

## Who Cares?

*All praise to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the source of every mercy and the God who comforts us. He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When others are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us .... When God comforts us, it is so that we, in turn can be an encouragement to you. Then you can patiently endure ... (2 Corinthians 1:3-4, 6 NLT)*

We are people who have lived troubled lives. Some of us have never known life without troubles. Others of us have stumbled through situations and found trouble waiting. For all of us, at some point, trouble done to us or caused by us became an excuse to begin or continue our addictive lifestyles. For many of us who have left an addiction for a time and "tried recovery" it was the experience of trouble in our daily lives that was the excuse to flee back and relapse. God wants to meet us at the place of trouble and give us exactly what we need. Comfort and care.

How many times have we thought or cried out, "Who cares?" Who cares that I am hurting? Who cares that I am hungry, tired, and lonely? If I clean up and fly straight, who cares? Who cares about the dull dark pressure I'm feeling right now in my mind and body? Who cares?

God answers, "I care." His answer is Jesus who is the source of love and kindness, including care and comfort for our broken hearts and tortured minds. Jesus provides healing for harm done to us. Jesus provides forgiveness for harm done by us. Jesus offers dignity and respect for all the words of condemnation and self-hated we've heard and spoken over ourselves. Jesus offers meaning and purpose for our lives if we live for Him rather than for ourselves. Jesus offers us peace and reconciliation for relationships that have been broken so badly and for so long that we have assumed they are as good as dead.

*Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke fits perfectly, and the burden I give you is light." (Matthew 11:28-30)*

Do I want love? Do I want comfort? Do I want strength? Do I want encouragement? The source of all of these for me is God My Heavenly Father through Jesus Christ. I need to surrender my life to God and accept Jesus into my heart as the one forgives and heals me AND the one who now orders a new way of living and guides me into it as He lives in my heart. There is no comfort outside of relationship with God. There is no relationship with God outside of surrender of my life and will to God's plan every moment of every day. God is not just the one who forgives

and heals me from my past. God is also the one who cares about my future and whether I walk in it with peace and love and joy.

Jesus offers us healing, rest, and a new way of life. We long for all of these. How can we actually get them? Jesus tells us we have to let go of our heavy burdens and then take on a new work with Him. He taught this to His disciples with a farming picture of two oxen in a yoke.

To be in a yoke on a farm is to be one of two animals connected together by a harness type instrument on the back of both necks so both animals move in the same direction, in step with each other. Typically a younger animal was yoked with an older one. The older one would move consistently in the proper direction and the younger animal would be trained as its movements were constrained and redirected in the right way. This pairing of animals with a yoke multiplied the power and the effectiveness of the work to be accomplished. Jesus tells us that if we want comfort and rest, we have to be yoked to Him and no longer operate on our own. His promise to us is that if we will work in this way that we will not be overworked but will find rest. There will be re-direction of our steps in an atmosphere of teaching, humility, and gentleness.

Do I want love? Do I want comfort? Do I want a new way of life? The only way to it is to receive the yoke - something that seems to limit me - and trust that God is working with me in a kind and caring way. God is caring for my soul. It's the most important question for every recovering addict to answer, "Who cares?" The answer will determine what we think and how we act.

God wants to comfort me so I can comfort others. God wants to strengthen me so I can strengthen others. God wants to heal me so I can show others how to be healed. That's the life that is meaningful, purposeful, and joyful. To teach I must endure but God promises that He will never give me more than I can bear. I must learn. I must be disciplined. I must walk out my new life in step with Jesus. I must allow my thoughts, my feelings, my actions and my reactions to be reshaped by God's love and God's truth. This then becomes the experience, strength, and hope I have to share with someone else. God who cares for me calls me to care for others. The joy and hope I have found in God flows out of me and attracts others to Jesus.

Do I know God cares for me? Am I living alongside Jesus today allowing Him to reshape how I think and speak and act? Am I heading towards a ministry of encouragement or a relapse by how I am living right now?

God cares. God offers me life through Jesus right now. Do I care?