



A Guide for Spiritual Formation

Text for the Week: Isaiah 40:1-11

Message for the Week: Preparing the Way:
Advent Comfort

Sunday, December 15

Opening:

What is one low (a bad thing) and one high (a good thing) that happened to you this past week? Write them down and take turns sharing them with the others in your group.

Where have you seen the work of the Holy Spirit in your life this past week?

Have you ever played whack a mole? Have you ever felt like you are the mole?

Preparation:

Spend 1-2 minutes in silence with God to center and prepare yourself for your time with God today.

Read:

Read / Have two people in your group read [Isaiah 40:1-11](#) out loud.

(Clicking the link will bring you to multiple translations.)

As you read and/or listen to the text being read, circle, highlight, or underline what words, phrases, or ideas grabbed your attention and heart in these verses?

Write them down below and/or share them with those who are with you.

Respond / Reflect:

Verse 2 states an important truth. What is it? Do you believe the truth of verse 2 for your life? For others?

What is like when someone speaks to you tenderly? What is it like when someone speaks to you harshly? How would you describe the difference?

What do verses 6-8 say all people are like? How does this make you feel?

What do these verses say about God and His Word? How does this make you feel?

According to these verses, what are we to shout, proclaim, and point out to others? How are you doing this?

Take Away:

What is a main point or key message that you learned, understood, observed, or experienced that you are taking away with you from your group's reflections on the bible passage or your group's conversations today?

Prayer:

Spend time in prayer with/for the other people who are with you. Who in your group needs prayer today? Who in your group will you pray for?

Pray this prayer together:

Father, thank you for the words of comfort you speak over us in this Advent season and every day. Help us to take those words of the good news to the people we live with every day. Encourage us to share the tenderness of Christ in our interactions with everyone. AMEN

"Try It" - Putting our Faith into Action:

Speaking Tenderly – This week embrace the truth "...that your sin is taken care of—forgiven!" Remember that God has been and is tender with you. Allow this tenderness to inform your words and actions this week.

Isaiah 40:1-11 - New International Version

40 Comfort, comfort my people,
says your God.

² Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
and proclaim to her
that her hard service has been completed,
that her sin has been paid for,
that she has received from the Lord's hand
double for all her sins.

³ A voice of one calling:
"In the wilderness prepare
the way for the Lord^(a);
make straight in the desert
a highway for our God.^(b)

⁴ Every valley shall be raised up,
every mountain and hill made low;
the rough ground shall become level,
the rugged places a plain.

⁵ And the glory of the Lord will be revealed,
and all people will see it together.
For the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

⁶ A voice says, "Cry out."
And I said, "What shall I cry?"

"All people are like grass,
and all their faithfulness is like the flowers of the field.

⁷ The grass withers and the flowers fall,
because the breath of the Lord blows on them.
Surely the people are grass.

⁸ The grass withers and the flowers fall,
but the word of our God endures forever."

⁹ You who bring good news to Zion,
go up on a high mountain.

You who bring good news to Jerusalem,^(c)
lift up your voice with a shout,
lift it up, do not be afraid;
say to the towns of Judah,
"Here is your God!"

¹⁰ See, the Sovereign Lord comes with power,
and he rules with a mighty arm.
See, his reward is with him,
and his recompense accompanies him.

¹¹ He tends his flock like a shepherd:
He gathers the lambs in his arms
and carries them close to his heart;
he gently leads those that have young.

Footnotes

- a. [Isaiah 40:3](#) Or *A voice of one calling in the wilderness: / "Prepare the way for the Lord*
- b. [Isaiah 40:3](#) Hebrew; Septuagint *make straight the paths of our God*
- c. [Isaiah 40:9](#) Or *Zion, bringer of good news, / go up on a high mountain. / Jerusalem, bringer of good news*

Isaiah 40:1-11 - The Message

40¹⁻² "Comfort, oh comfort my people,"
says your God.
"Speak softly and tenderly to Jerusalem,
but also make it very clear
That she has served her sentence,
that her sin is taken care of—forgiven!
She's been punished enough and more than enough,
and now it's over and done with."
³⁻⁵ Thunder in the desert!
"Prepare for God's arrival!
Make the road straight and smooth,
a highway fit for our God.
Fill in the valleys,
level off the hills,
Smooth out the ruts,
clear out the rocks.
Then God's bright glory will shine
and everyone will see it.
Yes. Just as God has said."
⁶⁻⁸ A voice says, "Shout!"
I said, "What shall I shout?"
"These people are nothing but grass,
their love fragile as wildflowers.
The grass withers, the wildflowers fade,
if God so much as puffs on them.
Aren't these people just so much grass?
True, the grass withers and the wildflowers fade,
but our God's Word stands firm and forever."
⁹⁻¹¹ Climb a high mountain, Zion.
You're the preacher of good news.
Raise your voice. Make it good and loud, Jerusalem.
You're the preacher of good news.
Speak loud and clear. Don't be timid!
Tell the cities of Judah,
"Look! Your God!"
Look at him! God, the Master, comes in power,
ready to go into action.
He is going to pay back his enemies
and reward those who have loved him.
Like a shepherd, he will care for his flock,
gathering the lambs in his arms,
Hugging them as he carries them,
leading the nursing ewes to good pasture.