



# **Message Transcript**

## **Considerations During Times of Spiritual Discouragement**

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Lord Jesus, we just thank you that we get the privilege of coming together as your people to worship you, to worship your holy name, to give you all the glory and all the honor and all the praise for who you are. And, Lord, in this moment now, we ask through your living and your active word to speak directly to us. Lord, we wanna hear you. We wanna hear you. And so, Lord, we pray.

If there's any distractions in our life, Lord, if there's any known sin in our life, Lord, we just confess that to you right now, knowing that the blood of Jesus covers all of our sin. Let our minds be alert and our hearts be receptive to hearing the very things that you have for us. And, Lord, for what you're going to accomplish this morning, we give you all the glory and honor and praise in Jesus Christ's name. And all God's people agreed with me and said, amen. Amen.

So glad to be here. We're going to continue our series of summer in the psalms. In this specific psalm, I have been waiting to preach for some time. And the reason is, I think when we talk about our journey as christians, there are many times with our journey as christians that we think, or we're taught that we're always supposed to be on the up and up, that we're always supposed to feel spiritually high, that we're always supposed to be growing, and that no matter what happened in your life this week or

last week or this month, no matter what's going on, hey, God's still on the throne. Be happy, be joyful.

Get over it. And I want to. I got news for you. If you've walked with Jesus long enough, there are times where you know that Jesus is still on the throne and that he's still God and that you still belong to him. And things are really discouraging.

And it's okay. And I think too often, as evangelical Christians, we want to put a spiritual band aid on people's hurts, because even we become uncomfortable with other people when they go through hurts. Like, hey, that's pretty uncomfortable for me. I hope you can get happy. And sometimes we think that coming to an hour service or come to harvest, an hour and a half service and, you know, singing some songs and hearing a message that, you know, 60 or 90 minutes later, we're supposed to walk out of here and everything's supposed to be all hunky dory again, put back together.

And the reality is there are times and seasons in our lives as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, where we go through times of spiritual discouragement. If you're going through that time today, if you've been through that time, then I have a word for you.

And if you haven't been, I have really good news for you. If you live long enough, you will. So this message will be applicable down the road.

Right. So I encourage you to open your bibles up to psalm, chapter 42 this morning. Psalm, chapter 42. I'm gonna read it. You'll find this psalm very familiar.

And then what we wanna look at are different ways. We're gonna actually look at six different things that we can do, that we can be reminded of when we go through spiritual discouragement. Listen to this psalm. As the deer pants for flowing streams so my soul for you, o God.

My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my food day and night while they say to me all day long, where is your God? These things I remember as I pour out my soul how I would go with the throng and lead them in the procession to the house of God with glad shouts and songs, songs of praise a multitude keeping festival. Why are you cast down, o my soul?

And why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God for I shall again praise him.  
My salvation and my God, my soul is cast down within me. Therefore I remember you  
from the land of Jordan and of hermon from Mount Mazar deep calls to deep at the  
roar of your waterfalls all your breakers and your waves have gone over me by day,  
the Lord commands his steadfast love. And at night his song is with me.

A prayer to the God of my life. I say to God, my rock, why have you forgotten  
me? Why do I go mourning? Because of the oppression of my enemy. As with a  
deadly wound in my bones, my adversaries taunt me while they say to me all the day,  
where is your God?

Why are you cast down, o my soul? And why are you in turmoil within me? Hope  
in God, for I shall again praise him my salvation and my God. Now, all throughout this  
psalm, three different times, the psalmist writes, why so cast down? Or why so  
downcast, o my soul?

Like, what's wrong with my soul? I wanna take a look at six different things. Now,

I don't always like doing six things in notes because the goal is not that you go out and remember all six things. The idea is to bring out from God's word what those things are and how God would use those in your life to speak to you for the one or the two or the three things that God wants you to put into practice this morning. But here's some considerations for times of spiritual discouragement.

