

Lesson 161

TEXT Genesis 28:10-19; 32:24-30; 33:1-4

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURES Isaiah 61:1-3; 2 Corinthians 1:3-7

OBJECTIVE The students will be able to explain that God in His love offers comfort during trying times to those who desire to please Him.

KEY VERSE FOR ANSWER I, even I, am he that comforteth you. — Isaiah 51:12

KEY VERSE FOR SEARCH Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort. — 2 Corinthians 1:3

ANSWER TITLE: How Can I Comfort Her?
SEARCH TITLE: Comfort

REFERENCE INFORMATION

According to Webster’s Dictionary, *comfort* means “to soothe in distress or sorrow; ease the misery or grief of; bring consolation or hope.” One of the many attributes of God is the fact that He extends comfort to all. In the New Testament, Jesus describes the Third Person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, as the Comforter (John 14:16). In the preceding Scripture, Jesus was talking to His disciples and, indeed, the children of God, who alone can receive the Comforter. However, God extends comfort to all, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). Our first record in the Bible of God’s extending comfort to man was to a murderer. Cain knew that he deserved to die and feared that he would be slain. God said that vengeance would

be taken on the one who killed Cain and He put a mark on Cain so that he would be identified and no one could say that they didn’t know it was Cain. This sign of God’s protection certainly must have been a comfort to Cain.

Our study of Jacob, in relation to comfort, is encouraging. We find God was faithful to consider and care for a man whose heart desired to follow God, although his ways and methods were far from perfect. So it was that Isaac, Jacob’s father, blessed Jacob as he departed alone for Haran. And so it was that God confirmed the covenant blessing to Jacob in Genesis 28:13-15, comforting him as he had to leave his father and mother for distant relatives and a land strange to him.

YOUR OPENER

Comfort

TEXT: Genesis 28:10-19; 32:24-30; 33:1-4

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURES: Isaiah 61:1-3; 2 Corinthians 1:3-7

KEY VERSE: Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort. — 2 Corinthians 1:3

Webster tells us the word *comfort* is derived from the Latin *com* meaning “with” and *fortis* meaning “strength.” Hence the first meaning of the verb is “to give strength and hope; to cheer.” Another meaning is “to ease the grief or trouble of; console.” In 2 Corinthians 1:5, the much persecuted Paul the Apostle says, “For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.” Our study today is aimed at aiding us in being recipients of God’s assistance, support, solace, and consolation: in one word—comfort.

RESPONSES

1. Discuss with your students the thoughts and fears that might easily be present in such a situation, particularly if, like Jacob, you had spent many years living at home with your parents. Your students should be aware that Haran, where he was journeying to, was a great distance away. He would be alone, and the way could have been perilous. Probably he had never met the relatives he was going to visit. The idea here is to be able to appreciate Jacob’s need for comfort at this time.

2. The students should refer to the lesson text for a description of Jacob’s dream. It should be noted that God revealed Himself personally to Jacob, and that God comforted Jacob with His promise. Ask your students how they know that God’s presence and words to Jacob that night were a real comfort to him. Your students should see that when Jacob awoke, he was a transformed man. From a condition of undoubted loneliness and uncertainty, he arose with the knowledge that God was directing his pathway and would prosper his journey.

3. As your students mention times when they received comfort, stress that “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights” (James 1:17). It is also an opportunity to stress the importance of giving thanks. “In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you” (1 Thessalonians 5:18). Encourage several students to share their experiences.

1. Genesis 27:41-46 and 28:1,2 indicate that Jacob left the home of his parents, Isaac and Rebekah, for two reasons: He was running from the anger of his brother Esau whom he had defrauded, and he was going to find a wife from among his mother’s family. Why do you suppose Jacob was in need of comfort at this time?

2. Jacob went northward to Bethel, traveling about fifty miles the first day. No doubt he was very tired as he gathered stones for his pillows. How did God provide comfort that night as Jacob slept with the earth for his bed and the heavens for his canopy?

3. Recall a time of disappointment and the blessing that God provided which resulted in your comfort. Consider sharing this experience with the class on Sunday.

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION NOTES

4. In order to gain an appreciation of Jacob's need for further comfort during the next twenty years of his life, read in Genesis, chapters 29-31, the story of his stay with his uncle. How did God comfort Jacob during his stay with Laban?

5. Are there conditions which we must meet to be assured of God's comfort? Refer to the following Scriptures and list the various conditions which Jacob met.

- Genesis 28:7
- Genesis 28:22
- Genesis 31:13
- Genesis 32:10

6. How long did Jacob wrestle with the angel? What blessing and comfort did he receive as a result of this prevailing?

7. At some time in one's life, it may appear that all is gone: friends, family, job, etc. How can one find comfort during these times? See Job 23:8-12.

8. During Jesus' ministry, He said to a woman who came to Him, "Daughter, be of good comfort" (Matthew 9:22). What attribute was exercised to secure this blessing? He also promised comfort to His disciples when He said, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you" (John 14:18). In what ways does Jesus comfort people today?

