



PLEASE DON'T READ THESE NOTES UNTIL YOU HAVE COMPLETED YOUR LESSON.

HEARING GOD FOR YOURSELF IS WAY BETTER THAN MY COMMENTS! REALLY! Ü

Questions

Read 2 Chronicles 20:1-30.

Background – Jehoshaphat (juh-HAHSU-uh-fat) was a godly king that ruled Judah during the time when Israel was divided into two kingdoms after the reign of King Solomon. (You may want to find **2 Chronicles 12-36** on the *Bible at a Glance* chart in your notebooks.) **Jehoshaphat** made some ungodly alliances while he was king, but for the most part he was a man who honored God as he ruled. When Judah was invaded by their enemies, **Jehoshaphat** completely and openly relied on God and we can learn much from his example! In this story we see a **description** of *El – God of Power and Might* (20:6) and a **demonstration** of his power (20:22-25).

1. What news did Jehoshaphat receive and what, specifically, was his *reaction* to the news (20:1-4)? **A vast army was coming against Judah and it was approaching quickly. Jehoshaphat was ALARMED by the news, and he decided he would seek God's help and guidance. First, he proclaim a FAST for everyone and all the people gathered in Jerusalem to seek God together.**

- ♥ Who are the "enemies" in your life – circumstances, situations and/or people that seem to come and "make war" on you? What is your usual response to trouble or difficulty?
- ♥ When in your life have you ever felt like a "vast army" was marching against you? What did you do? What can you learn from Jehoshaphat's reaction?

Fast – The Hebrew word for fast means to abstain from food and Old Testament fasts usually lasted from sunrise to sunset. Fasts were religious in character and there were three common reasons for fasting. 1) **Fasts** expressed depth of feeling and many were linked with times of great grief or mourning; 2) **fasts** were undertaken in times of deep trouble and emphasized the seriousness of personal and national appeals to God; and 3) **fasts** were a sign of honest repentance. In Jesus' day, the religious leaders fasted twice a week, but Jesus warned against the common practice of marking one's face to show others that one was fasting. There is no merit to fasting as such. It is one's heart attitude and the focus of attention on God that make fasting acceptable and helpful. Fasting is a voluntarily act of letting go of the **physical** in order to take hold of the **spiritual**.

- ♥ What is your experience with fasting, if any? Have you ever found it to be helpful when combined with prayer? Do you think this is something Christ followers are called to today? Why or why not? **Jesus' own forty day fast (food and water) is the longest reported in Scripture, though Moses (Ex. 34:28) and Elijah (1 Kings 19:8) also went without food for forty days. Jesus' fast took place right before he began his public ministry and the fast prepared him for his temptation from Satan.**

The practice of fasting in conjunction with prayer and worship is suggested in **Luke 2:37; Acts 13:2; and 14:23**. Jesus' words about fasting can be found in **Matthew 6:16-18** where he gives instruction to fast with the correct motives. In Matthew 9:14-15, Jesus seems to indicate that after he ascended to heaven, his disciples would fast. Fasting is not taught in any of St. Paul's Epistles.

2. Jehoshaphat begins his public prayer by stating facts **about God** and **God's past actions**. State the facts from **20:6-9** in your own words.

Statements about God (20:6)	Statements about God's past actions (20:7-9)
God is a God who is in heaven. He rules over all the kingdoms of the world. He is powerful and mighty and no one can stand up against him!	He drove out the inhabitants of the land and gave it forever to his people – the descendents of Abraham – Friend of God. No matter what trouble comes to his people – war, disease or famine – God will hear, save and rescue those who cry out to him for help from his temple, the place of his presence.

- ♥ In his prayer, why does Jehoshaphat tell God things that God already knows? Was he trying to "sweet talk" or coax God? Why or why not? **Recounting to God what he has done usually is done to remind ourselves and to build our own faith. When we remember God's faithfulness to us in the past, it helps us believe his promise to help us in the present.**
- ♥ What is the value of telling God **who he is** and reminding him of **what he has done**? Do you have enough "history" with God to do this? If not, what could you do to begin to build a history?
- ♥ In praying about a difficulty in your own life, what would you say to God to affirm his character, based on your personal experience of him? What past actions of his in your life would you recall? **A good question to share and discuss in your small group.**

3. What does Jehoshaphat tell God about the present situation and the "unfairness" of it (20:10-11)? Ironically, the countries that were coming against Judah were the very countries that God protected when the children of Israel were coming out of slavery in Egypt and on their way to the Promised Land. God told them to pass by and let them be because he had given that land to the descendents of Esau and Lot (Numbers 20:14-21; Deut. 2:4-6, 9, 18-19). Jehoshaphat calls out to God justice and fairness and asks for protection.

4. Consider the **words** and **actions** found in 20:12-13 from God's point of view. What specific things do you think God valued? Why?

