

Been There, Done That

Scripture Reading — 2 Corinthians 1:3-7

God . . . comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. — 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

Parents who have suffered the death of a child have a special understanding of one another's pain. The same can be said of war veterans, chemotherapy patients, abuse survivors, and recovering addicts. Empathy is a tie that binds.

The apostle Paul explains that there can be a higher purpose in our suffering: we can pass along to others the comfort we have received from God. In a world where the focus is increasingly on our individual needs, God's plan is that we would have compassion for one another. God wants us to look beyond ourselves to the needs of the people around us, being like Jesus to them.

The first time I was diagnosed with melanoma, I had to register with a large cancer center in Los Angeles. I felt sad and overwhelmed as I watched dozens of other patients in the waiting room—many had lost their hair, were pushing walkers, or appeared frail and weak. I was now a member of a club I had never sought to join.

But now I am better equipped to comfort cancer patients with the same comfort I have received from God. I can testify that I've "been there, done that"—and God has never left my side, despite a recurrence.

Our comfort abounds in Christ, and in his strength we can pass along God's love and comfort to others.

Prayer

Lord, you have been so good to us. In times of trouble, your Spirit comes near and comforts us. May we give generously of your comfort as we meet others who are hurting. Amen.

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