



**Hold on to His Promises When Overloaded.
Veterans of the Cross — God Leads Us!
By Chaplain Steven C. Hokana**

- 1 *Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness!
You have given me relief when I was in distress.
Be gracious to me and hear my prayer!*
- 2 *O men, how long shall my honor be turned into shame?
How long will you love vain words and seek after lies?*
- 3 *But know that the Lord has set apart the godly for himself;
the Lord hears when I call to him.*
- 4 *Be angry, and do not sin;
ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be silent.*
- 5 *Offer right sacrifices,
and put your trust in the Lord.*
- 6 *There are many who say, "Who will show us some good?
Lift up the light of your face upon us, O Lord!"*
- 7 *You have put more joy in my heart
than they have when their grain and wine abound.*
- 8 ***In peace I will both lie down and sleep;
for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.*** (Psalm 4:1–8¹ ESV)

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? _____
(Answers will vary.)

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? _____ (Answers will vary.)

Note: 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!

The full weight of God's loving relationship (verses 1– 3)

What is King David's "tone of voice" when addressing the Lord? _____ (Answers will vary.)

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 _____ (Elijah) was afraid!

I Kings 19: ¹Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. ²Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "So may the gods do to me and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by this time tomorrow." ³Then he was afraid, and he arose and ran for his life and came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there. ⁴But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he asked that he might die, saying, "It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life, for I am no better than my fathers." ⁵And he lay down and slept under a broom tree. And behold, an angel touched him and said to him, "Arise and eat." ⁶And he looked, and behold, there was at his head a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water. And he ate and drank and lay down again. ⁷And the angel of the LORD came again a second time and touched him and said, "Arise and eat, for the journey is too great for you." ⁸And he arose and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mount of God.

Exodus 3:1–6 Even _____, (Moses) the man who defied Pharaoh, who parted the Red Sea and saw the face of God, felt overwhelmed with his duties.

Exodus 3: ¹Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. ²And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. ³And Moses said, "I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned." ⁴When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." ⁵Then he said, "Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." ⁶And he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

I Samuel 1:8–15: _____ (Hannah) was in deep despair in prayer... crying.

I Samuel 1: ⁸And Elkanah, her husband, said to her, "Hannah, why do you weep? And why do you not eat? And why is your heart sad? Am I not more to you than ten sons?" ⁹After they had eaten and drunk in Shiloh, Hannah rose. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat beside the doorpost of the temple of the LORD. ¹⁰She was deeply distressed and prayed to the LORD and wept bitterly. ¹¹And she vowed a vow and said, "O Lord of hosts, if you will indeed look on the affliction of your servant and remember me and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a son, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and no razor shall touch his head." ¹²As she continued praying before the Lord, Eli observed her mouth. ¹³Hannah was speaking in her heart; only her lips moved, and her voice was not heard. Therefore Eli took her to be a drunken woman. ¹⁴And Eli said to her, "How long will you go on being drunk? Put your

wine away from you.”¹⁵ But Hannah answered, “No, my lord, I am a woman troubled in spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the Lord.

How does King David address God? _____ (God of my righteousness)

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**. _____ (“When ... I will be with you;”)

Isaiah 43: ¹But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.

²When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.

^{3a}For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.

Depression, anxiety, suicide, homicide, shame (verses 2-3)

God tells us to acknowledge our _____ (shame) 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 have a loved one make callous and cutting gibes — it hurts! God knows! “The Lord _____ (hears) when I _____ (call) to him,” regardless of where I am: under direct fire in a noisy, desperate battle or alone and feeling isolated.

We are _____ (set apart) 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 (verses 4–5)

The Holy Spirit, through David, addresses the problem of _____ (anger). Recorded 269 times in the Bible, anger is serious business.¹ The good news in this text is God does not leave us “hanging.” The Holy Spirit provides a remedy. We are to offer _____ (right) sacrifices and _____ (trust) in the Lord. What does this mean to you? _____ (Answers will vary.)

Read **Romans 12:1**. We are to present ourselves “as a _____ (living) 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

Romans 12: ¹I appeal to you therefore, brothers,^[a] by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

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.

Can you think of people in the Old Testament who got angry? List only three: there are lots! _____ (Answers will vary, but may include: **Jacob**, Genesis 30:2; **Moses**, Exodus 32:19; **Samuel**, 1 Samuel 15:11; **Saul**, 1 Samuel 3:8; **David**, 2 Samuel 13:21). 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? _____ (Yes, toward misuse of the temple)

John 2: ¹³ The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. ¹⁵ And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. ¹⁶ And he told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade."

Did the Savior get angry in other passages? Glance at **Mark 3:1–5**. _____ (Yes, at Pharisees' self-righteous criticism of healing on the Sabbath)

Mark 3: ¹ Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there with a withered hand. ² And they watched Jesus,^[a] to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him. ³ And he said to the man with the withered hand, "Come here." ⁴ And he said to them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?" But they were silent. ⁵ And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was restored.

Take a moment to explore **Ephesians 4:26**. The Apostle _____ (Paul) admonishes us not _____ (to sin) 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 _____ (angry). 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.

Ephesians 4: ²⁶ Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger,

Christ's loving embrace (verses 6–7)

Where can we go when hurting? _____ (the Lord) Where do you go now? _____? (Answers will vary, but may include: prayer, Bible study, The Lord's Supper, a friend, a counselor.) Do you find light or a place to vent?³ _____ (Answers will vary.)

We look to the _____ (Lord) as the source and center of _____ (joy, light)! Turn to **Matthew 11:28-30**. Discuss how burdens lifted by Christ bring about joy? (Answers will vary, but may include: _____ (given rest) _____ (yoke is easy) _____ (burden is light)

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.

Matthew 11: ²⁸ Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

Verse 8 is a “grace-filled” conclusion. What happens when we approach the Lord concerning our feelings of being overwhelmed? _____ (Answers will vary, but may include: lie down and sleep in peace.)

Read **Philippians 4:6–7**. What is the connection with **Psalms 4:8**? (Answers will vary, but may include:

_____ (prayer)

_____ (when feeling anxious, placing yourself in the loving arms of Jesus brings peace)

Philippians 4: ⁶ do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

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 to pray 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 Prayer: 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

Closing Hymn: Say or sing together “Children of the Heavenly Father” (LSB #725 or verse 3[#] quoted above).