



# HelpFinder™

## BIBLE

*God's Word at your  
point of need*



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*All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.*

2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17

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# Read This First

## Welcome to the *HelpFinder Bible!*

Think back to yesterday. Can you recall the range of emotions you experienced? Did you feel angry, happy, discouraged, tired? Were you frustrated? lonely? excited? worried? scared? embarrassed? bitter? Did you feel inadequate? Were you grieving? Did someone hurt your feelings? Were you criticized or ignored? Did you end the day with regrets? Did you long to rekindle a relationship with a friend or spouse? Did you long to feel the presence of God? Were you wondering how to pray more effectively?

These questions point to just a few of the many life-needs that are identified in the *HelpFinder Bible*. Now you have a place to look up those needs and instantly see where you can find help from the Bible for each one. When you are wrestling with a need, issue, or emotion, simply look it up in the HelpFinder Index at the front of the Bible. Under each topic you will find questions that help you focus on the kind of help you are looking for, many Scripture passages that show how the Bible offers help and encouragement, and application comments that will help you apply the Bible to your specific situation.

Our lives are filled with real human needs and issues. These needs, issues, and the emotions that come with them are what make up everyday life. No one is exempt from them! On some days, one need will leap to the front page of our lives to challenge us. On another day, another will surface—or perhaps several! The exciting news is that God’s Word holds answers and guidance for all the needs you are facing. Before you

## READ THIS FIRST

were ever born, God knew about you and the particular needs you would have. And because he created you, he fully understands each of those needs. That's one of the reasons God's Word offers help and hope for you.

Turn to the HelpFinder Index now and begin an exciting journey through the Bible that will offer answers to your deepest needs and questions. Use the *HelpFinder Bible* as a resource guide, a devotional Bible, or a topical tool kit, directing you to places where God's Word can touch you, heal you, and guide you. A lifetime of learning and adventure awaits as you search this Bible and discover how wonderfully our loving God meets your daily needs.

## Features of the *HelpFinder Bible*

### HELPFINDER INDEX

This is the most important feature in this Bible. Found here at the front immediately after this user's guide, the HelpFinder Index makes it easy to discover what the Bible says about well over a hundred life-needs topics. Each topic is listed alphabetically and dealt with thoroughly, offering a biblical summary, several questions that help put your needs into words, and a list of Bible passages to explore. The index also tells you which Bible passages have expanded notes in the Bible text and shows you a series of Bible promises related to each topic. In all, the HelpFinder Index thoroughly covers more than one hundred life-needs topics, gives links for many other related topics, and puts thousands of connected Bible verses and application notes at your fingertips.

### IN-TEXT FEATURES

#### *Application Notes*

Hundreds of notes are placed at appropriate places in the Bible text and offer application, insights, inspiration, and encouragement. Each note focuses on one of the topics covered in the HelpFinder Index, and quite a few topics are dealt with in several notes. The page numbers for these in-text notes are listed in the HelpFinder Index (at the front of the Bible) and in the Quick Topic Finder (at the back of the Bible).

#### *Book Introductions*

Complete Bible book introductions include the following helpful features:

- An overview of the book, emphasizing its core message and key themes
- An outline of the book that lists the main topics and where they can be found
- A list of key verses in the book

***Promises from God***

Knowing God's promises to us can deepen our faith, and the *HelpFinder Bible* highlights nearly two hundred of them. As you are reading, these promises draw your attention to important faith-building truths from God's Word. These and additional Bible promise texts are identified under each topic in the HelpFinder Index and the Quick Topic Finder.

**OTHER HELPS AT THE BACK OF THE BIBLE*****Quick Topic Finder***

This smaller index at the back of the Bible offers a bird's-eye view of all the topics covered in the HelpFinder Index and gives the page numbers in the HelpFinder Index where each topic is handled in much greater depth. The Quick Topic Finder also gives page numbers for the in-text application notes and offers additional Bible promise texts.

