

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
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Sermon title: How King Jehoshaphat Responded to Worrisome News,
2 Chronicles 20

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INTRODUCTION: Worry is something we all struggle with. I don't think there is anyone, anywhere who has never worried. We might call it other things—more intellectual sounding monikers like, “being concerned” or something else.

But worrying all the time, as a lifestyle, is not a good thing. I have an older friend who moved to a new town and started making new friends. In time, she began filtering the new friends because some were dragging her down. One of them was a woman who worried over everything.

There are different types of worrying. If you've got a test at school or a medical test around the corner, it is normal to be concerned. But, there is a personality type which seems to worry over everything. I've wondered if chronic worriers can change, and I'm afraid I cannot answer that question! I do believe, though, all believers in Jesus Christ can be overcomers.

BACKGROUND: Today, I want to look at an Old Testament king who had something serious to worry about. The king's name was Jehoshaphat. He was the king of Judah at the time. Israel had divided into two kingdoms, Israel and Judah. It was not the best thing; however, God allowed it, and later, the two nations were reunified.

We worry when things are out of our control. And, this king had a situation way beyond his control. What I will point out to you is the positive way he and his people responded to worry.

There are four ways we can learn from the way they responded to worry:

1. Jehoshaphat took action when he heard the bad news.

2. Everyone expected to hear from God.
3. Jehoshaphat's immediate response to God's reassurance was worship.
4. The faith of the people and God's plans played out simultaneously.

First, JEHOSHAPHAT TOOK ACTION WHEN HE HEARD THE BAD NEWS.

SCRIPTURE: 2 Chronicles 20: 1-12 ¹*After this, the Moabites and Ammonites with some of the Meunites came to wage war against Jehoshaphat.*

² *Some people came and told Jehoshaphat, "A vast army is coming against you from Edom, from the other side of the Dead Sea. It is already in Hazezon Tamar" (that is, En Gedi). ³ Alarmed, Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the LORD, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah. ⁴ The people of Judah came together to seek help from the LORD; indeed, they came from every town in Judah to seek him.*

⁵ *Then Jehoshaphat stood up in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem at the temple of the LORD in the front of the new courtyard ⁶ and said:*

"LORD, the God of our ancestors, are you not the God who is in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. Power and might are in your hand, and no one can withstand you. ⁷ Our God, did you not drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel and give it forever to the descendants of Abraham your friend? ⁸ They have lived in it and have built in it a sanctuary for your Name, saying, ⁹ 'If calamity comes upon us, whether the sword of judgment, or plague or famine, we will stand in your presence before this temple that bears your Name and will cry out to you in our distress, and you will hear us and save us.'

¹⁰ *"But now here are men from Ammon, Moab and Mount Seir, whose territory you would not allow Israel to invade when they came from Egypt; so they turned away from them and did not destroy them. ¹¹ See how they are repaying us by coming to drive us out of the possession you gave us as an inheritance. ¹² Our God, will you not judge them? For we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you."*

EXPLANATION: The action he took was to declare a fast and call the people together for prayer. And, he didn't just tell them to pray. He prayed. He took responsibility in the situation.

Jehoshaphat made several points in his prayer:

- He acknowledged God as the God of heaven—the God over all the nations of earth.
- In his prayer, his mind returned to past victories over enemies. He wasn't reminding God (God doesn't have memory loss). But, he was reminding the people how faithful God had been to them.
- He also reminded God of the temple. Apparently, the temple had been designated as a place where people would bring their concerns to God.
- At the end of the prayer, he said, “We do not know what to do; but, our eyes are on you.” Wow, what a leader!

I believe it's important for us to note the first action he took was prayer, and not only just prayer but public prayer—one everyone heard. The people heard their leader calling out to God. He turned the focus of the situation away from the enemy and toward God. He proclaimed God's faithfulness on the eve of a potentially terrible situation.

APPLICATION: The application here is incredibly obvious. When we are faced with surprising, worrisome news, the best thing we can do is take action—not go around worrying. The first action we must take is praying to God—acknowledging him as the God of heaven, recalling the times he's been faithful to us, and telling him even though we don't know what to do, our eyes are on him. What would have happened if Jehoshaphat had responded to the news with panic? He would have sent the nation in a downhill spiral.

Second, EVERYONE EXPECTED TO HEAR FROM GOD.

SCRIPTURE: 2 Chronicles 20: 13-17 ¹³*All the men of Judah, with their wives and children and little ones, stood there before the LORD.*

¹⁴ *Then the Spirit of the LORD came on Jahaziel son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite and descendant of Asaph, as he stood in the assembly.*

¹⁵ *He said: “Listen, King Jehoshaphat and all who live in Judah and Jerusalem! This is what the LORD says to you: ‘Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God’s.’* ¹⁶ *Tomorrow march down against them. They will be climbing up by the Pass of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the gorge in the Desert of Jeruel.* ¹⁷ *You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the LORD will give you, Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the LORD will be with you.’”*

EXPLANATION: In the Old Testament, there was a phenomenon where some people heard directly from God and passed along the words of God to listeners. Sometimes this came through prophets and other times through rather ordinary people. The scripture prefaces these occurrences with this phrase: “The Spirit of the Lord came upon...,” and the person is named. I cannot tell you how exactly this manifested itself, but it happened in such a way, everyone knew the words were from God.

