

EMPATHY TRAINING

***He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others.
(2 Corinthians 1:4)***

One of the things that a season of suffering can do for us is make us more “empathetic” towards others going through some trial. I was reminded of this watching a podcast last night of two ministers describing periods of burnout in their lives. The one minister said prior to his burnout, he was very critical and judgemental at times of ministers who battled with burnout but now he is very empathetic toward people experiencing burnout. I had a similar discovery after going through my four-year ordeal recovering from a chronic illness. I had never been in hospital prior to this. I had sympathy for people going through health issues, but it was not at the level of empathy. It takes going through suffering oneself in order to move beyond sympathy and have true empathy for what others are going through. Since my illness, having empathy has allowed me to pastor much more differently and authentically with people going through chronic health issues.

This pandemic has been a season of suffering and trial for us to say the least. We have suffered with feelings of loss of control, fear, worry, anxiety, isolation, loneliness, disappointment, and loss just to name a few. We may have been blessed to not suffer from the physical effects of Covid-19, but we have definitely had our share of emotional, spiritual and perhaps financial hurt through this. As believers, God has been a source of comfort for us in this time of suffering. Paul reminds believers of this truth in 2 Corinthians 1:3:

All praise to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort.

Think of the many ways that God in His mercy has comforted you during this pandemic:

- He has mercifully provided for all your needs in this time of uncertainty.
- He may have comforted you through an online worship service, placing a hymn on your heart, speaking to you through a daily devotional, putting your heart back to a place of peace after praying.
- He may have divinely arranged for somebody to call you and comfort you in a time of need.
- Or you may have felt comforted by being aware of His presence in a time of aloneness.

If we wrote out a list of all the ways that God has comforted us during this pandemic we would be amazed and in awe of God’s mercy and care.

As Paul points out in 2 *Corinthians* 1, God has a desire that comes with all of this comfort He has provided for us. This desire that God has is in verse 4:

**HE COMFORTS US IN ALL OUR TROUBLES
SO THAT WE CAN COMFORT OTHERS.**

Paul points out here that when God comforts us in our times of trouble, He is wanting us to develop “empathy” toward others who are going through similar trials. Maybe prior to this pandemic we had never experienced troubles in life such as:

- Isolation and aloneness,
- Insomnia due to worry,
- Fear, worry or panic attacks,
- Loss or grief due to cancelled events or celebrations,
- Loss of freedom and social contact.

We have all experienced these things and so much more as a result of this pandemic. We have also received God’s comfort and care through our struggles. God wants us to use this blessing we have experienced to be empathetic of others. It is not only important that we learn empathy through this period of suffering but also to understand how God has comforted us. Verse 4 says that we must use this newfound empathy to give the same comfort to others that God has given to us:

- That values them as God values us,
- That doesn’t judge or criticize them as God didn’t judge us,
- That gives them the gift of our time as God has given to us,
- That reveals love, grace, sacrifice and genuine care as God has shown us.

We all have been blessed by God’s comfort through the course of this pandemic. We need to understand that as we go through this season of trial one of the traits that God is developing in us is “empathy” for what others are going through. With this gift of “empathy” God is calling us to reach out to comfort others in this time of suffering. We all know people who are suffering and need comfort in these difficult times. May we do for others what God has done for us.

BE A SOURCE OF GOD’S COMFORT FOR THEM

Be blessed by God’s comfort toward you and be a blessing to others by showing God’s comfort.

Keep Safe & God Bless

Pastor Dean