



Discussion Guide — tempted+tried (week 5)

Date: March 22, 2026

Series: tempted+tried

Message: To be Comforted or Crushed

Scripture: Psalm 42; 2 Corinthians 4:1-9 (NRSVue)

Opening Prayer

God of mercy, we come to you as we are—tired, thirsty, hopeful, and honest. Meet us in what feels heavy. Give us courage to name what’s real, and grace to receive what we need for today. Form us into people who can be pressed without being crushed, held without pretending, and sustained by your love. Amen.

Introduction & Context

This week’s message began with a simple image: dehydration. It doesn’t announce itself—it quietly changes us. The sermon made the connection that spiritual dehydration can do the same thing: joy feels harder to reach, the hard parts of life feel amplified, and we can start to wonder whether we’ll be comforted or crushed.

We held two scriptures side by side:

- **Psalm 42** gives the *poetic inner language* of thirst—honest questions, honest longing, and a repeated refrain: “*Hope in God.*”
- **2 Corinthians 4:1–9** gives Paul’s *concrete field report*—life can be crushing, and yet mercy sustains: *pressed but not crushed; perplexed but not driven to despair.*

The goal isn’t to pretend pain isn’t real. The goal is to learn how to seek and wait for God’s comfort—and recognize the ways God’s mercy sustains us in ordinary, real-life ways.



Discussion Questions

1) Keep your water bottle full

1. What “spiritual dehydration” signs show up in you most often (short patience, thinner joy, cynicism, numbness, less prayer, etc.)?
2. When life gets hard, what do you tend to reach for first—comfort, control, distraction, productivity, withdrawal, something else?
3. What’s one way you can tell the difference between being comforted and being crushed?

2) Psalm 42: Naming thirst without pretending

4. Psalm 42 includes the question, “*Where is your God?*” When have you felt that question (even if you didn’t say it out loud)?
5. The psalmist talks to their own soul: “*Why are you cast down... Hope in God.*” What might it look like for you to “get curious” about your soul this week—without judging it?
6. The message said: “Bring the thirst to God. Then borrow hope.” Who or what helps you borrow hope when you can’t manufacture it?

3) 2 Corinthians 4: Mercy as fuel

7. Paul starts with mercy, not willpower. Where do you most feel tempted to rely on “try harder” faith right now?
8. The image of “clay jars” is meant to be freeing, not insulting. What part of your life feels most like a “clay jar” right now—ordinary, limited, fragile?
9. Which line from Paul’s contrasts hits closest today, and why?
 - pressed/afflicted but not crushed
 - perplexed but not driven to despair
 - persecuted but not forsaken
 - struck down but not destroyed

4) What mercy looks like in real life

10. The sermon named three “how”s of mercy: enough, presence, humility. Which one do you need most right now?
11. Where have you noticed “enough for today” recently (clarity, strength, calm, courage, breath, help)?
12. How has God shown up as presence—not explanation—either through prayer, Scripture, people, or small moments of steadiness?



5) From discussion to practice

13. What's one sentence you could pray this week that's honest and simple? (Example: "God, I'm thirsty—meet me with your mercy.")
 14. What's one "sip of mercy" practice you're willing to try daily for the next seven days?
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Closing Prayer

Merciful God, thank you for meeting us with what we need—often not all at once, but enough for today. When we are thirsty, give us the courage to pray honestly. When we are fragile, remind us we are still held. When we are pressed, surround us with your presence and your people so we are not crushed. Teach us to hope again—little by little—and to receive your mercy as daily bread. In Jesus' name, amen.

Key Takeaway

You can be pressed without being crushed because God's mercy meets you with enough, holds you with presence, and keeps your fragility from becoming failure.

Next Step — P.A.R.

Pray: Pray Psalm 42 honestly this week: "God, I'm thirsty—meet me with your mercy." Ask for enough for today (not answers for the whole future), and name one place you feel "pressed."

Act: Participate in Practicing the Way — Week 5: Meeting God in Pain and Suffering. As you do, choose one "sip of mercy" practice each day: a 2-minute breath prayer ("Hope in God"), a short walk without your phone, or texting one trusted person, "I'm pressed—can you help me carry this?"

Reflect: Each evening, finish this sentence: "Today I was pressed by ___, and God sustained me by ___." Look for mercy in ordinary forms—enough strength, a steady moment, a timely friend, a calmer reaction than expected—and thank God for the "not crushed" parts.

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