When you go through them, remember this, your soul's greatest need is an encounter with the living God. Your soul's greatest need during times of spiritual discouragement is an encounter with the living God. He says, as a deer pants for flowing streams. So pants my soul for you, o God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.

When shall I come and appear before God? I mean, you think about a deer. It's being chased or a deer that's been running, and it comes up to the brook or the streams or wherever that deer is, and it's panting and its lungs are moving in and out, and it needs that refreshment. It's similar to how you feel after you've worked out hard for a period of time or you've been out in the sun for a long period of time, maybe even riding a bike. And it's almost as if your tongue is sticking to the roof of your mouth.

You're so thirsty in the same way that you would feel like that is what it feels like when you're spiritually discouraged and your need for an encounter with the living God that your soul pants for God. Now, just to be clear, you don't have a soul. You are a soul. You have a body, right? That's why all throughout the Bible we talk about the soul.

And when we share the gospel, we talk about God saving souls. In Matthew, chapter 11:29, Jesus said, come to me, all of you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Rest for your soul, not your body, your soul, that deep inner part of who you are. And isn't it true, if you've walked with the Lord long enough, I found that it's true. It's easier to recover spiritually, and it's easier to recover emotionally than it is to recover spiritually.

Spiritually takes time. Jesus is referred to in one, Peter one, as the great shepherd of your soul. God cares about your soul. And so when the psalmist writes as the deer pants for the water, so my soul pants for you. I'm in need of an encounter with you.

And you see this theme all throughout the psalms. This is nothing new to psalm 42. If you flip over to psalm chapter 63, you'll read the exact same thing. O God, you are my God. Earnestly I seek you.

My soul thirsts for you. My flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory because your steadfast love is better than life. My lips will praise you, so I will bless you as long as I live. In your name, I will lift up my hands.

My soul will be satisfied with fat and rich food, and my mouth will praise you with joyful lips. And on and on it goes. In psalm 84. In Psalm, chapter 84, it's written the exact same way, verses one and two. How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts?

My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the Lord. My heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God. And in verse ten, he says, for a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I mean, it's a yearning for God. There will be times, if there hasn't



been already, where you love Jesus, you love who he is.

You believe that he died on the cross for your sins, that he's been raised victorious. You're following after him. And for some reason, somehow, deep down, it could be experiences, circumstances, just life happening, where you find yourself thoroughly discouraged. And this is what the psalmist asking, what's wrong with me? Why is my soul so discouraged?

Why am I so downcast? Here's what you need to remember that your greatest need is an encounter with the living God. That's your greatest need. Back in 2002, when I graduated from Dallas seminary, I was kind of on one of those spiritual highs. I mean, I just finished schooling, which I said I would never go back again and do, and I did.

And I felt like God was calling me to this program to go plant a church, which he did. And I'm in this program. And so in May of 2002, I'm thinking, I'm going and I'm engaged and I'm getting ready to get married. My whole life is coming together. Fast forward about four months.

Broken engagement, totally confused about whether I should ever plan a church or not, not understanding what's going on. Everything in my life unraveled. You ever had a situation like that? And even when well meaning christians, when you go through a time like that, you know what they want to do? They want to post a little spiritual band aid on it, throw some scripture at you.

Hey, Jeff, it's all good. God works for the good of those who love him, who are called according to his purpose. I knew that, but I was hurting. And I remember I would go to church every Sunday and every Wednesday by myself. And I couldn't wait just to get into a group, just to be in the presence of the Lord.

And just to sometimes hear people sing, because I didn't want to sing and just to hear the word, and I didn't care what the word was. I just wanted to hear God. And I remember I would go for a period of about six months, and I'd just sit in the very back and just weep. As all of that was going on. I knew God was good.

I knew he was still the savior of my soul. I knew he was still the Lord of my life. And I was thoroughly, 100% discouraged in every way you want my soul needed. I need an encounter with the living God. You know what you need when you go through times of spiritual discouragement?

