



Dear Comforter, Can I Trade My Down for a Quilt?

■ by Debi Mitchell, MS, LMFT

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort. ~2 Corinthians 1:3

Down comforters bring warmth to chilly nights. The uppermost thought is putting our feet on that cold floor. Not surprisingly, we don't want to get up. In the same way, we struggle to let go of our memories when we see no purpose in our future.

There is great news in God's name, "Comforter." God provides comfort as we let go of our past joys and present pain and, in so doing, gives us purpose.

The God of All Comfort

My daughter loved high school marching band. I loved being a band mom!

I looked forward to every Saturday, from the first September Invitational to November's Grand National competition. My indulgence involved purchasing each main event's "official" t-shirts for my daughter. When added to each year's "casual uniform" t-shirt, Sarah gained about four band shirts each year. When my daughter graduated, Sarah refused to wear high school t-shirts in college, and I became "keeper of the tees".

That was when I realized just how much I had loved being a band mom. My focus became those memories when she left for college. Yet, as happy as those memories were, it highlighted the loss of my "mom" role. I became down for a while, yet God comforted me throughout.

The prophet Isaiah spoke God's message as given to him: "Don't be afraid, for I (God) am with you. Don't be discouraged, for I am your God" (Isaiah 41:10). God meant for his people to be encouraged by knowing they belonged to him. He was on their side. God's word speaks the same truth to his present-day people.

John experienced a vision in which God dictated letters to seven churches. God's letter to Smyrna acknowledged a strong religious persecution about to turn deadly. God encouraged and comforted his people with the reassurance of his presence during and the promise of his reward after (Revelation 2:9-11).

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The Apostle Paul understood the need for comfort. In turning to serve Christ, he moved from lofty heights of position and respect to being persecuted by those who previously respected him.

God as Comforter encompasses many facets of his character. Here are a few examples:

- Are you hurting? Traumatized? God provides comfort as our Healer.
- Do you feel lonely or abandoned? God provides comfort as our Shepherd.
- Do you feel chained to a painful or sinful past? God provides comfort as our Savior, Redeemer, Sanctifier, and Righteousness.

God gives his comfort; we just accept it.

His Comfort Gives Purpose

Recently I discovered the bag with those old band shirts. I needed to figure out what to do with them; throwing them away felt wrong. I decided to give them new purpose. They will become a t-shirt quilt to provide comfort and warmth for my grandchildren. They will also become an opening for life lesson conversations, like the rewards of good teamwork and a strong work ethic.

I love Paul's statement, "God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort. He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others" (2 Corinthians 1:3-4, NLT). It offers purpose.

My every occasion requiring God's comfort has been used in some way in counseling, parenting, or being a friend. It builds empathy until my heart demands I pour out God's comfort. It provides wisdom (when I listen) as to what does and does not comfort me. God's comfort makes me want to be there for others as he has been there for me.

Why does God let his children hurt at all? As he is the All-Powerful God, we know he could stop it. I wish I knew. No single answer fits. Sometimes we need discipline (training). Sometimes God helps us let go of what is good to gain something better. Sometimes we get hurt by something between God and someone else, like a loved one's death or their discipline. The rest of my answer: I can't even imagine his thoughts and ways; they are so much higher than mine... (Isaiah 55:8-9).

I know for certain that God walks with me in everything: the good, the bad, and the ugly. God's comfort gets me out of bed and gives my life purpose. If you let him, God will do the same for you. ■

"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may be with you forever." ~Jesus (John 14:16)

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