

Becoming Real & Removing Our Masks



2 Corinthians 1:4

Who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted.

I. T.E.A.M.

- T. - Together
- E. - Everyone/Each
- A. - Accomplishes
- M. - More

Proverbs 11:14 - Where there is not counsel, the people fall, but in the multitude of counselors there is safety.

Proverbs 13:14 - The law of the wise is a fountain of life, to turn one away from the snares of death.

Proverbs 13:20 - He who walks with wise men will be wise but the companion of fools will be destroyed.

Proverbs 27:17 - As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.

We need each other. No lone rangers - think don't need anybody's counsel. Isolated.. Lonely Christians are often defeated Christians. A loving and wise friend often sees dangers and detours hidden from us.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 - Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up.

There are times when we are weak and times when we are strong. Sometimes, we give support to others and sometimes we need support from others. We belong to each other and we need each other.

Philippians 1:27 - Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in **one spirit**, with **one mind** striving together for the faith of the gospel. (**working side by side for the faith of the gospel**)

Genuine unity of heart and mind - necessity of oneness to win spiritual battles - love of others -

A oneness of heart and affection - In John 17, Jesus prayed for us to be one - (one in heart and mind).

Living in this world as citizens of another world (the heavenly kingdom) - our conduct reveal our citizenship to the world - not standing alone in isolation - united for a common goal - God never intended believers to be alone -

The Kingdom of God is about relationships of love. We were created to love God and each other.

II. How God Comforts Us

Isaiah 51:12 - I, even I, am He who comforts you, Who are you that you should be afraid of a man who will die, and of the son of a man who will be made like grass?

This is a message of comfort to us - not to fear others (only men).

Isaiah 61:1 - The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to **heal the brokenhearted**, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound.

Lamentations 3:21-25 - This I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope. Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, says my soul, Therefore I hope in Him! The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul who seeks Him.

Isaiah 66:13 - As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you...



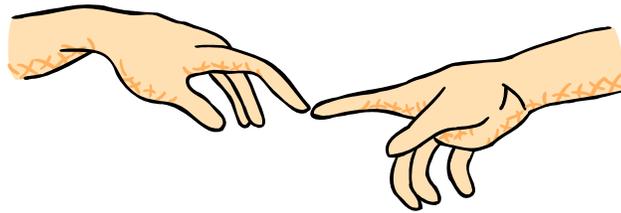
The source of all comfort in the midst of our troubles is God Himself - He is the originator of compassion and the God of all comfort. Comfort could also be translated as compassion and mercy. God provides that to us. He comes beside us in time of need and encourages us. We receive this comfort so we in turn can be enabled to comfort others. God's comfort that we receive from Him flows through us to others. "We are not comforted to be comfortable but to be comforters" (Believers Bible Commentary).

The qualification to be a comforter/encourager of others is to have personally experienced God's comfort and encouragement. And thus, we must be living in close fellowship with God.

2 Corinthians 1:3-5 - Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ.

III. How We Comfort Others

The Walking Wounded Need Comfort



2 Corinthians 7:6,7,13 - Nevertheless God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus and not only by his coming, but also by the consolation with which he was comforted in you, when he told us of your earnest desire, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced even more...Therefore we have been exceedingly comforted in your comfort. And we rejoiced exceedingly more for the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by you all.

Notice God comforts the downcast - not the high minded or haughty.

God stepped in and comforted Paul by the coming of Titus. He was comforted and refreshed by his friend and the report of his friend.

All of us need comfort and refreshment.

How can we comfort others:

Bear one another's burdens (Gal 6:2)

Encourage one another (Heb 10:25)

Minister to one another (1 Peter 4:10-11)

“Everyone reaches, but not everyone touches. Reaching is instinctive; but for the most part touching is learned. In touching we give and receive, talk and listen, share ourselves and see into another. And not everyone can do that or will do it.” - Gail MacDonald

Unless we choose to get close enough to others with concern and compassion, our talk and words mean nothing. Those who are hurting (the walking wounded) know when we are not really with them and are just saying words.

Enjoyment of People

Openness to share self graciously with others through all lives ups and downs

Participating in lives of others to bless, encourage and lift up

Can happen anywhere

Do you freely share your thoughts and feelings with others, allowing them to be an encouragement to you will letting God use your life to benefit others?

Apathetic and self-absorbed or involved with the lives of others?

IV. Being Real

Being real makes a team able to accomplish more, able to comfort -
Being real - transparent - dropping masks -

Genuine, not artificial

Are we trying to do in order to be? We must learn to be in order to do.

We only have so much time on this earth - (Things that have happened in one year to ladies - what will happen in the next year?)
What do we want to do with that time? How do we want to be known? How can we comfort others? How do we receive the comfort of Christ? How do we live with eternity in view?

What type of people are you attracted to?
Those who are real? Who are just themselves?

Mask = a cover used for disguise or conceal (pretense) (facades and defenses - people erect to protect themselves) (disguise one's true character or intentions) (cover for protection)

We all wear masks. We hide from each other. It's part of our fallenness.

See people in church smiling, talking, but never really removing their masks and revealing themselves.

Shocked when a marriage falls apart of "nice" people or a woman who everyone likes tries to commit suicide - walking wounded

Can we remove our masks, reveal our core feelings and fears, the sins we struggle with and areas in which we are having trouble

growing? What would happen if we did? If we were not happy plastic people?

Facial masks - when you peel off the mask, do you find the real you?

Need a safe place to peel off the mask - where no one condemns you

Maybe we start by acknowledging the reality of who we are to God and opening ourselves to Him to become real

To understand someone else's pain and comfort them, we must first face and embrace our own pain. It enables us to listen with empathy, rather than judgment, when people open the door of their soul and show us their wounds.

We must first experience pain to be real enough to comfort others and gain their trust. If you are real, you may not be able to relieve another person's pain or change their perceptions about it, but you can come alongside them and hold them, provide comfort and understanding, without judgment and assist them in growing in their relationship with God.



The Velveteen Rabbit - illustrates what it means to be authentic

Do we have an ache in our souls for our lives to count, to live lives of meaning - escape the routine - to become real.

There is a price to be paid in becoming real.
We are exposed -
However, being authentic attracts others to us.
Our witness is enhanced.
We are transparent and God shines through.

It is love, deep genuine love that makes us real.

As we experience God's love and live transparent and authentic lives, we become real. And then we can love people through the ugliness of life into the beauty of experiencing God in their life and circumstances.

Are you carrying burdens that have become too heavy to carry alone? Are you willing to share the weight with your Christian sisters? Why or why not? If you have, what has been the result?

James 5:16 - Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

Proverbs 28:13 - He who covers His sin will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.

Do you find it difficult to openly confess sins to one another? Why or why not?

What fears do you have about sharing your sins and struggles with other believers?

Transparent - having the property of transmitting rays of light through its substance so that bodies situated beyond or behind can be distinctly seen...easily seen through.

Hebrews 4:13 - And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

Define “naked and open” or “naked and exposed”.

Do we hide behind masks trying to cover up what is inside us so that we show others a certain image?

Do we block the rays that would allow others to see our “real selves”?

When we live behind masks, our deepest needs are unrecognized and unmet by others. We can become isolated, alone, and shallow in our relationships.

What are some masks women hide behind?

What makes dropping a mask so difficult?

What would happen if we became real, if we removed our masks and were no longer happy plastic people? Would others see Jesus in us?