

MON 1-16

▼ **SCRIPTURE** Mark 14:33-34

▼ **THOUGHT** "He took Peter, James, and John with him, and he became deeply troubled and distressed. He told them, 'My soul is crushed with grief to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.'" [NLT] Jesus knew what it was like to feel a crushing weight on one's soul. His response to that feeling was to ask his friends to be with him. If you don't have a circle of people who will share your burdens and whom you can encourage, seek that out in 2023!

▼ **PRAYER** **Mighty God, thank you for providing an example of how I should handle feeling overwhelmed. When I am tempted to turn inward, remind me that Jesus reached out to others in his time of distress. Amen.**

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TUES 1-17

▼ **SCRIPTURE** 2 Chronicles 32:7-8

▼ **THOUGHT** "Be brave and be strong! Don't let the king of Assyria and all those warriors he brings with him scare you or cause you dismay, because our forces are greater than his. All he has is human strength, but we have the LORD our God, who will help us fight our battles!" [CEB] Sometimes in the thick of our struggles, we forget we are not alone--we take a look at our circumstances and assume defeat. God loves us and goes before and behind us--guiding and protecting. We can trust in God's unfailing love!

▼ **PRAYER** **Loving God, I know your love never fails me, but sometimes my battles seem too big. Help my confidence and trust in you to grow as I seek you each day, reminding myself of your faithfulness. Amen.**

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WED 1-18

▼ **SCRIPTURE** Psalm 142:2-3a

▼ **THOUGHT** "I pour out my concerns before God; I announce my distress to him. When my spirit is weak inside me, you still know my way." [CEB] What is your default, go-to response or source of comfort when you are struggling? David modeled for us how to cry out to God during hard times. This honest display allowed David to get it off his chest to the only one who truly knows his path. It is a relief to release our struggles before God, and making this our first stop can help us avoid unhealthy ways of coping.

▼ **PRAYER** **God, I acknowledge that you are the one who has the answers. You know my pain, and you have the wisdom to guide me through it. Forgive me when my first reaction is to cling to something other than you. Amen.**

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THURS 1-19

- ▼ **SCRIPTURE** Psalm 42:1
- ▼ **THOUGHT** "As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God." [NIV] David was described as "a man after God's own heart." If someone like David could feel distant from God, we should not be surprised that we go through similar times. Sometimes it just takes a small step to move closer to God. Can we change how we spend some of our free time to make room for this connection that we need so desperately? Are there other ways we can adjust?
- ▼ **PRAYER** **Savior, help me remember that there is no distance between us, though at times that might seem to be the case. Help me prioritize differently and seek you in new ways when I am feeling thirsty for a deeper connection. Amen.**

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FRI 1-20

- ▼ **SCRIPTURE** 1 Thessalonians 5:18
- ▼ **THOUGHT** "Give thanks in every situation because this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." [CEB] We all have days when giving thanks seems impossible, but we are encouraged to do this for a reason. Finding something to be thankful for provides necessary perspective, reminding us that troubles won't last forever. God's love is eternal--our troubles are not. Even if it is breath for a new day, food in our refrigerator, or the beauty of a sunrise, we can find something!
- ▼ **PRAYER** **Gracious God, develop a heart of thanksgiving in me. Open my eyes to see the goodness in my life, even on my darkest days. Thank you for loving me so persistently. Amen.**

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SAT 1-21

- ▼ **SCRIPTURE** Isaiah 53:3
- ▼ **THOUGHT** "He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem." [NIV] Jesus endured so much pain, and despite the utter rejection he faced, he still chose love. When you are feeling the weight of life on your shoulders, remember Jesus offered rest for the weary, and his love never runs out.
- ▼ **PRAYER** **Precious Jesus, there are no adequate words to express my gratitude for the sacrifice of love that you made. Thank you for the precious gift of light in my life. Help me find it each day and share it with others. Amen.**

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DIGGING DEEPER



- ▼ **Intro** What's chipping away at your soul? What's getting in the way of you becoming the person who God created you to be? In this message series, we will explore ways we can neutralize damaging influences and care for our souls. At times, the weight we carry feels crushing, but God wants to lift the heaviness of our souls.
- ▼ **Reflect**

 - What types of things tend to get you down the most?
 - How has the busyness of life contributed to your heavy soul?
 - Psalm 42:5-6 says, "Why am I discouraged? Why is my heart so sad? I will put my hope in God! I will praise him again—my Savior and my God! Now I am deeply discouraged, but I will remember you—even from distant Mount Hermon, the source of the Jordan, from the land of Mount Mizar." [NLT] This psalm refers to places where David lived in exile. Even from a dark and lonely place, David is reminding himself to remember to hope in God. Each of us has visited these types of difficult places at one time or another.
 - What hurts from your past are causing your soul to be heavy? What's keeping you from overcoming these hurts?
 - What troubles are you currently dealing with that are contributing to your heavy soul?
 - Sometimes, it is not our past or present that is troubling us but rather anxiety about things to come. What things are you anxious about for the future?
 - Proverbs 3:5-6 reminds us, "Trust God from the bottom of your heart; don't try to figure out everything on your own. Listen to God's voice in everything you do, everywhere you go; he's the one who will keep you on track." [MSG]
 - Discuss ways that you have learned to listen for God's voice. What does that mean in your life in practical terms?
 - Ultimately, we have to trust God with our future. Time spent worrying or guessing what is to come is time that we are not fully present in our current situation. What are some ways you can redirect your mind when you start going down this path?
- ▼ **Prayer** **Loving God, when my circumstances and emotions bring me to a dark and lonely place, thank you for being my comforter. I need you. Lift the heaviness of my burdens, past, present, & future, so I can live fully present with you in control of my life. Amen.**



DIGGING DEEPER

▼ What did I learn? _____

▼ How might it apply in my life? _____

▼ What is a next step I can take? _____

