



4 Comfortable Worships

REST GAVE SAVE ADVOCATE

4 Studies
for Individuals, Groups or 1:1

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Welcome to **4 Comfortable Words**

This series of four studies is designed to accompany the teaching series at Trinity Mount Barker during March 2015.

At the time of the Protestant Reformation in the early 16th century, Archbishop Cranmer had a compelling vision: to convert England to a deep understanding and appreciation of the true Gospel of Christ. Cranmer introduced large portions of Scripture into the prayer life of every home through the Book of Common Prayer (BCP). In fact, roughly 85 percent of the Book of Common Prayer is drawn directly from the Bible.

Cranmer chose four verses from Scripture to underscore a very important fact: we are forgiven through the reconciling work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Our forgiveness does not come from a priest, the church, or even a special prayer. It comes by grace through faith in Christ alone.

For more than 500 years, the verses that Cranmer chose have been spoken in churches around the globe. These verses are known as the "Comfortable Words". They are direct quotes from the Gospels of Matthew and John and the Letters of Paul and John. These words are not intended to "comfort" us in the modern sense of the word. Rather, they are meant to "strengthen us" with the assurance of our forgiveness.

At Trinity Mount Barker our Bible Study Groups normally explore a study in the week leading up to the sermon. Our purpose in adopting this approach is to encourage the study of Scripture that is not influenced by having already heard the sermon, and allows groups and individuals to independently '*wrestle with the Bible*' in each of the studies.

These studies can also be used for private study or undertaken with a friend, but we encourage you to join a Bible Study Group to gain

the benefit of group learning that promotes our growing toward maturity in Christ. If you are doing these studies individually, we encourage you to let someone know, and arrange a time to meet with them to tell them how God's Word is changing your life and to pray together.

In order to get the most out of these studies, you can do three things each week before your study time:

1. **Read the passage in advance** (it really helps your understanding to read it out aloud to yourself)
2. **Pray** that God would help you to understand it more fully and how it applies to you
3. **Think about the passage**, and if you have time, take a look at the questions in the Study Guide.

This will certainly help you, but an even better principle is to think about how you can serve each other. Your preparation and attendance will help your brothers and sisters in Christ as they come together each week, so please do make it a priority.

Recommended Reading

- ❑ 1662 Book of Common Prayer (1/2 way down the page) — <http://www.eskimo.com/~lhowell/bcp1662/communion/index.html>
- ❑ J. I. Packer — 18 Words: The Most Important Words you will ever know, 'The Mediator', p105

Matthew

- ❑ David Turner — Matthew [*Baker Exegetical Commentary on the NT*]
- ❑ Tom Wright — Matthew [*For Everyone Bible Study Guides*]
- ❑ Bible.org — <https://bible.org/article/call-discipleship-invitation-rest-matthew-1128-30>

John

- ❑ St Helen's Bishopsgate — John (<http://www.st-helens.org.uk/download-file/downloads/John-1-21-Study-notes-Paul-Clarke-2009-10.pdf>)
- ❑ Bruce Milne — The Message of John [*The Bible Speaks Today*]
- ❑ Colin Kruse — John [*Tyndale New Testament Commentary*]
- ❑ Dick Lucas & William Philip — Teaching John [*Proclamation Trust Media*]

Timothy

- ❑ Gordon Fee — 1 & 2 Timothy [*Understanding the Bible Commentary Series*]
- ❑ William D. Mounce — Pastoral Epistles [*World Biblical Commentary*]
- ❑ Donald Guthrie — The Pastoral Epistles [*Tyndale NT Commentary*]

1 John

- ❑ Karen H. Jobes — 1,2 & 3 John [*Exegetical Commentary on the NT*]
- ❑ John Stott — The Letters of John [*Tyndale NT Commentary*]
- ❑ David Jackman — John's Letters [*Bible Speaks Today*]
- ❑ Robert W. Yarbrough — 1-2 John [*Baker Exegetical Commentary on the NT*]
- ❑ www.smallgroups.com — 1 John: Go Deeper in Christ (<http://www.smallgroups.com/bible-studies/1-9/1-john-go-deeper-in-christ-8-session-study.html>)

Study 1 — 'Rest'

Matthew 11:28

28 *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."*

Jesus often taught using illustrations from the everyday experiences of his hearers. In the agricultural setting of His time, everyone knew a yoke was a wooden stock placed on oxen for them to carry a load together (*'A load shared is a load halved' — Old English proverb*). So the idea of bearing a burden sets the scene for the 'rest' from burden that Jesus offers. This verse is part of a well-known passage (Matthew 11:25-30) about people coming to know the Father only through Jesus, who then offers them release and eternal salvation. Jesus makes an offer to do life together, take up His yoke and find rest; will you take up His offer?