You need an encounter with the living God. What you're really looking for is not your best friend. What you're really looking for is not your buddy. What you're really not looking for is give me the quick fix answer, God. Give me the three steps that gets me out of here.

I need to have an encounter with you. And there's such a difference. There's such a difference between seeking God's face and seeking God's hand. God loves to bless us. He really does.

God is a prospering God. God's done so much for us. I mean, even if we were just talking about salvation alone, we could talk about his goodness all day long. He's just a good God. But God doesn't want us just to love him for what he does.

God wants us to love him for who he is. It's the difference for those of you who are married between engagement and marriage, right? You ever seen Christian engaged couples? You ever seen them together? I think premarital counseling for christian engaged couples is pretty worthless in some ways because every christian engaged couple I've ever spent time with will tell me to my face that they know that's been problems for other people out there.

But for them, out of the billions of people that have been married, they're the one couple, even though they've never been married, that's got it all figured out. And so even when you share suggestions about finances or relationships or communication, no need to share. They already know that stuff. They've read it in the Bible, right? And then they get married.

And it's fun because post marital counseling is really important, right? Because for premarital couples, you're getting married because I love you. Because marriage couples are. I love you in spite of. And I'm enjoying you.

I married my wife because, like, I married my wife because I knew she had integrity. I married my wife. Cause I knew she was hot. I married my wife, you know? Cause she's gonna cook and she's gonna clean and she's gonna give me kids and she's gonna take care of them.

It's awesome. Right? Now, if I went home to my wife and said, hey, I love you because you're a good cook and you clean well and you take care of the kids and keep it up, way to go. That's not loving to her, right? She wants me to seek her.

She wants me to spend time with her. She wants to see in me that I really want to get to know her and that I appreciate her and I value her. And our God's the same way. God does great things for us. But you know what God wants?

God wants us to pursue him, to have an encounter with the living God. Even if you're discouraged, keep pursuing him. It's okay. And, boy, I wish I could give you a formula. If you're really discouraged, these three easy points will get you out of it within a week.

But I find that sometimes God takes us through the valley of the shadow of death. Sometimes it's for a week and sometimes it's for a month and sometimes it's for a year. And we just don't know. But I can tell you this. It's okay.

It's okay. And evangelical Christians in America need to hear this. Do you know why? Because we're uncomfortable when we're going through it and we think there's something wrong with us. And we're really uncomfortable when other people go through it and we want to fix them.

And even in our best attempt, sometimes we're hurtful. Here's what the psalmist says. I don't get why I'm cast down. I don't get what's wrong with me. But here's what I do know.

I'm searching for an encounter with the living God. I need a touch from God right at this moment. It's important. Second thing you should remember when you're going through times of spiritual discouragement is that honesty and vulnerability is a value

before the Lord. Being honest and being vulnerable before the Lord is a value.

Now, honesty is easy enough. That's just telling the truth, right? But being vulnerable is where you pour out the entirety of your heart. Notice what the psalmist writes in verse three. The psalmist writes, my tears have been my food day and night.

You know what that means? All day long, from the time I wake up, throughout the entire day until I go to sleep, I find myself in tears. I'm thoroughly discouraged. I'm crying. I didn't think you could be a Christian and do that.

Don't you believe in Jesus? Why are you crying? Right. No, because I do believe in Jesus, and my life's really hard right now. I didn't expect this circumstance.

I didn't expect this tragedy. I didn't expect this health problem, expect this financial setback. Yeah, I still love Jesus, but I'm hurting. Be honest before the Lord, when you hurt. Not only was this psalmist hurting, but notice what they said while they

say to me all the day long, where is your God?

During times of discouragement. You ever had this happen before? You're hurting, you know, God's still the Lord. Jesus is still the Lord of your life. You know, God's still on his throne.

And then there's some other people, like, you're a Christian. Look at how sad you are. I'm not a Christian. I'm happy. Where's your God?