***Great Bible Passages to Study and Memorize***

This list points to some of the Bible's greatest passages and reflects on the importance of studying and memorizing longer Scripture texts to ensure that we keep the passages we read in their larger context.

***Great Bible Stories for Discovering God's Truth***

This list gives easy access to the great stories of the Bible and offers reflection on how God uses stories to reveal his truth and help us to connect it to our lives.

# HelpFinder Index

**WHEN GOD INSPIRED THE BIBLE**, he was thinking of you and your needs. And because God made you, he knows you and what you need to make your life all it should be. He put the answers to meet your needs in the Bible. But wouldn't you like an easy way to find God's answers? You have found it here, in this HelpFinder index. This is a place to find Bible help for daily needs, arranged alphabetically by topics. Each topic includes (1) a summary, (2) several questions that help put your need into words, (3) a list of Bible verses to look up that will speak directly to your particular issue, and (4) often a short comment to help apply those verses to your life. In addition, some of the Bible verses are paired with a corresponding application note on the page indicated. We hope that this HelpFinder index gives you a lifetime of joy as you search God's Word and see how wonderfully he wants to meet your daily needs.

## Addiction *See also Desires; Guilt; Lust; Temptation*

Who in his right mind would volunteer to become a slave, chained to a life of bondage? Yet that's just what addiction is: self-imposed slavery, selling oneself into bondage to habit or a substance. While we typically think of addiction as a problem related to drugs or alcohol, there are other addictions that can also be destructive. We may become addicted to work, addicted to gambling, or addicted to pornography. We all have our addictions, whether they are "minor" bad habits or dangerous dependencies. One thing we are all dangerously addicted to is sin. When it comes to rejecting God's way of living and doing what seems best to us—well, we are hooked.

So how do we break the chains of our sin addiction? Ironically, it is by submitting to the control of God and his Holy Spirit. We are still controlled, but his control is always for our benefit and health, not our destruction. God's transforming power is the only thing that can ultimately heal us from all addictions.

### Can addiction involve more than substance abuse?

- **2 PETER 2:19** | *[These false teachers] promise freedom, but they themselves are slaves of sin and corruption. For you are a slave to whatever controls you. (See note on page 1136.)*

The key to addiction is control. What controls you? Whenever we have a master, we are slaves. Addiction is relinquishing ourselves to the control of something or someone else.

- **ROMANS 3:23** | *For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard.*
- **COLOSSIANS 1:22** | *You are holy and blameless as you stand before him without a single fault.*
- **1 CORINTHIANS 6:11** | *But you were cleansed; you were made holy; you were made right with God.*

Sin is the most deeply ingrained addiction of every human being. You can't go to a clinic to overcome sin once and for all. But you can go to a person—Jesus Christ, the Son of God—to help you resist the sin in your life and to completely forgive what's left. When he forgives you, he looks at you as though you have never sinned, and when your life on earth is over, he will give you eternal life where you will be forever free from sin.

- **ROMANS 8:5, 7** | *Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things. . . . For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God's laws, and it never will.*

You can be addicted to your own sinful nature, which can dominate your thoughts and actions.

- **MATTHEW 19:21-22** | *Jesus told him, "If you want to be perfect, go and sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." But when the young man heard this, he went away sad, for he had many possessions.*

Possessions can be addictive.

- **ROMANS 1:26-27** | *That is why God abandoned them to their shameful desires. Even the women turned against the natural way to have sex and instead indulged in sex with each other. And the men, instead of having normal sexual relations with women, burned with lust for each other.*

Sexual perversions can be addictive.

- **PROVERBS 21:17** | *Those who love pleasure become poor; those who love wine and luxury will never be rich.*

Pleasure, a luxurious lifestyle, and wealth can be addictive.

