

Sermon Topic: Building a Culture of CARING, Rev Sng Chong Hui

*“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, **the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort**, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ. If we are distressed, it is for your salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort.” – 2 Corinthians 1:3-7*

1) The Shelter of Caring Christians

- a. The complicated structures of life on earth that we invest much time and energy in building will come down and be washed away by the tides of times, and will cause great despair.
 - i. Only caring relationships last and support you when your sandcastles get washed away.
- b. The Church has to have a *culture of caring*, especially since the Christian life is a constant battle.
- c. Small groups within the Church provide shelter for members. (*“It is in the shelter of each other that people live” – an Irish proverb*)
- d. Those who need to be comforted have to be willing to receive comfort instead of isolating themselves in fear of weakness, vulnerability, or neediness (tool used by Satan to shut off the flow of care and shelter).
- e. Those who need to provide comfort to others have to be willing to do it as well.

2) God Provides the Shelter of Mutual Care

- a. God always places people in the body of Christ to comfort you, build you up, and strengthen you, so that we *in turn can comfort others*.
- b. God comforts us to make us comforters, not to make us comfortable.
- c. We must allow our light to shine and comfort to flow into others, so that we can alleviate their pain.

3) How Do We Become The Shelter

- a. By receiving God’s comfort
 - i. God does not give us pain/suffering/trouble without a divine purpose, and we learn to rely on God (2 Corinthians 1:9).
 - ii. We learn how to place faith in God rather than in the flesh.

- iii. To receive God's comfort, we must be willing and open to it.
- b. By communicating God's faithfulness
 - i. The storm is silenced not by our own efforts, but by God who comforts us, and we have to give him credit for it.
 - ii. This way, others who are suffering will also remember to turn to God for comfort and to calm the storms for them too.
- c. By sharing God's Word
 - i. God's Word should be their anchor during distressing times, reminding them of God's promises and faithfulness, and guiding them with wisdom to tide through the difficult times.
- d. By praying together
 - i. Praying together reminds them that they are not alone in asking God to rescue them.

Questions for Discussion

1. According to the passage, what does God do for our afflictions? (Think: List some problems Christians often have that God can help with.)
2. Do all people suffer for the same reasons? List 3 other passages that talk about suffering.
3. What problems/sufferings had Paul endured? (Run cross-references, and describe what happened). What did Paul learn about the character of God from these afflictions?
4. How do our afflictions help qualify us to comfort others?
5. N. Fidel claims that "the existence of suffering proves God does not exist because a merciful God would not allow suffering." How would you respond? Prepare a Biblical answer.
6. Do you have people in your life who really care for you? If you do, can you name them and recall those times when they afforded you real caring support in your times of great need? If you don't have such caring relationships, what is preventing you from developing them?
7. The Church is fundamentally people in caring relationships. Are you making the most of Christian fellowship? What part do you play or contribute to build a culture of caring?