Doesn't he care about you, even well meaning Christians? Hey, what's wrong with you? Maybe you're just depressed. You know, maybe you should get some counseling. I couldn't have preached this psalm 20 years ago because when I first became a Christian and I heard about people that were depressed, it didn't even make sense to me.

Like, I don't even get it. I'd never been depressed in my life. And then I went into ministry, and then I experienced it in spades. And then I started studying missionary



biographies and other pastors who've had significant impact and realized it's so common to people that want to walk with Jesus. It's normative in some ways.

And, oh, I wish I could tell you now that I've gone through that. And I'm, you know, I know it doesn't look like I'm 45, but I am. I'm 45, that I'll never go through anything like that ever again. I just don't know. I might cycle through it several more times.

Right. What does God want us to do? He wants us to be honest and vulnerable. This person is saying, God, I'm crying all day long. I'm crying myself to sleep.

My pillow's wet. Every single night I wake up and it's still damp. And all along everybody's saying, where's your God? Drop down to verse nine. I say to God, my rock.

Notice the language. I still believe that God is the rock. I still believe who he is.

But I'm saying to him, why have you forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of my enemy.

And notice how he describes it metaphorically, as with a deadly wound in my bone. My adversaries taunt me while they say to me all day long, where is your God? I mean, it feels like I'm just being shot upon with spears. I feel totally wounded. I feel like, where the heck are you?

I'm trying to serve you, and you don't care, right? I remember being a youth pastor in my thirties. I remember doing a wedding for a couple that was coming out of my youth group. The gal was 23, and the guy was 19. And when you're doing a wedding, I mean, a lot of a wedding is pretty rote material.

You know, you're kind of reading vows back and forth. You're reading exchange of rings back and forth. It's not like it takes a whole lot of talent to officiate a wedding. So while I'm going through this, I remember thinking, I mean, everybody's there. They're celebrating the bride and the groom, and I'm looking at all the smiley faces, but I'm not happy.

I was trying to smile on the outside, but inwardly, I'm doing this whole service. I'm like, lord, where the heck's my wife? Why do I have to officiate this stupid service? And I don't even have somebody yet, right? You ever been that honest with the Lord?

See, in church, oftentimes, we are trained to not be honest with God and to not be honest with our feelings and to not pour out our heart before him as if he doesn't know what it is already.

Religion, you know, religion is simply a rehearsed bit of rituals. Religion's always rehearsed. Relationships are real. You think about the best relationships you have. You can be real in them.

You can be real. Best relationship you have, you can be real with our elders. I can be totally real. I've seen them at their best. I've seen them at their worst.

They've seen me at my best. They've seen me at my worst. My wife, we are real. I've seen her at her best. She's never had a worst.

She's seen me at my best. I sometimes have a worst. Right? We know each other. We can have those conversations.

We know each other's heart. It's real. What's your relationship like with God? Is it just routine prayers? God, I love you.

God bless his person, God bless us. And I am on my day. Or do you pour out your heart before the Lord? God wants us to pour out our hearts before the Lord. Let me just give you a couple verses you can write down.

Psalm 30 417. It says, when the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears and delivers them out of their troubles. Psalm 57, two. Says it like this. Psalm 57, two.

I cry out to God most high, to God who fulfills his purpose for me. And then my favorite verse on this in the Old Testament, psalm 69, three. Listen to how vulnerable this is and how honest it is. I am weary with my crying out. My throat is parched.

My eyes grow dim with waiting for my God. Now, if you've ever gone through spiritual discouragement, you're like, live that, been there, done that, know that verse, right? It's okay. It's okay to go through those times. It's okay to be honest and vulnerable before the Lord.

It's okay to question God. It's okay to ask why. It's okay to wonder. As long as our hearts are open to receiving, God wants us to be real with him. And sometimes we think in our life, because we're taught this, that our spiritual life should be linear.