- **PSALM 39:6** | *All our busy rushing ends in nothing.*
- **MARK 6:31** | *Then Jesus said, "Let's go off by ourselves to a quiet place and rest awhile."*

Work can be addictive. Make sure you find time to rest and refresh your body and spirit.

## Does the Bible say anything about drugs?

- **1 CORINTHIANS 6:12-13** | *You say, “I am allowed to do anything”—but not everything is good for you. And even though “I am allowed to do anything,” I must not become a slave to anything. . . . [Our bodies] were made for the Lord, and the Lord cares about our bodies.*
- **1 CORINTHIANS 6:19-20** | *Don’t you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.*
- **1 CORINTHIANS 10:31** | *So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.*

The Bible doesn’t specifically mention the kind of drug addiction common among many people today, but it does address putting things into your body that are harmful and that impair your ability to function. Taking drugs to get a high produces an artificial happiness or escape that is a cheap substitute for the true joy of being filled by the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit controls your life, your joy is authentic and contagious.

## Can I be devoted to God and other things too? Is that addiction?

- **MATTHEW 6:24** | *“No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other.”*  
Devotion and addiction are different, but devotion can lead to addiction. You can be devoted to family and friends and to helping other people. You can be devoted to a worthy cause. This shows you care. But devotion becomes addiction when it so absorbs you that God is no longer your first priority and distracts you from spending time with him. You must evaluate who or what is most important to you. A clue to determining this is to see where you spend most of your time.

## What is the best way to be free from my addictions and bad habits?

- **ROMANS 6:16** | *Don’t you realize that you become the slave of whatever you choose to obey? You can be a slave to sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God, which leads to righteous living.*  
Submission is a choice. We daily stand at the crossroads, choosing sinful ways or God’s way. Choose wisely.
- **ROMANS 12:2** | *Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.*
- **1 JOHN 4:4** | *You belong to God, my dear children. You have already won a victory . . . because the Spirit who lives in you is greater than the spirit who lives in the world.*
- **1 JOHN 5:4-5** | *Every child of God defeats this evil world, and we achieve this victory through our faith. And who can win this battle against the world? Only those who believe that Jesus is the Son of God.*

Freedom from addiction comes as you change your focus and the way you think. You do this by trusting Christ to transform you and empower you to resist temptation. While it is healthy and important to seek the help of others, with God’s help, you have the ultimate power to overcome addiction. It’s hard to focus on Christ when your eyes are fixed on this world. It’s hard to focus on worldliness when your eyes are fixed on Christ.

## If we shouldn’t let anything control us, why do we submit to the Holy Spirit’s control?

- **GALATIANS 5:22-23** | *But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. (See note on page 1063.)*
- **ROMANS 8:6** | *Letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace.*

God’s control is the only kind of control that produces completely positive results.

PROMISE FROM GOD

- **JOHN 8:36** | *So if the Son sets you free, you are truly free.*

## Anxiety *See also Grief; Hope; Pain; Stress; Worry*

Pressures in our lives can build and pull us in different directions. These pressures pull against our sense of well-being, and anxiety begins to overwhelm us. Trying to do too much work with too little time or too few resources can stretch us beyond our capacity. Trying to cope with the financial demands of life without adequate income can make us begin to feel desperate. Difficulties in marital relationships, in parent-child relationships, or in work relationships can lead to deep anxiety and a sense of hopelessness. What is the answer? We need a perspective that comes from God. And we also need the help of wise counselors and friends who God can use to bring us his presence, wisdom, and hope.

### Should I be surprised by the anxiety I am experiencing in my life?

- **JOHN 16:33** | *“I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.”*

Jesus warned us to expect stress and trouble in this life. This world is filled with trials and sorrows that generate deep seated anxiety. The key to dealing with anxiety is to not be surprised when it comes, but to learn how to respond when it comes. While there are many healthy and positive ways to handle anxiety, never neglect the spiritual help the Holy Spirit promises to provide if you ask.