Jehoshaphat and his people knew well God's character. When God revealed himself to Moses on Mt. Sinai after they escaped Egypt, God said about himself:

And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, 7 maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; Exodus 34:6-7

From God's point of view, his people were admitting their helplessness and telling him that they didn't know what to do, but they were trusting him, keeping their eyes on him and standing before him (even the "little ones") waiting for him to act on their behalf. As a good and compassionate God, this dependence pleases God – just as our children move our hearts when they look to us to help and protect them when they can't do it themselves. You can't help someone until they are ready to receive help and the people were letting God know that they were ready to receive from him. This is the same attitude God looks for in our hearts too. When we admit our helplessness, God is able to then give us help.

- ♥ In what areas of your life do you feel powerless right now? What do you see as "unfair"? Would following Jehoshaphat's example in handling the situation help you? Why or why not?
- ♥ In light of what is going in your life right now, which elements of Jehoshaphat's prayer in 20:6-12 do you think should be incorporated into your own prayers to God?

5. As the people stood before the Lord (20:13), what happened (20:14-15a)?

The Spirit of the Lord upon a man standing there by the name of Jahaziel. In other words, the Holy Spirit came to Jahaziel's heart and mind and told him what to say to the people – and he spoke up and told them what he was hearing.

- ♥ If you had been present, would you have believed Jahaziel's (juh-HAY-zih-el) announcement? **Can** God still speak this way today (20:14-15)? Jesus told his disciples that when he returned to heaven, he would send the Holy Spirit to be with them (and us) forever. The Spirit would teach, guide and remind them of everything Jesus had said to them. The Holy Spirit continues to speak to our hearts and minds. We would not be able to see or understand truth or even call Jesus Lord unless the Spirit speaks and convinces us in our hearts.

Does God still speak this way today? God speaks in many ways today – through his written Word, through creation, and certainly through people to whom the Spirit leads, guides and teaches. Often we can tell when the Holy Spirit has spoken through another person because the Spirit in OUR heart will "know" and "agree" with what has been said. We may not "hear" the Spirit speak, however, if we are not listening or not expecting him to speak.

- ♥ Have you ever received specific instructions from God? If so, how did the message come to you? How did you know it was God speaking? How did you respond?
- 6. Consider God's answer to Jehoshaphat's prayer in **20:15-17**. Using key phrases, fill in the chart below to summarize what God said to the king and his people through Jahaziel.

What commands did God give?	What promises did God make?
Do not be afraid or discouraged Tomorrow, march down against them Take up your positions; stand firm ..(stand still) Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged go out to face them tomorrow	For the battle is not yours, but God's You will find them at the end of the gorge . . . You will not have to fight this battle . . . and see (watch) the deliverance the Lord will give you and the Lord will be with you

- ♥ Is **fear** and **discouragement** a choice? Why or why not? We are told over and over in the Bible – both the Old and new Testaments not to be afraid or discouraged which tells us that it is a choice or somehow under our control. God would not command us to do something that we can't do – something that isn't possible.

How would one go about obeying the command to *not be afraid or discouraged* (10:15, 17)?

Fear and discouragement are **emotions** and emotions always have their origin in our **thoughts**. So, to obey the command to not be afraid or discouraged will begin in our minds and it will depend on what we choose to think about and what "narratives" or "stories" we let play out in our minds. Controlling and training our thoughts IS under our control. Jesus give the antidote for fear and anxiety in **John 14:1** – *Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me.* Trusting God and his promises in the situation will drive fear and discouragement away. Of course, this assumes we **know God well enough** to trust him and that we also **know his promises** to us. (This is why we get to know God and his love when times are good so that we are prepared when difficulties come.) Two other powerful scriptures that make connecting statements about **fear** and **trust** are **Psalm 56:3-4** and **Isaiah 26:3-4**. (If you have time, have our group look up these verses.) St. Paul tells us in **Philippians 4:8** to think about what is **true honorable, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent and praiseworthy** – because our thoughts and what we let our mind dwell on **do** control our emotions. **Romans 12:2** says, *Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by **changing the way you think**.*

- ♥ Even though *the battle was not theirs, but God's* (20:15), why do you think the people still had to **march, take up their positions** and **stand firm** (20:16,17)? Just because the battle is God's and not ours does not mean we are passive in the battle. We remain active, doing what God has called and commanded us to do. We still have to face our problems (march), know God and hear his promises to us (take up our positions) and put all our trust in him (stand firm or still). What application does this have for you?

- ♥ How did Jehoshaphat and the people respond to God's message (20:18-19)? Jehoshaphat bowed before God in gratefulness and humility with his face to the ground and all the people fell down in worship before the Lord. The Levites (priests) stood to praise the Lord with a very loud shout!

What effect do you think this response had on Jehoshaphat and his people? On God? **Worship and praise** is a wonderful way to build our faith and help us trust God. **Worship and praise** is all about God – focused totally on who he is and what he has done. It's impossible to worship and not also trust. **Worship** will drive fear and discouragement away – especially when music is involved because music will effect our emotions and our faith. Where **worship** is, God is. **Praise and worship** makes God's presence very real to us. We can worship under any circumstances because **worship** focuses on God and his character (not our situation) and he never changes.