So there's this moment in time where I was not a Christian. Then I came to know Jesus, and then my life began to trajectory up. And slowly but surely, every day I've made little steps, and now I'm getting higher. My spiritual growth in Christ has looked nothing like that. My spiritual growth in Christ.

The moment I met Christ, I was out sharing my faith with everybody I could find. And then I went to the theological institution of the University of Illinois, and it plummeted and went like that for about three years, until I met somebody that really loved me and showed me how to get in the Bible. And then it started to go up, and then I. And it still kind of goes like that. It looks more like a stock market.

And sometimes if we tell people, hey, it's supposed to go up, then when times go down or situations happen or trials hit, we think there's something wrong with us when God is using all those things just to grow us. And it's okay. It's okay if you don't believe what I'm saying today. If you don't believe what the word of God is saying today, go back and study. Any saint in the history of the church that has had radical impact for Jesus, and their lives will tell the same story.

Tell the same story. Be honest and be vulnerable before the Lord. Third, how about this? During times of spiritual discouragement, remember, God's love for you is constant. His love for you is constant.

I mean, even during this time, while his soul is downcast. In verse seven eight, he says, deep calls to deep at the roar of your waterfalls. I mean, that God is sovereign, that you look at a gigantic waterfall. He's making a metaphoric picture of God's grace. He says, all your breakers and your waves have gone over me by day.

The Lord commands his steadfast love, that he's even aware during the times of difficulty and despair and discouragement and desperation, that God's love is still pouring over him, just like the overwhelming circumstances are pouring over him. Just like when you go through it and overwhelming circumstances are pouring over you, that God's love is still pouring over you. He hasn't left you. He's not forsaken you. During times of spiritual discouragement is when the enemy speaks the loudest.

If God loved you, then why are you going through this? If God loved you, then why is your friend? That's not as spiritual as. You don't have to go through that. If God loved you, how come it's those kind of questions.

And here's what the psalmist says. God, I know your love is consistent for me. Your love pours over me. You love me, God. It's who you are, and it's who I am in you.

Think about this. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us, right? It had nothing to do with your performance. We think that love is earned. We learn that from people in our world, from coaches and teachers and parents, that if we perform a certain way, then we have significance.

If we perform a certain way, then we belong. When we read through the Bible, what we realize is it's all about Jesus performance on the cross and his performance in being resurrected from the dead. That's the performance that demonstrates his love for us. And I love romans eight. I always say, if there was one chapter in the Bible, I could have, and I believe all of God's word to be true.

But if I had to pick one, I'd probably pick romans eight, because it's so rich with theological truth. But think about romans 831. What shall we say about these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? If you love Jesus, God is always for you.



Drop down. In verse 38, it says, for I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God. In Christ Jesus our Lord. There's nothing but. Nothing but nothing that separates you from God's love.

You're going through times of spiritual discouragement. Remind yourself of the fact that God loves you with an unconditional love so much that the father was willing to send the Son on your behalf and have him crucified in your place so that you could have life. He never stops loving you. He never does. Reflect on that.

Here's another thing to remember. Number four. When you go through times of spiritual discouragement, remember to reflect on the times God has been at work in your life. Reflect on the times God has been at work in your life. Because here's what happens.

What happens is when you go through times of spiritual discouragement, you'll forget that God even exists. You'll forget that God's ever even done anything for you. Right? But notice what the psalmist says. Psalm 42 three.

After he says, my tears have been my food. In verse four, he says this. These things I remember as I pour out my soul, how I would go with the throng and lead them in the procession to the house of God with glad shouts and songs of praise. A multitude keeping festival. When you go through times of spiritual discouragement, remember the times where you've been on fire for the Lord.

Remember the times where God has done some amazing things in your life. Remember them. This is a great time to pause and say, here's a practical way you can do this. Keep a journal. Now, if you say, I can't afford a journal, then go buy, like, a notebook or like a three ring binder.