### What are some causes of anxiety?

- **GENESIS 3:6, 23** | *So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband . . . and he ate it, too. . . . So the LORD God banished them from the Garden of Eden.*
- **GENESIS 44:18** | *Then Judah stepped forward and said, “Please, my lord, let your servant say just one word to you. Please, do not be angry with me, even though you are as powerful as Pharaoh himself.” (See note on Stress on page 44.)*
- **2 SAMUEL 11:4; 12:13-14** | *Then David sent messengers to get her; and when she came to the palace, he slept with her. . . . Nathan replied, “. . . the LORD has forgiven you, and you won’t die for this sin. Nevertheless . . . your child will die.”*
- **LUKE 22:56-62** | *Finally she said, “This man was one of Jesus’ followers!” But Peter denied it. “Woman,” he said, “I don’t even know him!” . . . At that moment the Lord turned and looked at Peter. . . . And Peter left the courtyard, weeping bitterly.*

Anxiety can have roots in things we have done in the past. When we sin, we can bring anxiety along with sin’s painful consequences into our lives.

- **EXODUS 16:2-3** | *The whole community of Israel complained about Moses and Aaron. “If only the LORD had killed us back in Egypt,” they moaned. (See note on Stress on page 67.)*  
Anxiety can build when we fail to trust God for help.
- **MATTHEW 1:18-19** | *Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But before the marriage took place, while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit. Joseph, to whom she was engaged, was a righteous man and did not want to disgrace her publicly, so he decided to break the engagement quietly.*

Change often produces anxiety in our lives.

- **JAMES 1:2-4** | *Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.*

Adversity and the normal problems of life cause anxiety. Sometimes anxiety is the result of wounds from the past that were not your fault.

- **PROVERBS 21:17** | *Those who love pleasure become poor; those who love wine and luxury will never be rich.*

Laziness and poor planning can lead to anxiety.

- **COLOSSIANS 3:13** | *Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.*

Making mistakes can lead to anxiety in our lives and in the lives of our friends.

- **1 SAMUEL 25:17-20** | *"You need to know this and figure out what to do, for there is going to be trouble for our master and his whole family. He's so ill-tempered that no one can even talk to him!" Abigail wasted no time. She quickly gathered 200 loaves of bread . . . 100 clusters of raisins, and 200 fig cakes. She packed them on donkeys and said to her servants, "Go on ahead. I will follow you shortly." But she didn't tell her husband Nabal what she was doing. As she was riding her donkey into a mountain ravine, she saw David and his men coming toward her.*

Working against the clock, especially on an ongoing basis, can cause deep anxiety.

### What are some of the dangers of anxiety?

- **NUMBERS 11:10-14** | *Moses heard all the families standing in the doorways of their tents whining, and the LORD became extremely angry. Moses was also very aggravated. And Moses said to the LORD, "Why are you treating me, your servant, so harshly? Have mercy on me! What did I do to deserve the burden of all these people? . . . I can't carry all these people by myself! The load is far too heavy!"*

- **2 CORINTHIANS 1:8** | *We think you ought to know, dear brothers and sisters, about the trouble we went through in the province of Asia. We were crushed and overwhelmed beyond our ability to endure, and we thought we would never live through it.*

The intense demands of life have the potential to overwhelm you. The expectations, the criticism, and the scope of needs and responsibilities can threaten to crush even the strongest person.

- **LUKE 10:40-41** | *But Martha was distracted by the big dinner she was preparing. She came to Jesus and said, "Lord, doesn't it seem unfair to you that my sister just sits here while I do all the work? Tell her to come and help me." But the Lord said to her, "My dear Martha, you are worried and upset over all these details!"*
- **MATTHEW 13:22** | *"The seed that fell among the thorns represents those who hear God's word, but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the worries of this life and the lure of wealth, so no fruit is produced."*

Anxiety can cause you to focus on the trivial and miss the important. As pressure squeezes your perspective inward, you lose the big picture. Preoccupation with the issues of the moment can sometimes blind you to what's really important.

