

## Overwhelmed

1. Warm-up Question: Tell us about the best costume you saw this year for Halloween.
2. For the most part, King David had a very successful reign. But there was a time when everything seemed to be coming apart at the seams. The backstory began years earlier when David's eldest son Amnon raped his half-sister Tamar. David's next eldest son, Absalom, avenged his sister by murdering Amnon, then fled into exile. Eventually, David was persuaded to pardon Absalom and welcome him home. Although Absalom was now David's eldest son, David seemed to favor his younger son by a different mother, Solomon, as his heir. So Absalom decided to take matters into his own hands. He launched a rebellion that forced David to flee Jerusalem. Absalom actually ruled for a short period before David could regroup and reclaim the throne. It was during the period when David was banished and running for his life from his own son that he sat down and wrote Psalm 3. Although we don't know the precise circumstances that prompted Psalm 4, it too reflects a time of distress in David's life. Read Psalm 3 and 4, as printed on p. 3.
  - a. In Psalm 3:1, David says, "O Lord, how many are my foes! Many are rising up against me; many are saying to me, 'There is no help for you in God.'" Imagine yourself as King David deposed from the throne by your own son, in the wilderness, running for your life – having gone from living in a palace to sleeping in caves, If you were David, what feelings would be surging through you?
  - b. At various times in life, we all find ourselves surrounded by our foes and on the run. When in your life have you felt most overwhelmed?
  - c. In your life right now, what most threatens to overwhelm you?
3. Knowing what David was facing, we'd expect Psalm 3 and 4 to be filled with despair. Instead, David says things like: "You, O Lord, are . . . the lifter up of my head." Psalm 3:3. "You have enlarged me when I was in distress." Psalm 4:1. Elsewhere Psalm 18:29 says, "By you, O Lord, I have run through a troop and by my God I have leaped over a wall." In Psalm 3:5, David says, "I laid down and slept. . . . I will not be afraid of ten thousand people who have set themselves against me all around!"
  - a. Have you ever known someone who was relentlessly upbeat and hopeful even in times that would drive others to despair? What fueled that person's hope and optimism?
  - b. Have you ever known someone who seemed to surrender to despair? What was it about their inner perspective or life experience that seemed to fuel their despair?
4. We all want to have what David had – to experience hope, peace, and supernatural strength in times of great difficulty. The question is how to get there. Jeff focused our attention on two key insights embedded in Psalm 3 and 4 that seemed critical to David's ability to triumph during adversity. The first is found in Psalm 4:5, where

David tells us that in times of crisis we should, “Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord.” “Righteousness” means doing the right thing. “Sacrifice” means doing something that’s costly. So, offering “sacrifices of righteousness” means doing the right thing even when it’s costly. It means that, when all the pressures of life are crashing in on us, we resist the impulse to lose our integrity or compromise our values.

- a. Tell us about a time of great stress in your life when, despite all the pressure, you did the right thing even when it was costly. How did that make you feel?
  - b. Tell us about a time of great stress in your life when you let all the pressure get to you and you compromised your values and didn’t do the right thing. How did that make you feel?
  - c. In a TED Talk, psychologist Susan David tells how she encounters a lot of people who want life to be happy and fluffy. When she counsels someone like that, she tells them, “You have dead people’s goals. Only dead people never get stressed, never get broken hearts, never experience the disappointment that comes with failure. Tough emotions are part of our contract with life. You don’t get to have a meaningful career or raise a family or leave the world a better place without stress and discomfort. Discomfort is the price of admission to a meaningful life.” How can Susan David’s perspective help us in times of crisis in our life?
  - d. Jeff said, “Doing the right thing, even when it’s hard, brings a lot of peace and satisfaction into our lives. I would wager to guess that some of the hardest things you’ve ever had to do are some of the very things that have brought the most meaning and beauty into your life.” Do you buy that? Why or why not?
5. The second great insight King David offers for how to thrive during overwhelming times is found in Psalm 4:4, where he says, “Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.” Elsewhere in Psalm 46:10, God reiterates this same point, saying, “Be still and know that I am God.” The Hebrew term translated “be still” is *damam*. It means “to cease your inner striving.” *Damam* is the opposite of being all stirred up inside. It means to surrender the illusion that you have the power to control outcomes in life. It’s a call to cease resenting and resisting that what happens is not what was “supposed to be.” It’s a call to embrace what is. Jeff described *damam* as the feeling you get when you sing Paul McCartney’s song “Let It Be.”
- a. Why is it so hard to let go of what was supposed to be and embrace what is?
  - b. Tells us about something happening in your life – or something that happened in the past – that you are tempted to resist and resent, instead of letting go and embracing. Does holding on to that resistance/resentment make you stronger and more peaceful? What keeps you from letting go of it? What might help you let go?

## Psalm 3 and 4, selected verses

**3** O Lord, how many are my foes! Many are rising up against me; **2** many are saying to me, "There is no help for you in God!"

**3** But You, O LORD, are a shield for me, my glory, and the lifter up of my head. **4** I cried to the LORD with my voice, and God heard me. **5** I lay down and slept; I awoke, for the LORD sustained me.

**6** I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around. . . .

**4** So hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness! You have relieved me in my distress; have mercy on me, and hear my prayer. . . .

**4** To the wise you say, commune with your heart on your bed, and be still. **5** Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the LORD.

**6** There are many who say, "Who will show us any good?" LORD, lift up the light of Your countenance upon us. **7** You have put gladness in my heart, more than in the season that grain and wine increase. **8** I will both lie down in peace, and sleep; for You alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.