alone/disappointed. I needed comfort because . . .*

1. Share with one or two people at your table – just for sake of time.
2. The other partners share words of comfort.
3. Then take turns sharing, giving and receiving comfort
* Slide #4

Here are responses that DO NOT comfort:

* Analysis – The reason that probably happened was . . .
* Advice – If I were you, I would . . .
* Criticism – If you just didn’t . . .
* Pep Talk – You’re going to get through it. God will bring good out of this situation.
* Comparison – I know what you mean. There was this time when I . . .
* Facts or Logic – Lots of people go through tough times.
* Neglect – Change the subject or leave the moment

This is what NOT to say when someone is hurting.

* Slide #5

*There was a time when I felt sad/hurt/alone/disappointed.* *I needed comfort because . . .*

Comforting Responses do sound like:

* I am so sorry that you went through that.
* I care about you and I’m sad that happened.
* It hurts me to think about . . .
* I feel compassion for you because . . .
* I am sad to know that you . . .
* My heart is heavy when I think about how you . . .

These responses ARE what comfort sounds like.

**Scripted Outline for Facilitation of Experiencing the Word**

As you plan to lead this session on giving comfort, use the following outline to guide your preparation.

1. **Give the context for this exercise. Tell the participants WHY we are going to do this exercise.**

Set up the exercise so that all participants are clear about the exercise, and the appropriate guidelines have been set for a successful experience and everyone is clear about the intended purpose.

Say: *Today we want to practice an important skill that will help us in ALL of our relationships. Whether we’re at home, at work, or in church we’re going to need this skill.*

*We’re going to learn how to comfort - what to say when people experience the hard things that happen in life. We need to know what to say when life brings those inevitable hard times.*

*2 Corinthians 1:3 tells us to comfort one another with the same comfort that God gives to us. I’d like for you to remember a time that was difficult, challenging and hard for you – and God comforted you.*

*Did he bring a person to share words of comfort?*

*Did he comfort you with a verse of Scripture?*

*Did he comfort you directly in a moment of prayer?*

*Did he comfort you with a particular song or time of worship?*

*Remember the gratitude that you felt as God brought comfort to you and now let’s do what the Bible says in 2 Corinthians 1:3. He comforted us so that we can comfort others. So let’s do that now.*

*What if we actually DID this Bible verse right here in the room? I wonder what good things might happen if we weren’t just hearers of the Word, but we did the Word in this very moment. That’s a part of what James meant when we said we’re not to be only hearers of Word, but doers. (James 1:22)*

1. **Explain the exercise. Help participants know what to do.**

Say: *I’d like for each of you think of a time when you felt sad/hurt/alone or disappointed in your life. Choose a time that was hard for you, but it didn’t have anything to do with anyone in this room – no one in this room caused your hurt. It might be a time that was hard at school, work, or with extended family. It might a time when you lost a loved one or received some bad news about your health. It might be a time when you were sad and because of circumstances, no one new or no one was around to care for you.*

Facilitator: Give your own example painful memory that is appropriate for the age of all participants. Model an appropriate level of vulnerability for the room. Make your example brief — three or four sentences!

If you’re referring to a sentence completion, be sure to model it in your example.

(For instance, if you’re using the sentence stem: “There was a time when I felt sad/hurt/alone or disappointed. I needed comfort because . . .”)

You’ll want to model what it sounds like to do this exercise, so write your BRIEF example that you plan to share...

Say: *After you’ve thought of your memory, we’re going to share these memories and then practice responding with words of comfort.*

1. **Set the class members up for success. Clarify what to say and what NOT to say.**

Help the class members have a successful experience by helping them know:

*  What you want them to say
*  What you want them to do
*  What you do NOT want them to do or say

For this exercise, give guidelines about HOW to comfort one another.

Say: *In just a few minutes, we’re going to share our memories and then comfort each other. We’re going to do what the Bible verses say: We’re going to weep with those who weep. We’re going to comfort one another just like God comforts us.*

*But first, we need to make sure we know HOW to COMFORT each other.*

(Go through each example on the presentation slide with a little humor. Give some light-hearted examples of what NOT to do)

*Sometimes, it’s harder than it sounds.*

*What if I had just broken up with my boyfriend – we dated for a long time and now we’ve broken up.*

*Would any of these responses be a blessing?*

*Here are responses that DO NOT comfort:*

* *Analysis – The reason that probably happened was . . .*
* *Advice – If I were you, I would . . .*
* *Criticism – If you just didn’t . . .*
* *Pep Talk – You’re going to get through it. God will bring good out of this situation.*
* *Comparison – I know what you mean. There was this time when I . . .*
* *Facts or Logic – Lots of people go through tough times.*
* *Neglect – Change the subject or leave the moment*

*This is what NOT to say when someone is hurting.*

This helps the participants relax and is a sensitive way to set appropriate boundaries for this exercise. It also encourages the participants to use the script later and practice the skill effectively.

*Now, if these responses DON’T sound like comfort, what DO we say?*

*It’s also helpful to have some sentence starters that give us an idea of what comfort sounds like.*

Walk through each of these examples of comforting responses briefly – use a sincere tone of voice.

*Comforting Responses*

* I am so sorry that you went through that.
* I care about you and I’m sad that happened.
* It hurts me to think about . . .
* I feel compassion for you because . . .
* I am sad to know that you . . .
* My heart is heavy when I think about how you . . .

*These responses ARE what comfort sounds like.*

Refer to the presentation slide so that participants know how to begin their sharing and what comfort DOES NOT sound like.

In just a moment, you’re going to share with a partner about the time when you were sad, alone or disappointed. You need to know what to say. Your partner will be mourning, so they need mourning in return. They need you to live out Romans 12:15b. Your partner will be talking about a need for comfort, so you will want to give words of comfort and watch God bring blessing to you both.

Help participants know who will go first?

Say: *I’d like everyone to divide up into groups of 2 or 3 people. I’d like for one person in the group to go first. You share something that was sad or painful and then let the others comfort you. Then switch roles—so that everyone has a turn to share and to comfort.*

1. **Debrief and Close**

Help class members remember WHY we just did the exercise and HOW it will help them in the future. Here’s what you might say as you close.

Say: *As you were mourning and comforting, you experienced some of the blessing God promised. You comforted another person with the same comfort that God has provided for you. You lived out 2 Corinthians 1:3*

*You also just experienced another half of a Bible verse. You lived out Romans 12:15b. You didn’t just hear the Word. You did it! Imagine what that did to the heart of God? His people weren’t just hearing Bible verses; they were doing them. Imagine how much it blesses the heart of the Father when He knows that He has written the Word, preserved the Word, protected the Word and his people are actually experiencing His Word. In fact, one of the ways we LOVE the Lord is by DOING HIS BOOK.*

*Comforting one another is a skill that we are called to live out because the painful things in life are inevitable. Here’s the amazing thing. Although we can’t keep painful things from happening to the people we care about, we CAN help them feel less alone.*