If you say, I can't really write very well, then make bullet points and just write down what happened during the day or that week. Just a couple things that you see, because what God shows you in the light, Satan will always try to rob in the darkness.

And when you go through times with blinders on and you feel like you're all alone, it's great to have somewhere to go and read and see. God has always been faithful to me. He's always been faithful to me.

I mean, that's why I tell the story so often about us being able to purchase this building and raising \$1.93 million in six days. And some of you will say, well, Jeff, that was three years ago. Why are you still talking about it? Because I still serve the same God. And I love to be reminded about how good he is to me.

I have a journal. I remember the day that I married my wife. We were full time missionaries. We had just bought a house, which was kind of a risk. And we were getting ready to go on our honeymoon.

And I was looking at our bank account and I'm like, this is going to be kind of hard. We don't have any money. And I remember that day going to the mailbox and somebody gave our ministry a \$5,000 donation that I received on my wedding day. So I wasn't stressed at my wedding. I'm like, we're going to make it.

It's going to be okay. And I remember writing that down because I like to remember the fact that God showed up just when he needed to show up. Do you know he's done it in your life just by show of hands? I mean, just raise your hand if you've ever seen God at work in your life personally. Just raise your hand.

Okay, now keep them up for a second. Now look around at everybody. Okay, now keep your hand up. If you've ever felt like you're all alone and God doesn't care about you, you've ever felt that, okay, see what I'm saying? It's the reason we need to journal that, not just for ourselves, but to tell others about our God and who he is.

It's important because we're all going to go through the valley of the shadow of death at some point in time. And I can't tell you what that circumstance is going to look like for you. I can't describe the details, but you'll know when you're in it. You'll know when you're in it. And when you raise your hand and say, yeah, I know God's been good to me.

It's great to go back and be able to read specifically how he's been good. Do you

know I have a drawer of a place where I go for people that have written me encouraging notes that I just keep because there are days I need to read them. And the ones that send discouraging notes, they didn't make the drawer. Did you know that? Because they don't help me.

They don't even make a file. They make the trash. Right? We need to reflect on the times God's been good in our life. I mean, just journal.

Hey, I used to be this, and now I'm this. And it's all because of God's grace. Write that story down. And I just want to tell you something. I mean, what he talks about here is man.

I remember I used to lead people to the house of God. I was the one leading the shouts of worship up front. And now I don't even feel like going anymore. What's wrong with me? Why so downcast?

O my soul. Can I tell you this? One of the greatest places to go when you're spiritually discouraged is corporate worship. It's corporate worship. It's being around other believers who are breathing life.

So you see God at work in a community of people. It's the best place to be. It's the best place to be. That's what he's writing about. That's what he's saying to us.

Be encouraged. Now, for some of you here today, you would say, you know, I used to really be fired up about God, but my sin has gotten in the way of what God wants. Can I just tell you something about our God, how awesome he is. He loves to bring wavered sheep back. Loves to.

I mean, the story of the lost sheep and the lost sons is not just about a lost person coming to Christ. It's really about people that were in the fold that traveled off and he's going to get them again. You say, well, I was a Christian. Hey, if you're a Christian, you're still a Christian. You've just wandered and God's going to bring you back.

He has incredible love for you. Remember that. And for some of you said, you know, I'm just in this trial. I mean, I didn't do anything wrong. I'm seeking the Lord, and I don't know where he is and what happened here.

Can I tell you this? God loves to comfort those who are in the valley of the shadow of death. It's who he is. It's who he is. He's a loving God.

Reflect on the time God has been at work in your life. Number five, I would say this. When you're going through times of spiritual discouragement or you're depressed, remember to confirm God's presence by singing praises to God. Confirm his presence by singing praises to God. That's why I put this as number five, because I knew some of you were going to be uncomfortable.

I'm tracking till number five now. I'm kind of done with that. I'm not singing right. Notice what he says. Verse eight.

