



THE JOHN
ANKERBERG SHOW

God's Comfort



during the
Coronavirus.



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& cathy sims

God's Comfort During the Coronavirus

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Introduction

We know that you are going through a tough time right now. There is not a person in the world today who is not being affected by the coronavirus. The varied emotions people are experiencing right now range from loneliness during this time of isolation—to grief over losing loved ones. Many people are feeling a sense of fear because there is no way to predict what our future may hold (both physically and financially). You may be fighting the virus and feeling physically and emotionally drained and wondering when it will end. You need desperately to be encouraged.

As we struggle during this difficult time, there is only one place where we can go for real answers to our deepest longings. God wants to speak to you through His Word and give you the reassurance you need. Our prayer is that you will sense His presence and experience His comfort as we share where we have found encouragement during distressing times.

Where do you turn when you are feeling anxious?

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:6-7

We are told in these verses not to be anxious—but that may be exactly how you are feeling right now! Think about what we are instructed to do. Take **everything** you are worried about and give it to God in prayer. No matter what you are going through, there is still something to be thankful for. If you can't think of anything to be grateful for, thank God for His love for you (even if you aren't **feeling** it right now). These verses teach us that God can lead us to a place where we're not anxious about anything we will face. Come into His presence knowing and believing that He loves you and **God will**

keep your heart and your mind in a state of supernatural peace whatever happens. The Bible is telling us, “God will do something for us that we can’t do for ourselves.”

We don't have to be afraid

Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

Psalm 23:4

Only God knows what you are dealing with right now. As a result of the coronavirus, there are so many things in our world today to be afraid of: losing our job, our home, our health, or someone we love. Fear is a terrible feeling. It causes our heart and thoughts to race, and if we don't get it under control we will start to panic. Contracting COVID-19 is a valid fear, and we must do what we can to stay safe. But we do not need to obsess about what **might** happen. It is because of fear that people are hoarding necessary items. This gives them a feeling of security, knowing they have everything they could possibly need in their homes.

When you feel afraid, stop allowing those “what if” thoughts to torment your mind, and go to the Lord in prayer. “We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5). No matter how you may feel, remember you are not alone: “It is the Lord who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed” (Deuteronomy 31:8 ESV).

You can trust the Lord

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

Proverbs 3:5-6

There are not too many people we trust completely. We get to know the people in our lives and learn if they are trustworthy by how they handle any information we entrust to them. When you actually trust someone, you can share all of your deepest thoughts and even your fears with them. If not, then you don't spend a lot of time talking to them.

Do you honestly trust God, or are you afraid that you won't like the plans He has for your life? Do you think He is out to get you; watching and waiting for you to mess up? God really doesn't want to make your life miserable; He wants what is best for you. He wants to mold you into the person you were meant to be. Just as you have to get to know people before you can trust them, you have to get to know the character of God before you will ever be able to trust Him. The most powerful weapon we have to combat the fears we are

facing is learning to trust God completely. “Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The Lord, the Lord himself, is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation” (Isaiah 12:2).

God is our refuge and strength

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.

Psalm 46:1

Where can you find strength during these tough times? Do you realize that God is love and has created us with a desire to love and be loved by Him? When we were born, we were separated from God’s love because we inherited a spiritual nature from Adam that was empty and closed to God. So, we had the problem that we were created to be loved by God and to love Him in return, but we were missing out on that love. We often try to find that kind of love in another person, but it is not the same.

Romans 12:1-2 urges us, “in view of God’s mercy, do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” Do you feel weak, as though you have lost all of your strength? God becomes our refuge and **strength** as we fill our minds with His Word. He wants to be the ultimate source for getting our needs met (not a last resort). Take your troubles to Him and take it to heart that God is the One who truly loves you more than you can imagine.

God helps those who have no one to help

For he will deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted who have no one to help.

Psalm 72:12

Who can you run to when you are hurting? Friends can sometimes give us consoling and encouraging words, but they cannot experience our emotions. You may feel as though no one truly understands or honestly cares about what you are enduring. but take courage in the fact that God actually hears you when you cry out to Him in desperation. So often we want to try to solve all of our own problems and not take them to the Lord. But He is there waiting for us to give them to Him. He wants to deliver you from your suffering and supply **all** of your needs: “And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19). Quit trying to work out everything by yourself and ask God to give you the help you need.

God comforts us in all our troubles

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.