In this story, Jehoshaphat prayed, and the people just stood there. I assume his prayer was so powerful and sought God with such fervor; it conditioned people to hear from God right then. And, they did.

APPLICATION: How does this apply to us? If we pray and ask God to meet our needs, we must have our eyes open like the nation of Judah did. As a person with some experience in this area, I can tell you God does not always answer instantly, and he does not always answer through a person. I cannot recall a time when I specifically knew the Spirit of God had come upon a person to speak directly for God, but there are many times when I believe I’ve heard the voice of God through someone. This may sound like a contradiction, although that’s not my intention. Discerning God’s voice is not so easy. In fact, at times it might be exhausting.

Third, JEHOSHAPHAT’S IMMEDIATE RESPONSE TO GOD’S REASSURANCE WAS WORSHIP.

SCRIPTURE: 2 Chronicles 20: 18-19 ¹⁸*Jehoshaphat bowed down with his face to the ground, and all the people of Judah and Jerusalem fell down in worship before the LORD. ¹⁹ Then some Levites from the Kohathites and Korahites stood up and praised the LORD, the God of Israel, with a very loud voice.*

EXPLANATION: God led these people through many trials, and he was not about to abandon them now. He sent a supernatural word through a human voice, and everyone worshiped. What exactly did they do? They did two things. Some bowed and some stood, but all praised God.

Out of reverence they fell to the ground. The word worship is used here. Many hearing me today believe the definition of “worship” is singing repetitive praise choruses. For some reason I cannot define, the word worship has been redefined today as singing, but worship entails more than just singing worship songs. In this case:

1. They bowed and
2. Some stood up and praised God with loud voices.

Wow, it must have been a sight!

APPLICATION: Let us, too, have an attitude of reverence and praise.

SCRIPTURE: 2 Chronicles 20: 20-21 ²⁰*Early in the morning they left for the Desert of Tekoa. As they set out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, “Listen to me, Judah and people of Jerusalem! Have faith in the LORD your God and you will be upheld; have faith in his prophets and you will be successful.” ²¹ After consulting the people, Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the LORD and to praise him for the splendor of his holiness as they went out at the head of the army, saying:*

“Give thanks to the LORD, for his love endures forever.”

Fourth, THE FAITH OF THE PEOPLE AND GOD’S PLANS PLAYED OUT SIMULTANEOUSLY.

SCRIPTURE: 2 Chronicles 20: 22-23 ²²*As they began to sing and praise, the LORD set ambushes against the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and they were defeated. ²³ The Ammonites and Moabites rose up*

against the men from Mount Seir to destroy and annihilate them. After they finished slaughtering the men from Seir, they helped to destroy one another.

EXPLANATION: I want you to note: *“As they began to sing and praise, the Lord set ambushes...”*

This morning I was talking with Terry about today’s message, and he said, “Imagine an army headed toward your army and the people in front of your army holding choir folders! Picture an army of men singing together and praising God while at THE SAME TIME, God was setting ambushes.” As the readers, we get to see an interesting point of view. If the point of view was from a man in the army, we would ONLY know they sang and praised God, and when they arrived on site, they saw both sets of enemies dead. Many times in scripture, we have the point of view of an individual, but in this narrative we are permitted to rise above the individual’s point of view and see the faith of the people working hand-in-hand and simultaneously with the plans of God—setting ambushes.

The more we know stories like this in scripture, the more we can apply the lessons to our own experiences— God will never leave us or forsake us, and the more our point of view will be higher-minded.

The story goes on to tell us one of the armies killed the other, then themselves. When Jehoshaphat’s army arrived, all they saw was dead soldiers.

It took them three days to carry away the plunder. As they went home, they praised God.

ILLUSTRATION: Wednesday night, I talked with a group of children about a game I used to play with my kids. It was the same game my dad played with my brothers and sisters. When my kids were little, I lifted them and placed them standing on the kitchen counter and had them jump into my arms. I did it over and over. Then, when their confidence was built up, I backed up a little bit. Each time they’d jump no matter how far I backed up. Occasionally they hesitated, but they always jumped. As a loving father, I never backed up further than I knew they could jump and be caught.

CONCLUSION: We can only wonder what would have happened to the people of Judah if they’d been skeptical and did not have the faith to go into battle with

armies larger than theirs. But, they remembered how God had been faithful to them and knew he would never forsake them.

When we are worried, let's be like Jehoshaphat and his people:

- Pray and have your eyes on God.
- Worship him even though the circumstances may seem adverse.
- Expect to hear from God.
- When God reassures us and comforts us, let's worship and praise him.
- Our faith and God's plans play out together simultaneously.

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I use the NIV translation of scripture because of its conversational nature. Feel free to go to Bible Gateway and copy and paste whichever translation you want to use. This transcript has been edited to an outline format that improves readability and therefore may not exactly follow the video edition.

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