By day, the Lord commands his steadfast love. And at night, his song is with me. A prayer to the God of my life. Prayer and praise are a weapon when you go through times of discouragement. And I'll tell you why praise is so powerful.

Because sometimes it's hard to even pray. Sometimes it's hard to even get the words out. Like, I don't even know what I want to pray because I'm so discouraged. But a song that's already been written is great. Developing a new song is great.

You say, well, I can't sing. The Bible talks about you make a joyful noise, right? Just make a joyful noise. Cry out to the Lord. It's a powerful thing to set your heart on the Lord.

I mean, there are times in my life where I'm discouraged. I just sing. I'll sing in my car, I'll sing in the shower. I'll sing when I'm by myself. I'll sing when I'm on a hike.



I don't do it with everybody around all the time, for obvious reasons, but I like to sing. And there's a difference between singing praises to God and just knowing some of your favorite songs. I mean, I grew up in the eighties. I know every classic rock tune from the seventies and eighties by heart, all the guitar riffs. But they've never done anything for my soul, at least anything good that I'm aware of.

But there's something about worship music, and I'm not talking about a style here, because I've been to churches where there's a choir that's robed and there's an organ where people are swinging back and forth, and God's showing up, and I've been to contemporary worship services where God's showing up, and I've been to acapella services where God's showing up, and I've been by myself singing, and God's shown up. It's. Where is the worship going? Do you know? We don't sing songs at the beginning of our service because it's the right thing to do in a worship service.

We sing praises because there's power, and God inhabits the praises of his people. That's why so often you read in the Old Testament, when they went out to battle, who did they put in the front lines? It wasn't the infantry. It was the singers. They put the worship team out front because why?

Because they wanted God's presence out front. And singing praises to God brings his presence. It's what he does. I know all sorts of songs. I grew up in the Methodist church.

I know all about the Methodist hymnal. I have one in my office. I went to a lutheran grade school for nine years. That's k through eight. I didn't flunk k through eight.

Right. I know all the lutheran hymns. There's times I sing those songs. If I'm discouraged about the church, there's a hymn called the church is one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord. She is a new creation by water and the word from heaven he came and sought her to be his holy bride.

With his own blood he bought her and for her life he died elect from every nation yet won over. I mean, I know the whole song and I sing it because it reminds me about how much God loves church and how much God loves his people in the church. When I sing that song, it fires me up. That's why we sing different genres of songs, because

there are different ones that connect to your heart. But sing praise to the Lord.

There's a song and you're going to hear us sing it here. Within the next couple of weeks, vertical church band has come out with a new album and there's a song where the singer sings, I have set my heart. I've set my heart on you. You have every part of me. Chorus that goes over and over and I've been singing it in my car.

It's song number seven on the album. I know. And as I've sang it, there's so many times where I'm singing that chorus. I'm saying, lord, I'm just singing to you because I'm resetting my heart on you again today. You have all of me, every part of me.

This week. My good friend Kent Shaw, who's the executive director for the Harvest Bible Fellowship, was in town. We spent a couple days together and he was in my car and we were driving and I was listening to that song, kind of humming it in my head. He goes, I'll never forget this song, ever. I'm like, tell me why.

We had a pastor within our fellowship within the last year whose, whose son killed himself. I mean, just a tragic, tragic story. And Kent told me, he goes at the funeral and we're listening to the song at the time. I've set my heart on you. I've set my heart.

You have every part of me. It's all going to be good. And he said, we sang that song at his funeral. And as he was telling me the emotion of that, I started just weeping in my car the other day listening to that song, thinking about when I read prayer requests and I see things going on in my own life and I see people that have way worse things that are currently going on in my life and I start to pray. It's like, lord, let them set their heart on you.

Praise him. A word to the guys. Yeah. Church songs are for girls. No, they're not.

They're for your soul. They're for your soul. They're for your soul. I'm going to spend more time in a couple weeks talking about what that looks clear, simple, emotive, truthful, honoring, vertical worship. Songs to the Lord will change who you are in his presence.