2 Corinthians 1:3-5

Did you notice that this scripture passage says God comforts us in **all** our troubles? Jesus knows what it is to suffer. He was beaten almost to the point of death, and then He was crucified. Crucifixion was a horrific death, because in order to breathe a person had to keep pushing themselves up with their feet (which had been nailed to a tree or cross through their ankle bones). People who never experience pain are not very compassionate because they can't relate to those who are hurting. Jesus can relate to your pain on every level and give you the comfort you need, because He genuinely understands what you are going through. God can also use what you are experiencing to enable you to help others when they endure similar circumstances. When we go through the rough times, they not only change us, but they change how we view what others are enduring. It gives us an empathy we would not have had otherwise.

We should not forget any of God's benefits

Praise the Lord, my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all his benefits—who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

Psalms 103:1-5

These verses are a great reminder of the many ways God provides us the help we need in **every** area. He forgives our sins; heals our sickness; redeems our lives from sin by His blood so we can live with Him in heaven forever; rewards us with His love and compassion; and even satisfies our desires. If we **know** we are loved, it gives us the strength and stamina to persevere through whatever we may be facing. "See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!" (1 John 3:1).

Learning to praise God when we don't feel like it

For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come. Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

Hebrews 13:14-16

When we read stories of the pain and suffering many people are experiencing during this time, it is heartbreaking. Your present circumstances may be very disheartening. If we only look at our current situation, we can lose hope. But we have to realize we have a future we can look forward to. We don't **feel** like praising God because of what we are experiencing right now. These are the times when praising Him is truly a sacrifice.

It is very strange to have to stay away from our family and friends and not be able to go to work or to the places where we have always been able to go. It is hard to recognize the city we are living in with much of it closed down. (On top of everything else that is happening, we recently had a tornado ravage our area.) If we look at how things currently are in this world, our outlook will be bleak. But God tells those who love Him that someday we will be in a new place, a perfect city that will never be destroyed. When we realize that God is using all that we are experiencing now to prepare us for our future with Him, then we can praise Him. Not because we enjoy hardship and suffering, but because we know this present time isn't all there is. As God told the nation of Israel: “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future” (Jeremiah 29:11). He has a wonderful plan and future for your life too.

God is there with you

Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.

Deuteronomy 31:6

Before the nation of Israel entered the Promised Land, Moses knew they would have to fight with the nations that were already in the land. Since there is nothing more frightening than going to war, the Lord had Moses instruct them to: “Be strong and courageous.” This phrase is also used numerous times by the Lord to Joshua, to remind the people that God would fight for them, because there were literal giants living in the land they were going to inhabit.

This is also an important reminder for each of us today. Wherever we go, our God goes with us and will be right there with us. He never leaves us to fight the battles we face in

our own strength. We read in 1 Chronicles 28:20: “David also said to Solomon his son, ‘Be strong and courageous, and do the work. Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the Lord God, my God, is with you. He will not fail you or forsake you until all the work for the service of the temple of the Lord is finished.’” God will enable you to finish the work He has for you to do. You are not alone in your struggle.

God’s faithfulness is your shield

He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.

Psalm 91:4

We don’t fully comprehend God’s faithfulness to us. If we realized He is our shield of protection against anything our enemy, Satan, throws at us, we wouldn’t worry like we do. We are instructed in Ephesians 6:16: “take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.”

There is a story of a farmer who found a hen that had burned to death in a prairie fire. When he kicked the charred remains, baby chicks came running out from under her! Her feathers had shielded them from the heat and saved them. I find it comforting to picture God wrapping His wings around me to protect me from whatever I may have to face.

God is close to the brokenhearted

The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

Psalm 34:18

Do you feel as though you have been crushed? Do you find it hard to have the strength to go on? You may have aching in your chest and literally feel as though your heart is going to burst. It is during these times when you need the comfort that only comes from above. You need God’s supernatural peace to calm your spirit.

The psalmist shares in Psalm 73 that he is upset because he sees evil people prospering: “Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart. But as for me, my feet had almost slipped; I had nearly lost my foothold. For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong” (Psalm 73:1-4). It doesn’t help to look at other people and wonder why everything seems to be going fine in their lives while you are experiencing heartache. In the end, the psalmist realizes where his strength comes from: “My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever” (Psalm 73:26). Allow God to be your strength and meet your deepest needs.

Why do Bible verses comfort us?