### What can I do when I'm overwhelmed by anxiety?

- **2 CORINTHIANS 4:9** | *We are hunted down, but never abandoned by God. We get knocked down, but we are not destroyed.*

Keep going! Knowing that God is by your side during times of anxiety can help you to keep from giving up.

- **PSALM 55:22** | *Give your burdens to the LORD, and he will take care of you. He will not permit the godly to slip and fall. (See note on Stress on page 508.)*
- **ISAIAH 41:10** | *"Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Don't be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand."*
- **PSALM 62:2** | *He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress where I will never be shaken.*
- **JOHN 14:1** | *"Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me."*

## Anxiety *continued*

- **HEBREWS 2:18** | *Since he himself has gone through suffering and testing, he is able to help us when we are being tested.*
- **PHILIPPIANS 2:4** | *Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.*

The first step in dealing with your anxiety is to bring it to the Lord. Only he brings true peace of heart and mind. God's availability and promises provide effective stress reducers.

- **2 SAMUEL 22:7** | *But in my distress I cried out to the LORD. . . . He heard me from his sanctuary; my cry reached his ears.*
- **PSALM 86:7** | *I will call to you whenever I'm in trouble, and you will answer me.*  
Be persistent in prayer.
- **MARK 6:31** | *Then Jesus said, "Let's go off by ourselves to a quiet place and rest awhile." He said this because there were so many people coming and going that Jesus and his apostles didn't even have time to eat.*

Take time to slow down and take a break from pressure-packed situations.

- **1 CORINTHIANS 6:19-20** | *Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.*

Take care of your body. Adequate rest, regular exercise, and proper nutrition are essential to dealing effectively with stress and anxiety.

- **GALATIANS 6:9** | *So let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up.*

Don't let stress and anxiety defeat you. When you are tired of doing good, it may be because you are just too tired.

## Why do I need help from others? Why can't I just rely on my own strength?

- **PROVERBS 12:15** | *Fools think their own way is right, but the wise listen to others. (See note on Advice on page 568.)*

Wisdom is the recognition of our own inadequacies. Foolishness is thinking we can handle all our problems on our own. It is wise to be aware of our tendency to become overcome by anxiety and to be prepared to deal with it. This involves building supportive relationships that can bring us help when we become overwhelmed.

- **PROVERBS 25:11** | *Timely advice is lovely, like golden apples in a silver basket.*

There are few things as valuable as wise and timely counsel. Sometimes the presence and help of a friend or counselor is just what we need to get through a time of deep anxiety.

## How can I keep hoping when God doesn't seem to act?

- **PSALM 71:5** | *O Lord, you alone are my hope.*

Who but God controls the future? Who but God has a home for us that is eternal? Who but God forgives our sins? Who but God can give us a life that lasts forever? No wonder he is our hope!

- **HEBREWS 11:1** | *Faith shows the reality of what we hope for; it is the evidence of things we cannot see.*

We have faith in God to do what he has promised, and we can be absolutely sure that he will. Unlike idle hopes, our hopes are built on the solid foundation of his trustworthiness.

## PROMISES FROM GOD

- **JEREMIAH 29:11** | *"For I know the plans I have for you," says the LORD. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope."*
- **JOHN 16:33** | *"I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world."*
- **1 PETER 5:7** | *Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.*

## Comfort See also Compassion; Friendship; Serving

Suppose you get into big trouble and need help. More than likely you will seek legal help, someone to come alongside you and plead your case—an advocate. That kind of person would be a great comfort to you. We hope beyond hope that our advocate is also a person of compassion, and while he or she is there to plead our case, that person will also bring a personal comfort and compassion to us. Friends and family can be comforters. Comfort is relief from burdens, encouragement for a new day, exhortation to rise above the burdens that afflict us, and hope that the pain and suffering will ultimately end. Just being there with us is perhaps the greatest source of comfort, whether at the funeral home, when we're wrestling with a problem alone, or when others stand against us. Oppressors stand above us, adversaries stand against us, but comforters stand beside us. But God is our ultimate comforter, through the constant presence of the Holy Spirit. Let him be with you in all of life's ups and downs.