Sing songs to him. Make up a song that's truthful. Sing a scripture way. I memorize a lot of scripture. I got this little app on my phone and sometimes they sing songs.

They're goofy songs, but I know the verse when I'm done. I know a lot of verses that way. Sing God's word to him. There's power in that. There's power in that.

And then finally, is this. When you go through times of spiritual discouragement, remember to continually hope in the Lord. Put your hope in the Lord says this throughout the psalm, but specifically in verses five and eleven when he asks, why are you cast down, o my soul? And why are you in turmoil within me? And this is the exact verse.

Five and eleven are the exact same. What does he say? Hope in God, for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God. He's my God. I know I'll praise him.

I know I'm coming through this continually hope. Now, hope is not just man. I hope this works out. I'm not so sure. Hope is the confident assurance that what I'm praying for and that who I'm praying to is going to bring about what is good and right and true.

That's hope. Hope. Hope is the confident assurance that it's going to happen. Like I joke with you all the time, being a Cubs fan, I hope they win the World Series someday. That is not confident assurance that good things are going to happen.

That's just hope. Hope in the Lord is. I know that my redeemer lives. And I know this is tough. And I know I don't feel like singing, and I know I don't feel like praising, but I know that Jesus is my God.

I know he's my salvation. I know I'll again praise him with everything that I have. I have hope in that. Continue to hope in the Lord. Can I tell you this?

You're on the winning team. We win. We win. This is temporary. Everything here is temporary.

Remember 45 years seemed ancient to me when I was a kid. It goes pretty fast. In another 45 years, I don't know will I be here or not? If I am, I'm going to be close to not being right. It goes fast.

We win. Now I'm not telling you, hey, what you're going through. Hang in there. 45 more years from now, it'll be over. That's not what I'm saying.

I'm saying I don't know how long you're going to have to hang in there. I'm saying you can have hope that our God is good and that what he brings you through will be great. And really, what I love about this psalm, it's the authenticity of pain coupled with the reality of hope and harvest. I just want to tell you this. It's okay for you to come to harvest and love Jesus and go through a really, really difficult season.

It's okay to come to harvest and love Jesus and to be confused. It's okay to come to harvest and to feel hurt, to feel frustrated, to feel angry, to feel abandoned. It's okay to not leave service every single weekend and be like, great, I'm awesome now. It's okay not to feel that way. And just a word of caution to those of you who are going through a good season, be tender and compassionate towards those who aren't.

Because even in your well meaning desire to see someone grow and come out of the season, that may not be God's plan for them right now. So instead of telling them, here's a scripture that will get you out of it, because I've never met that scripture yet. What's better is to walk alongside and to say, hey, I know this must be really hurtful, but I love you and I know God loves you, and let's walk through this together. I'm right here for you because I know this. When I've gone through times of spiritual discouragement, that's what I want.

I want somebody to walk along with me. I want somebody to remind me of God's love. And for those of you who would say, man, this sermon wasn't even for me, yes, it was. Because if you're aware of this, then you can put these things into practice for the hurting people that you meet. And let me ask you, for as many people as held up their



hands today that said, yeah, God is at work in my life.

If I were to ask it outside these doors, how many people are looking for hope, there'd be that many hands go up for as many people as you asked. So if you were to say, well, this isn't for me, sure it is. This is for you teaching others. This is for you being Jesus with skin onto others as to how to overcome spiritual discouragement. I love this psalm.

I love it. It's okay. It's okay. I'm smiling at you because it's okay. Because God would tell you, hey, I know what you're going through.

It's okay. I'm the one taking you through it. It's okay. I've got you. It's okay.

I know you don't feel good. It's okay. Have your hope in me confident hope in me I'm bringing you through I'm going to bring you through this just keep seeking my face keep reflecting on how good I am keep singing to me keep loving me I'll bring it through. Amen. Is that good news?

It's really good news.