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

All 66 books of the Bible are inspired, which literally means “God-breathed.” God, through the power of His Holy Spirit, gave the words for the men to write down. Because God created us, He knows us better than we know ourselves. There have been times when I (Cathy) was heartbroken and felt like I would never be able to stop crying. In the last two years I have lost both my mother and my brother. When I picked up my Bible and started reading it, God would give me a comfort that I have never experienced apart from His Word. When you are at your lowest point, allow God’s Holy Spirit to speak to you and quiet your breaking heart through His inspired Word that was written for you. “Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:20-21).

A room is being prepared for us in our Father’s house

Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

John 14:1-3

There is nothing better than loving someone and knowing they love you in return. When you fall in love, you will find every way possible to be with that person because there is nothing more exciting than being with the one you love.

One day Jesus will come back and take us to live with Him in His Father’s house in heaven. We will live in that perfect place forever. Jesus loves us with the kind of unconditional love a bridegroom has for His bride. Whatever you are enduring now will be worth it when you see Him face to face.

We have a Comforter

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth.

John 14:16-17

On the night before Jesus was to be taken and crucified, He met with His disciples and told them they could not follow Him where He was going. Naturally, they were shaken to the core to learn that this man that they had worshiped and followed was leaving them. They must have felt like their entire world was being turned upside down.

Jesus encouraged them by telling them that He would ask God the Father to send them an Advocate (a Comforter), the Holy Spirit. If you have surrendered your life to the Lord, then you have the Holy Spirit living in you. “The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you” (John 14:26). Take the time to listen to His Spirit and allow Him to comfort and encourage you. If you have not given your life to the Lord, we will share with you how you can at the end of this book.

God has a purpose for everything

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.

Romans 8:28-29

God has a good purpose for everything—but we don’t have to *know* what that good purpose is for there to be one. Even if I can’t tell you a good purpose for every tragedy or physical suffering in this world, God is still at work during these events. There are so many things that we don’t understand right now because we can’t think like God: “‘For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,’ declares the Lord” (Isaiah 55:8).

If we keep asking, “Why?” and believe what we are enduring is senseless, it will drive us to despair and we will become bitter. If we look at the ultimate result of everything we are enduring, we will realize it is to conform us into the image of Jesus. If we trust God in gut level faith (no matter how bad things look now), whatever we are experiencing will drive us into the loving arms of God.

Our perspective is everything

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

Romans 8:18 (ESV)

We do a lot of things that can cause us pain in one way or another. When we start exercising, it can be very painful because we are using our muscles differently. So, why do so many people in our society exercise today? Because you have to experience some pain to get the outcome you want. The result is worth the temporary pain.

The apostle Paul had this perspective when he wrote Philippians 3:7-11,13-14: “But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead... But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.”

It is important to laugh

A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.

Proverbs 17:22

When you are going through a difficult time, the last thing you can think of is laughing. But it is important to laugh, because laughter relieves stress, stimulates many of our organs, soothes tension, boosts our immune system, and may even relieve pain.¹

The following verse was written while the nation of Israel was under pressure from other nations, yet it talks about laughter: “Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. Then it was said among the nations, ‘The Lord has done great things for them’” (Psalm 126:2). In his book, *The Love of God: An Intimate Look at the Father-Heart of God*², Oswald Chambers makes us think deeply about the meaning of this passage: “The characteristic of this passage is the unexpectedness of the happenings. ‘Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing’ (Psalm 126:2). We never dreamed that such a thing would happen to us! This attitude of mind frequently comes by the way of a calamity. Many a man has had his soul restored in the valley of the shadow, not in the green pastures. There are clouds we fear to enter, but on the inside of those clouds is the suddenness of real light. We get the evidence of this on the threshold of real sorrow and difficulty, there is the suddenness of real light and a discernment of

things that was unsought, which we could get in no other way.” Don’t lose heart. Focus on the fact that God will restore your joy and you will be able to laugh.

Can anything separate us from God’s love?

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?... No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:35,37-39

It is so hard for us to believe that nothing can separate us from God’s love. Most people have a love for one another that can be destroyed by adverse circumstances. This is the main reason why there are so many divorces. It is hard for us to understand unconditional love because it is rare to find that in another person (or ourselves). But God loves us just because He loves us. There is something unreasonable to us about this kind of love, so when we do something wrong, we think He must love us less.