Conversation Starters

What are some of the differences that believers and non-believers face in the disappointments and challenges of life?

Study Questions

1. How have the ways you dealt with life’s struggles and disappointments changed as your relationship with Christ matured?

2. Read **2 Corinthians 4:8-9**. The Christian life comes with its fair share of disappointment, heartache, stress, and loss. In what ways does believing in Christ give you the strength and peace to make it through? How would you explain this inner peace to someone who doesn’t know Christ?

3. In the beginning of Matthew 11:28 Jesus says “*Come to me*”. He didn’t offer an invitation to come to His miracles or teachings. The invitation was to come to *Him*. What importance is a *personal relationship* with Jesus when dealing with disappointment and stress? Why is just knowing *about* Christ not enough?

4. Read **Matthew 11:29**. The first step to finding rest is to “come to Jesus”. This initial rest is salvation. It is the peace of knowing that Jesus is your Lord and Saviour. But once you come to Jesus and believe in Him there is a second rest that is offered. What is that second rest?

5. Jesus *gives* the first rest, while the second rest is something you will *find*. This second rest comes only after you take up the yoke of Christ. What does taking up the yoke of Christ mean?

6. Surrendering our wants and desires to seek after God’s will is a struggle for most believers. People like to be in charge and to have things their way. Surrendering to Christ and letting go of your will is something that believers need to learn. Jesus says in Matthew 11:29 to “learn from me”. In what ways does Jesus’ life and ministry help us learn to *‘let go and let God’*? What does that practically look like every day?

Study 2 — 'Gave'

John 3:16

16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

This is perhaps the most widely recognised Gospel summary of the entire Bible spoken in only 26 words. While some elements of the Gospel are only briefly alluded to, nothing is missing. Sin is bad news as it wrecks havoc in the world and causes people to perish. But Jesus' sacrifice in our place is the good news of God who gave His only Son to save us. The condition of faith for receiving such undeserved love is belief in Jesus. And the result is everlasting life with Him in heaven. What a beautiful verse of challenge and assurance.

Conversation Starters

What does this verse tell us about God, Jesus, believers and unbelievers?

Why might this verse be potentially very offensive to religious people, who think that their actions make them right with God?

Study Questions

1. How does a person enter into God's eternal kingdom?
2. How does this differ in the way that most people expect or imagine?
3. Read **Numbers 21:4-9**. In what ways is this event looking forward to the salvation that is found in Jesus? What are the intended parallels in the story?

4. Who is '*the world*' referring to?

5. What stops people from entering the Kingdom of God?

6. Who is the subject of this verse? Why is this important?

7. What action(s) does God take in this verse?

8. What does this verse tell us about why faith is necessary?

9. Is Jesus Christ a reliable enough and good enough Saviour for you to trust Him for your eternal destiny? Which would you rather trust in for your eternal standing before God: your own life or Christ's?

10. Read **John 3:18**. Is Jesus' sacrifice *effective* for all people?
11. It's so easy to gloss over well-known Bible verses and overlook their life-changing message by virtue of familiarity. What *fresh insights* does this verse provoke you to think about God, Jesus, yourself and friends and family who claim to be agnostic, atheist or 'not religious'?
12. How [specifically] can we pray for our friends and family who don't know Jesus?

Study 3 — 'Save'

1 Timothy 1:15

15 *Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst.*

Most of Paul's letters (epistles) were written to churches, but 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus and Philemon were written to individuals (this group of four letters is called the '*Pastoral Epistles*'). Here Paul is writing to his ministry apprentice Timothy, to advise and counsel him on ministry. Christian author C. S. Lewis once wrote, "*When a man is getting better, he understands more and more clearly the evil that is still in him. When a man is getting worse, he understands his own badness less and less*" (*Mere Christianity*, 87). Paul wants Timothy to staunchly avoid the trap of self-righteous pride and self-reliance and instead fully realise the complete depravity of our own sinfulness from which Jesus saved us.

