



This study is dedicated to the prayer warriors of LWML who are also my Sisters in Arms — Fellow Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Coast Guardsmen, Marines, and Veterans — who serve Christ and Country with honor and integrity. Leaders, mothers, and daughters — you dedicate your lives to the protection of this great nation. It is not uncommon to face periods of anxiety, frustration, loneliness, fear, and powerful feelings of being overloaded. Satan and the enemy work overtime to destroy and discourage, yet you persevere in the face of danger. The love and grace of God, manifested in Christ, allow you to rise above these challenges. How awe inspiring!

Hold on to His Promises when Overloaded

Veterans of the Cross — God Leads Us!

By Chaplain Steven C. Hokana¹

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**. _____

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."² 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?³ _____

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.⁴

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

¹ More by Chaplain Steve on anger: <https://www.lcms.org/ministry-to-the-armed-forces/resources>; <https://www.lcms.org/publications/sohelpmegod>; <https://www.lhm.org/men/studydetail.asp?id=21041>.

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.