According to biblical descriptions, the angels and demons are much more powerful than we are, yet they are powerless to separate us from Christ’s love. The list of things that cannot separate us from God’s love include death, life, anything that exists in the present, future, any power, anything in heaven or hell, or anything else in all creation. In short, absolutely **nothing** can ever separate us from Christ’s love. Certainly this must include our own actions. So, no matter what has happened in your life, no matter what you may have done, God loves you. He doesn’t love you for the things you have done, He loves you just because you are you.

How can you cope with a loved one dying?

“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.

2 Corinthians 12:9

There is nothing we will experience in this life that is more difficult than losing a loved one. We try to make sense of it, and we want some kind of explanation as to why this happened. This is especially true if they died from the coronavirus, because it happened so fast and you may not have been able to be by their side to comfort them as they left this world.

We may never know this side of heaven why they had to die like they did. If you become consumed with asking **why**, it will lead to bitterness and you will only prolong your despair. You do need to take some time to grieve your loss, time to go through your memories and try to come to terms with what has happened. We all need time for our tears to flow. When my (John's) mother died, it was one of only two times in my life I have cried. The length of time you will need is different for each person; so don't let anyone try to rush you through your grief.

Don't waste the agony you are going through—ask God **what** He wants you to **learn** and **do** with all of this pain you are experiencing. Take the time you need to open yourself up to God and allow His everlasting love to start to heal your broken heart.

God will wipe away our tears, pain and suffering

He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.

Revelation 21:4

While we are suffering, it is hard to imagine there will be a time when we don't have to endure any more pain. Looking toward our immediate future can be encouraging because we know that at some point this pandemic will end. But our greatest inspiration to rally ourselves not to give in to depression is to think about our eternal future. For those of us who surrender our lives to the Lord, we will live in a world without any pain or suffering. God encourages us by giving us glimpses of what this perfect world will be like in the Bible.

No matter what you are living through right now, God is not far away. He sees and cares about every detail in your life (including your tears). "You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in your bottle. You have recorded each one in your book" (Psalm 56:8 NLT). Rest assured that God hasn't forgotten you. He wants to console you in your time of grief.

Why do we go through trials?

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

James 1:2-4

If you are a Christian, do you wonder why you have to go through difficult times? We see the answer in these verses. It is because our faith is being tested so we will have the endurance to persevere through whatever tragedy we may face. God is all-knowing, so

He already knows how you will do during this trial, but through each trial you experience in your life, your faith and confidence in God grows. You can look back on things He has brought you through before and it will encourage you to realize He will bring you through this one. God can use the coronavirus to make you stop and think and depend on Him more deeply than you ever have before.

If you are not a Christian, then God can use what you are experiencing now to help you come to the end of your own self-reliance and surrender everything (including your life) to Him.

How to begin a personal relationship with God

If you would like to begin a personal relationship with God that promises joy, forgiveness, and eternal life, you can do so right now by doing the following:

1. Believe that God exists and that He sent His Son Jesus Christ in human form to earth (John 3:16; Romans 10:9).
2. Accept God's free gift of new life through the death and resurrection of God's only son, Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:8-9).
3. Commit to following God's plan for your life (1 Peter 1:21-23; Ephesians 2:1-7).
4. Determine to make Jesus Christ the ultimate leader and final authority of your life (Matthew 7:21-27; 1 John 4:15).

There is no magic formula or special prayer to begin your relationship with God. However, the following prayer is one that can be used to accept God's free gift of salvation through Jesus Christ by faith:

Dear Lord Jesus, I admit that I have sinned. I know I cannot save myself. Thank You for dying on the cross and taking my place. I believe that Your death was for me and I receive Your sacrifice on my behalf. I transfer all of my trust from myself and turn all of my desires over to You. I open the door of my life to You, and by faith receive You as my Savior and Lord, making You the ultimate Leader of my life. Thank You for forgiving my sins and giving me eternal life. Amen.

If you have made this decision, congratulations! You have just made the greatest commitment of your life. For more information on growing in your relationship with God, please visit JAshow.org. You can also receive additional materials by contacting us at: jasnews@jashow.org.

About the Authors

Dr. John Ankerberg is host of the award-winning John Ankerberg Show, and has authored over 150 books and 155 study guides. He has coauthored the two-million-

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Cathy Sims serves on the executive staff for the John Ankerberg Show where she has written and edited numerous resources. She has a passion for sharing God's Word and has taught Bible studies for many years to help others better know and apply God's Word.

¹Mayo Clinic article accessed at: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/stress-relief/art-20044456>

² Oswald Chambers, *The Love of God: An Intimate Look at the Father-Heart of God* (Discovery House, 2015).