4. The students should note that God comforted Jacob during his stay with his uncle by giving him a family of his own with many sons—sons who were to be the heads of the future tribes of Israel. God fulfilled His promise of Genesis 28:15 to be with Jacob and bless him. Even his uncle Laban realized this as noted in Genesis 30:27. Everyday blessings are one means of God's comfort.

5. Genesis 28:7 — obedience
Genesis 28:22 — tithing
Genesis 31:13 — hearing God's instructions
Genesis 32:10 — humility
Discuss with your students why all the foregoing are necessary if they wish to be assured of God's comfort.

6. He wrestled until the break of day. Use this prayer of Jacob's to impress upon the students the need for prevailing prayer in order to be assured of God's comfort. Jacob the supplanter, became Israel, a prince of God. Esau and his band of four hundred men came to meet Jacob in peace. Jacob and his family and flocks were preserved. What a blessing! What comfort!

7. Using this Scripture, your students will have an opportunity to reflect upon the trials that came to Job. It seemed he had nothing left in his life that offered him comfort or spiritual support. But where did he find comfort? In his implicit trust in God. He found that God and His Word were enough. Your students will conclude that rarely will we be called to face the extremity of circumstances which came to Job. But in whatever situation or trouble we face, we can profit by following his example.

8. The woman exercised her faith in Jesus to obtain the healing that she desired. Your students should see that faith is the basis for our hope and comfort. Jesus comforts His people today through God's Word, through the ministration of the Holy Spirit, through fellowship of the saints, the encouragement of godly people, the example of those who have won a spiritual battle, etc. As you conclude your lesson, discuss with the students the depths of comfort which God makes possible. Our greatest comfort is summed up in these verses: "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:17,18).

YOUR WRAP-UP

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

Is it necessary to deserve comfort, in order for God to give it? Explain your answer.

How can we be assured of God's comfort in time of need?

List a number of ways in which one can (a) receive comfort and (b) give comfort.

What comfort did God offer Jacob after he had left his home, family, and friends?

Did you ever face a move or some other new situation in life where you needed that same type of comfort? Explain. How did God help you?

In our ANSWER story, what was the benefit that Pam received by being saved? Do you think this is an important benefit for a young person? Can you think of some other situations where it might be needed?

THINGS TO DO

Plan a class project to provide comfort for someone. This project could take many forms. Some suggestions follow:

- Have a card shower for a sick friend.
- Write a letter to a prisoner.
- Visit someone in the hospital.
- Set aside several hours each week to cultivate a one-to-one friendship with a Sunday school child or young person who has either no father or no mother at home.
- "Adopt" a homeless child or orphan.
- Write a class letter of encouragement to your pastor.
- Visit an elderly widow or widower.
- Share and help in a Sunday school student's crisis or problem.

Bring a child's blanket or stuffed animal to class. Discuss how many times children look to these things for comfort. In our Christian life we can look to God for our comfort.

Bring a sympathy card, a plate of cookies, and a potted plant to class. Ask your students what these have in common. Bring out that they are all items commonly used to express sympathy or to offer comfort. Point out

that these reflect the limitations of our human abilities to extend comfort, but that God offers a comfort from Above.

Divide the class into several small groups to plan and act out a skit which would illustrate different situations that could occur at home, school, or in the neighborhood where comfort might be offered or welcomed. The different aspects of comfort should be emphasized:
 To strengthen — encourage or uplift someone who may be failing
 To aid — give assistance or help
 Relieve distress — point out the good or positive
 Console — listen to and offer sympathy

Answers for ANSWER

It's a Big Help!

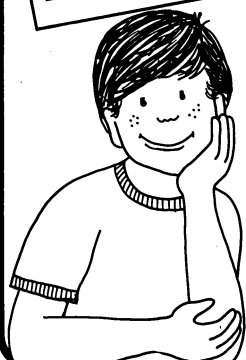
God offers comfort to all who love and obey Him. Below are three verses concerning God and comfort. Cross out all the Q's, X's and Z's and write the verses on the lines provided. Can you memorize them?

IQZWIQXXLZLQNOZXTQLEAXZVEZYQOQXCOM
ZFOORTZLEZSQS;XZIQWQIZLQLCOZMQEZXT
ZOQYQOZU. QXJZDOXHQZNXZ 14:18

I WILL NOT LEAVE YOU
COMFORTLESS; I WILL
COME TO YOU.
John 14:18

IQEVZEXNI,QAZMQHEZTHXAZTXCOZMQFOZ
RXTZEGTZHGYQOZXU.
IXZOSXAZQIZAXQHYZ 51:12

I, EVEN I, AM HE
THAT COMFORTETH
YOU.
Isaiah 51:12



QZWXHQEXRZEFXORZEQCOMZFZOQRTQYOUQR
ZSELXVQESZTOGXETHQZERAAXNZDOEDIZFY
OZNXEQANQZTHZEXR.
I XZTHQXKEZSXSAXQLZOXNIXAZNQZS 5:11

WHEREFORE COMFORT
YOURSELVES TOGETHER,
AND EDIFY ONE
ANOTHER.
I THESSALONIANS 5:11