

Living Generously

Generous With Comfort

SESSION GOALS

The point of every session is a main idea with the goal of informing our knowing, feeling, and doing.

MAIN IDEA: Living generously will take us out of our comfort zone.

Head Change: To know that there's an inescapable physicality to generously forgoing comfort for the benefit of others.

Heart Change: To celebrate that when we generously put aside our comfort for others, we discover the generous comfort God readily gives us.

Life Change: To avoid echo chambers and holy huddles, and rather be a missional people who love and serve others despite the cost to our comfort.

OPEN

Describe your most uncomfortable camping trip or family Christmas or office cubicle experience – or any other appallingly uncomfortable scenario you've endured. How far were you from the centre of your comfort zone, on a scale of perfectly-comfortable to I-want-to-die?

Naturally, we'd all rather feel safe and at ease than stretched and uncomfortable, but Jonathan takes our understanding of generosity a step further in this session by showing us that Jesus made Himself cosmically uncomfortable for our sakes, and He calls us to be generous with our comfort too, for His glory and the good of those He has given us to love.

REVIEW

Jonathan says, ‘Part of the challenge of leading a generous life is that it takes us out of our comfort zone in so many ways. We have less for ourselves if we give more to others. We have to forego things we *want* so others can have things they *need*. It can also be about giving up things we want because of the joy they can bring to others.’ **Complete this sentence for three people you’ve seen or texted or thought about this week: [Name] needs _____ . Do you have what they need? Is there something practical or physical you can do to meet their need, even partially? Do you think you’d regret meeting their need, even if it made you uncomfortable to do so?**

Jonathan tells the story of a cycling accident that rendered him immovable and tangled up in a bike, while a friend held the weight of the bike off his potentially-broken leg for twenty minutes – in the freezing sleet – until the ambulance arrived. **Share about a time when someone stayed up all night or drove for miles or endured extreme cold or heat, for your sake. Have you ever forfeited physical comfort for someone else? Why did you do it?**

When Mary anoints Jesus’ feet and wipes them with her hair, she’s surely down in the dust and dirt. She willingly took on the uncomfortable, unpleasant position of a servant so she could lavish her love on Jesus. **How would Jesus – very soon – make the ultimate sacrifice of comfort for Mary?**

Jesus has *just* washed His disciples’ feet and told them that His body will be given for them – but they don’t get it. They start arguing over who will be named the GOAT Disciple (Luke 22:24). Jesus responds by reiterating the upside-down Kingdom message He’s been preaching and modelling throughout His time on Earth: the least shall be greatest, the last shall be first (Luke 22:25–30, Matthew 20:24–28). **In which areas of your life would you love to be *first* and *greatest*? What would it look like for you to flip the script? How is God challenging you to reimagine your goals and pursuits, forgoing the status or comfort you’re chasing for the sake of someone else? How is God already using you to channel His comfort to someone in need?**

Mary graphically illustrated the notion of being generous with comfort. When Jesus washed the disciples’ feet, He did the same. Generosity needs to be seen and felt if people are to understand it and be

changed by it. **Is there something you could physically do for someone, this week, to put some skin in the game? In other words, how could you take the idea of being generous with your comfort out of the philosophical, conceptual realm and into your practical, lived experience?**

BIBLE EXPLORATION

David writes, ‘Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.’ (Psalm 23:4) The rod represents God’s authority and defending power. The staff represents His comfort and care. **What would it look like for you to provide this kind of ‘rod and staff’ comfort to someone God has written into your story? What would it cost you, in terms of your own comfort?**

Read 1 Corinthians 9:27. Paul clearly isn’t chasing comfort. **Why not? What is he chasing instead?**

Read 2 Corinthians 1:3–4. **If you feel comfortable to do so, share about a deeply uncomfortable or painful experience you’ve endured, which God has used to bring comfort to others going through something similar.**

Read Matthew 11:28–30 and Hebrews 4:16. **Is God’s comfort available to you, 24/7? How do you know? Does knowing this encourage you to be more or less generous when it comes to stepping out of your comfort zone?**

LAST WORD

We’re not called to be a holy huddle, reminding each other how right we are. We’re called to be a missional people who live generously. That means we need to step outside of our mental and physical comfort zones to bring the love of God to the people He’s given us to serve. This leads us to discover the love of God too. May we be generous with our own comfort, willing to sacrifice it so others can be cared for. The way Mary so generously gave of herself – her time, attention, wealth, talent, possessions, people’s perceptions of her, and her comfort – is an inspiring example and encouragement to us today. May we also come closer to the generous God who created us and who promises to be with us and help us to live ever more generous lives.



DEEPER WALK

Select at least one activity below to complete before watching the next session.

Read: Isaiah 40–66 are known as the ‘comfort chapters’. Take this week to read them, highlighting the word *comfort* every time it shows up. Who is being comforted? Who is doing the comforting? How does God’s comfort strengthen His people and lend them faith and courage? What kind of comfort is God offering you in this season, and how is He asking you to comfort those around you?

Write: The word *comfort* isn’t just about consoling someone or feeling at ease. The prefix *com* means *with*, and *fort* (from the Latin, *fortis*) means *strong*. To comfort someone means to *with-strong* them. Write down all the ways you can think of to *with-strong* someone you live with or work with or perhaps need to spend some extra time with.

Pray: Pray for the comfort of those in war-torn areas of the world. Pray for the comfort of those in your wider community. Pray for the comfort of those in your own household. As you pray, take note of any ideas that come to mind, of ways God is asking you to be generous with your comfort.