Habakkuk 3:17-19 *Even though the fig trees have no blossoms, and there are no grapes on the vine; even though the olive crop fails, and the fields lie empty and barren; even though the flocks die in the fields, and the cattle barns*

are empty, yet I will rejoice in the LORD! I will be joyful in the God of my salvation. 19 The Sovereign LORD is my strength! He will make me as surefooted as a deer and bring me safely over the mountains.

7. What similarities do you see between Jehoshaphat's situation and **Exodus 14:10-14** when the children of Israel were trapped in the desert by the pursuing Egyptian army? What do both these incidents teach you about God? How do they encourage you in what you are facing today?

These incidents are 500 years apart, yet God is the same. When we are trapped in a no-win situation, when destruction seems a certainty, God – who knows our helplessness and weakness – tells us to trust him and let him fight for us. Moses told his people the same thing that Jehoshaphat told his: **“Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still.”**(Ex. 14:13-14) Trust in God – **who he is and what he will do** -- is the all important response from us. He will fight for us, but not if we insist on fighting the battle ourselves. Our response is to not be afraid, trust, stand firm and be still – waiting and watching for what God will do.

8. Jehoshaphat told the people that faith/belief was necessary in order for them to stand firm and be successful. What did the people do and how did this demonstrate their faith (20:20-21)?

The people marched out to face the enemy – and the king appointed singers to walk ahead of the army, singing to the Lord and praising him for his holy splendor. They sang: Give thanks to the Lord; his faithful love endures forever!

- ♥ In what, exactly, did Jehoshaphat and the people place their trust (20:20)? In God and what God said through his spokesperson (prophets). What helped them keep their focus (20:21)? Singing praise to God for who he is. What do you think is the significance the *singing* praises and not just *saying* praises? Music affects our heart, soul and emotions in a way that words alone can't.
- ♥ In the midst of a problem, where is *your* focus? On the problem? On God? On yourself? What helps you fix your eyes on God? Would praise music/singing help you keep your focus? Why or why not?
- ♥ Have you ever thanked God for an answer to prayer *before* the answer became a reality? Why would someone do this? What effect would it have? Thanking God for what he will do before it is a reality demonstrates faith and strengthens our trust.

9. Describe all that happened, starting at the moment the people began to sing and praise God as they faced their enemies (20:22-25).

God cause the enemies to start fighting among themselves and turn on each other and they actually killed each other so that when Jehoshaphat's people arrived on the scene the battle was over and there were only dead bodies lying on the ground. The plunder of equipment, clothing and other valuables was so great that it took days to carry it away. Only God could have caused the enemy to turn on themselves and destroy each other.

- ♥ If you followed Jehoshaphat's example the next time you faced a difficulty, do you think you would have the same results? Why or why not?
- ♥ How have you seen your enemies (people, situations and circumstances) "destroy themselves" as you trusted in God and refused to fight our own battles?

10. How did Jehoshaphat and the people celebrate the victory (20:26-27)? **This reference should be 20:26-28**
Why is this important?

They all assembled together and praised the Lord. Then they returned joyfully to Jerusalem and went to the temple to worship and praise God with harps, lutes and trumpets.

Gratefulness for what God has done for us is an act of love and appreciation. Often we forget to even say thanks when the heat of the battle is over and victory is won.

- ♥ Can you share a battle that God won for you? What effect has this had on you? How did you show your gratitude? How can you continue to show your gratitude?

- ♥ What was the outcome of God's victory over Israel's enemies (20:29-30)? How does this encourage you? What does this reveal about the character of God?

The fear of God came upon Judah's enemies and they left Jehoshaphat and his people alone. The kingdom was at peace and God gave the "rest on every side." God knows exactly what we need and he knows we cannot be in battle all the time. He will take care of us and he will not allow us to go through more than we are able to bear. He will give us rest and peace.

11. *The battle is not yours, but God's.* If you trust *El - God of Power and Might* - to fight your battles, what are some things you must *give up doing* as God works? What are some things you will *need to keep doing* as God works?

This is a good question for discussion. The answers may vary, but if we let God fight for us in our battles we must give up worry, discouragement, fear, control, manipulation, fighting the battle ourselves, protecting or defending ourselves . . .

But this does not mean that we are **passive**. We still need to trust, believe, pray, perhaps fast, stand firm, be still, wait patiently, not give up . . . You might want to discuss how we do these things.

- ♥ What have you learned about *El, God of Power and Might*, in this lesson? About facing "impossible, hopeless" situations? What do you especially want to remember when you face your next difficulty?

♥ Heart Therapy

SPEND SOME QUALITY TIME WITH EL - GOD OF POWER AND MIGHT . . .

Sing to the Lord and praise him for the splendor of his holiness; Give thanks to the Lord for his faithful love (20:21).

Using music, give God some undivided attention in praise and worship for at least **15 minutes**. Make this time all about God. Rejoice in who he is and what he has done! Tell him how awesome he is! **How do you think God reacts to all this attention? How does this exercise make you feel? Is it "worth" it?**