Conversation Starters

This verse is the first of five *trustworthy sayings* found in the Pastoral Epistles (1 Timothy 3:1; 4:7-9; 2 Timothy 2:11-13; Titus 3:8 ✪). What reason(s) do you think the Apostle Paul might be using such a repeated formula? (Also notice that the word used for '*full acceptance*' is found only here in the New Testament).

Which is better, to be saved as a child and be spared a sinful past or to be saved after a few years of sin?



1 Timothy 3:1 — *Here is a trustworthy saying:* Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task.

1 Timothy 4: 7-9 — Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come. *This is a trustworthy saying* that deserves full acceptance.

2 Timothy 2:11-13 — *Here is a trustworthy saying:* If we died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us; if we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot disown himself.

Titus 3:8 — *This is a trustworthy saying.* And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.

4. Why is Christ's saving of sinful people focused not only on their future destiny? In what ways are people saved?

5. How did Paul gain such an awareness of (the gravity of) his sin?

6. Read **1 Timothy 1:13**. Where's the balance between seeing ourselves as "chief of sinners" versus "saints in Christ"?

7. In what way(s) is Paul an example to us?

8. Awareness of sin is always related to our closeness to God. Do you agree?

9. Why did God save you?

10. What can we do to help people become aware of their sin and need for God without either guilt-tripping them or exhibiting false modesty about our own sinfulness?

Study 4 — 'Advocate'

1 John 2:1

1 My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.

From the very beginning of Jesus' ministry, He emphasised that it's not just what we profess, but how we live that counts. John makes fellowship with God through Jesus a centrepiece of this letter (v3); what it means to experience God at work in our lives. God brings light into the darkness of our world and distinguishes truth from deception. He challenges thinking that denies any need for God and the delusion of self-righteous living that excludes Him. God provides Jesus to help us in our sin. But the blood of Jesus Christ cannot cleanse excuses; it only cleanses sins. Jesus is the light of the world who helps us see ourselves for who we really are rather than who we pretend to be. Whatever the magnitude of our sin, Jesus provides a way to be made right with God again; to come back into fellowship with Him again and live.

Conversation Starters

Have you ever done something wrong only to find that the people you trusted to help you, simply abandoned you when they found out? How did that make you feel? What did you learn from this experience?

The slogan '*God hates the sin but loves the sinner*' is sometimes used to identify that sin is not intrinsic to a person (i.e. a person's sinful acts shouldn't be what identifies who that person really is 'inside'). What do you think?

Study Questions

1. Read **1 John 2:2**. John opens the verse '*My little children*'. Who is John referring to? Is the truth of this verse only for Christians?
2. What if a person claims to know God but disobeys Him?
3. Read **1 John 1:5-7**. Atheists do not recognise the need for sin because they believe that truth is subjective and relative. What does John tell us that sin is?

4. Read **1 John 1:8-10**. Have you heard people say '*Everyone does things wrong; after all we're only human*'. Rather than deny or rationalise sin, what does God want us to do about sinning?

5. Is John's hope for people not to sin plausible / practical? Why?

6. What does this verse tell us happens when we sin?

7. What is the role of an Advocate¹? What does Jesus advocate for to God, on our behalf?

8. Although John doesn't want us to sin, he knows that we do. What comfort and assurance does this verse offer to people who struggle with sin?

9. Read **1 John 2:2-6**. John could have simply finished the verse with a general reference to Jesus as our advocate. Why does John refer to Jesus Christ as *'the Righteous One'*?

¹ The original Koine Greek word used here is translated 'Paraclete' into English and is unique to John. It refers to someone who is a legal assistant or advocate; someone who intercedes or mediates for others in seeking the forgiveness of sin.

10. Read **1 John 3:23-24**. What impact does recognising our sin have on our living as a Christian?

11. One way of dealing with our sin is to admit to our sinfulness and ask for God's forgiveness and strengthening against further sin. In what ways can we do this on a daily basis?

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