### When I'm in trouble, where should I go first for comfort?

- **PSALM 119:52** | *I meditate on your age-old regulations; O LORD, they comfort me.*
- **2 THESSALONIANS 2:16-17** | *May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who . . . gave us eternal comfort and a wonderful hope, comfort you and strengthen you in every good thing you do and say. (See note on page 1089.)*

Since God is our ultimate comforter, his Word is our greatest resource for comfort. God's Word is as close as your fingertips, and God himself is as close as your whispered prayer.

### When does God comfort me?

- **PSALM 23:4** | *Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me.*
- **MATTHEW 5:4** | *“God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted.”*  
When you grieve.
- **PSALM 147:3** | *He heals the brokenhearted and bandages their wounds.*  
When you are discouraged.
- **EXODUS 14:13** | *But Moses told the people, “Don't be afraid. Just stand still and watch the LORD rescue you today.”*
- **PSALM 145:14** | *The LORD helps the fallen and lifts those bent beneath their loads.*  
When you are overwhelmed.
- **JOHN 16:33** | *“Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.”*
- **1 PETER 5:7** | *Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.*  
When you are persecuted.
- **ISAIAH 41:10** | *“Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Don't be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand.”*  
When you are rejected.
- **PSALM 138:3** | *As soon as I pray, you answer me; you encourage me by giving me strength.*  
When you face conflict.
- **GENESIS 26:24** | *“Do not be afraid, for I am with you and will bless you.”*
- **MARK 6:50** | *But Jesus spoke to them at once. “Don't be afraid,” he said. “Take courage! I am here!” (See note on page 902.)*  
When you are afraid.
- **PSALM 41:3** | *The LORD nurses them when they are sick and restores them to health.*  
When we are sick.
- **ACTS 23:11** | *That night the Lord appeared to Paul and said, “Be encouraged, Paul. Just as you have been a witness to me here in Jerusalem, you must preach the Good News in Rome as well.”*

## Comfort *continued*

- **ROMANS 8:28** | *And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.*

When you wonder about your plans for the future.

## Will God really take time to involve himself in my little problems?

- **ISAIAH 40:11** | *He will feed his flock like a shepherd. He will carry the lambs in his arms. . . . He will gently lead the mother sheep with their young.*  
God has a shepherd's heart. We are his lambs, weak and discouraged, carried in his arms.
- **NAHUM 1:7** | *The LORD is good, a strong refuge when trouble comes. He is close to those who trust in him.* (See note on page 828.)  
A God who is good wants to comfort his loved ones.

## How can I comfort others?

- **JOB 2:11** | *When three of Job's friends heard of the tragedy he had suffered, they got together and traveled from their homes to comfort and console him.* (See note on page 453.)  
You can be with them in their time of need. Just being there speaks volumes about how much you care.
- **JOB 21:2** | *"Listen closely to what I am saying. That's one consolation you can give me."*  
You can be a good listener. It is usually more important for you to listen than to talk.
- **RUTH 2:13** | *"I hope I continue to please you, sir," she replied. "You have comforted me by speaking so kindly to me, even though I am not one of your workers."*
- **1 CORINTHIANS 14:3** | *But one who prophesies strengthens others, encourages them, and comforts them.*

You can speak kind and encouraging words.

- **2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-4** | *All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort. He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us.*

Remember the ways God has comforted you, and model that same comfort to others. When you have experienced God's assuring love, his guiding wisdom, and his sustaining power, you are able to comfort others with understanding. The comforted become the comforters.

- **2 CORINTHIANS 1:7** | *We are confident that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in the comfort God gives us.* (See note on page 1047.)

