Hold on to His Promises when Overloaded
Veterans of the Cross — God Leads Us!

By Chaplain Steven C. Hokana

Opening Prayer
Gracious and Loving God, today I feel overwhelmed. Life comes at me with pummeling fists. I am confident this chapter, this season of struggle, will pass. I know You stand beside me. I am Your child. Help me embrace the comforting words of the hymn: “Neither life nor death shall ever, from the Lord His children sever; unto them His grace He showeth, and their sorrows all he knoweth.”* Amen.

Opening Discussion
Read aloud Psalm 4. What is your reaction? ____________________________________________________________

God knows and loves His people. Like the Psalmist, our life is filled with distresses. The list of suffering, pain, and sorrow is long and deep. Conjuring up a short list brings despair. The consequences lead to hours of restlessness, and we need rescue from sleepless nights. But God does not leave us alone in our suffering. How does this Psalm encourage when overwhelmed? ____________________________________________________________

The full weight of God’s loving relationship (Psalm 4:1–3)
What is King David’s tone of voice when addressing the Lord? ____________

The Lord’s best and brightest were reluctant and afraid. Life frequently blew up in their faces. They approached God in the rawness and desperation of life.
I Kings 19:1–8: The great prophet ____________ was afraid!
Exodus 3:1–6: Even ____________, the man who defied Pharaoh, who parted the Red Sea and saw the face of God, felt overwhelmed with his duties.
I Samuel 1:8–15: ____________ was in deep despair in prayer … crying.

How does King David address God? __________________________

We have the same blessing as David, through Jesus Christ our Lord, to come to our God in times of desperation. We are made his children and have access to him 24/7! Look at Isaiah 43:1–3a. _____

* The full weight of God’s loving relationship (Psalm 4:1–3): “Neither life nor death shall ever, from the Lord His children sever; unto them His grace He showeth, and their sorrows all he knoweth.”

Leader guide and Bible passages for this study are available online or by calling the LWML Office.
Depression, anxiety, suicide, homicide, shame (Psalm 4:2–3)

God tells us to acknowledge our ________ to Him and place it at the foot of Golgotha. Shaming and belittling hurt! Ask a high schooler what it’s like to be humiliated on social media. Or to have a loved one make callous and cutting gibes — it hurts! God knows! “The Lord ___________ when I __________ to him,” regardless of where I am — under direct fire in a noisy, desperate battle or alone and feeling isolated.

We are ________ by the Lord. What a loaded phrase! When God the Father looks at us through the eyes of the cross, His Son makes us beautiful and cherished! Jesus brought us into this wonderful estate … a redeemed child of God!

The “intimate” Lord who helps us (Psalm 4:4–5)

The Holy Spirit, through David, addresses the problem of ________. Recorded 269 times in the Bible, anger is serious business. The good news in this text is God does not leave us hanging. The Holy Spirit provides a remedy. We are to offer ____________ sacrifices and ___________ in the Lord. What does this mean to you? ____________

Read Romans 12:1. We are to present ourselves “as a ________ sacrifice” — “our spiritual worship.” Luther wrote concerning Psalm 4:5: “For to trust in the Lord means to trust in Christ. Without him, we can do nothing.”

Can you think of people in the Old Testament who got angry? List only three: there are lots! ____________, ____________, ____________.

At this point in perusing the Old Testament, you may have noticed the Lord got angry.

Look at John 2:13–16. Do you think Jesus was angry? If so, why? ____________

Did the Savior get angry in other passages? Glance at Mark 3:1–5.

Take a moment to explore Ephesians 4:26. The Apostle ___________ admonishes us not ___________ ________ when we become angry. In his letter he is quoting the very Psalm we’re studying! The Eternal Lord God, Creator and Sustainer of the Universe became ___________. Wow! We are created in God’s image (Genesis 1:26) and redeemed under Christ. We get angry, too, and that is not wrong or sinful. It is what we do with our anger that makes all the difference.

Christ’s loving embrace (Psalm 4:6–7)

Where can we go when hurting? ____________.

Where do you go now? ________

Do you find light or a place to vent? ________

We look to the ___________ as the source and center of ________!

Turn to Matthew 11:28–30. Discuss how burdens lifted by Christ bring about joy? ____________

Psalm 4:8 is a grace-filled conclusion. What happens when we approach the Lord concerning our feelings of being overwhelmed? ________

Read Philippians 4:6–7. What is the connection with Psalm 4:8? ________

Through the suffering and death of the Lord, we are free from Satan, hell, death, and the grave. We are His children through the waters of Holy Baptism. We have the joy to bring Him ALL our concerns — even the tumultuous rollercoaster of life. We have the privilege to come to Him in prayer whenever we have needs: whether at home or deployed and separated from loved ones. My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest (Exodus 33:14).

Closing

Almighty God, You are the refuge for Your people in times of trouble. We trust You with all our needs. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

*Say or sing together “Children of the Heavenly Father” (LSB #725 or verse 3 quoted above).  


2 Luther’s Works, Volume 10. Pg. 68.

3 NOTE: If you are under medical care for pain, pain management, depression, or any other medical condition please continue care. If seeing a therapist, counselor, or participating in group therapy, do not stop. The Lord God sends medical and behavioral providers as a gift to help us.

4 The Lutheran Study Bible, page 571

Chaplain, Lieutenant Colonel, Steven Hokana (USA) retired serves as the Assistant Director of Ministry to the Armed Forces—LCMS. He served 26 years in the Army as a Chaplain. Among his current duties, Chaplain Hokana travels the country, assisting congregations in bringing veterans and their families back to church. He also assists our LCMS members who serve our nation to remain faithful, telling the ministry to the military story. Steve is married to the former Mary Ophardt for 35 years. They have three children and two grandchildren.