A great privilege of believers is to share the vulnerability of offering comfort and understanding to one another. If you see vulnerability as a negative thing, you will always have trouble sharing with others. If you see it as a way to deeper and healthier relationships, you will learn to develop it.

- **PHILEMON 1:7** | *Your love has given me much joy and comfort, my brother, for your kindness has often refreshed the hearts of God's people.*

You can comfort others with kind actions.

## Can I get too comfortable?

- **GENESIS 19:16** | *When Lot still hesitated, the angels seized his hand and the hands of his wife and two daughters and rushed them to safety outside the city.* (See note on page 18.)

There is a difference between *comfort* and *being comfortable*. When we get too comfortable, we can lose our zeal for God and become useless to him.

## What can I take comfort in?

- **JOHN 3:16** | *"For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life."*

- **JOHN 6:37** | *“Those the Father has given me will come to me, and I will never reject them.”*  
Our greatest comfort is in knowing that we can be saved from sin and live eternally with God in heaven, where all sin and fear and trouble have disappeared.

## PROMISES FROM GOD

- **PSALM 34:18** | *The LORD is close to the brokenhearted; he rescues those whose spirits are crushed.*
- **2 CORINTHIANS 1:5** | *The more we suffer for Christ, the more God will shower us with his comfort through Christ.*

## Depression *See also Burnout; Encouragement; Grief; Loneliness; Self-Esteem*

Sooner or later most of us experience some form of depression. It can descend slowly, like the coming of an evening rain. It can overwhelm like an avalanche of darkness. It can be the result of a real situation of failure or loss, or it can invade our minds for no discernible reason. The Bible includes stories of people who experienced depression of all kinds, and parts of Scripture were written by people experiencing feelings much like depression. The good news is that God does not regard depression as sin but rather responds to those who suffer its darkness with great tenderness, understanding, and compassion.

### How am I vulnerable to depression?

- **1 KINGS 19:3-4** | *Elijah was afraid and fled for his life. . . . Then he went on alone into the wilderness, traveling all day. He sat down under a solitary broom tree and prayed that he might die. “I have had enough, LORD,” he said. “Take my life, for I am no better than my ancestors.”* (See note on page 321.)

You can be especially vulnerable to depression after a major victory. Elijah had just defeated four hundred fifty prophets of Baal and seen God work several mighty miracles, yet he was afraid and depressed. Between his exhaustion and his emotional swing after the high of victory, he was susceptible to depression.

- **PSALM 42:3-5** | *Day and night I have only tears for food, while my enemies continually taunt me, saying, “Where is this God of yours?” My heart is breaking as I remember how it used to be. . . . Why am I discouraged? Why is my heart so sad?*  
Depression often comes from looking backward at what you have lost.
- **ROMANS 7:19-24** | *I want to do what is good, but I don’t. I don’t want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway. But if I do what I don’t want to do, I am not really the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it. . . . I love God’s law with all my heart. But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me. Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death?*

Depression can occur when you realize how wide the gap is between the ideal you strive for and the reality you see within and around you. This can create a great sense of loss.

- **MATTHEW 26:36-39** | *Then Jesus went with them to the olive grove called Gethsemane, and he said, “Sit here while I go over there to pray.” . . . He told them, “My soul is crushed with grief to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.” He went on a little farther and bowed with his face to the ground, praying, “My Father! If it is possible, let this cup of suffering be taken away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine.”*  
Depression can come from being asked by God to do an extraordinarily hard task and realizing what you may have to suffer to do it.
- **1 SAMUEL 16:14** | *Now the Spirit of the LORD had left Saul, and the LORD sent a tormenting spirit that filled him with depression and fear.*

When you neglect the Lord to the point where he can no longer get your attention, then he may neglect you for a while, and depression can move easily into the vacant room in your heart. The farther you move from God, the less hope you have of receiving the joy of his blessings.