

Jehoshaphat and the People Pray

Scripture Reference:

[2 Chronicles 20:1-30](#)



Suggested Emphasis: The Lord can help us even when we are afraid and the situation seems impossible.



Background Study



Story Introduction



Telling the Story



Review Questions



Songs



Learning Activities



Other Online Resources

Story Overview:

While Ahab and Jezebel were ruling the kingdom of Israel, King Jehoshaphat (4th king of Judah) was trying to be a good king over the country of Judah. He tried to teach his people how to follow God. When a huge army was about to attack Judah, everyone was very afraid. King Jehoshaphat called all of the people together to fast and pray. The Lord spoke through a prophet and told the people not to worry because this battle belonged to the Lord. Jehoshaphat sent the army into battle but he put a group of men in front to praise the Lord in song. While the army of Judah was approaching the battlefield praising the Lord, the Lord set the enemy armies against each other. By the time Judah's army

arrived at the battle, it was already over. The enemy armies had killed each other!

Background Study:

Jehoshaphat was the fourth king of Judah after the kingdom had split into two nations. He ruled for 25 years. He adopted strong military and political policies. His father had had constant trouble with the northern kingdom of Israel. Jehoshaphat strengthened all the cities located along the border between Judah and Israel. [Background Information on the Divided Kingdom.](#)

During the time that Ahab was king of Israel, Jehoshaphat managed to gain peaceful relations with Israel. Jehoshaphat went to Samaria and made a treaty with King Ahab stating that they would not attack each other and would help each other if either was attacked by an outside nation. This treaty was further sealed by the marriage of Jehoshaphat's son to Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. This alliance would later cause major problems.

Besides military reforms, Jehoshaphat made many religious reforms. He accepted his responsibility as king to set a good example for his people. Jehoshaphat sent his princes, priests, and Levites throughout the country with copies of the Mosaic Law. These groups would teach the people how to properly worship the Lord.

Jehoshaphat had done everything he could to return his nation to the Lord. When the Moabites, Ammonites, and Edomites began their attacks on Judah, Jehoshaphat turned to the Lord for help. Moses had spared these three heathen nations from destruction when the Israelites entered the Promised Land over five hundred years before Jehoshaphat. This had been an order from God because these three nations were related to the Israelites. The Moabites and Ammonites were descendants of Lot (Abraham's nephew) by an incestuous relationship with his daughters (Genesis 32:3). Their chief city was located at Mount Seir.




All three of these nations were located very close together, occupying the territory southeast and east of the Dead Sea. Now they banded together and marched around the southern end of the Dead Sea, coming up on the western side. Jehoshaphat had strengthened his cities in the north, but not in the south, so Judah was very vulnerable to anyone attacking from this direction. The three nations had gotten as far as Hazazon Tamar (En Gedi). En Gedi is a popular source of fresh water along the very salty Dead Sea. These attackers were getting extremely close to Jerusalem. Jehoshaphat prayed to the Lord, and God heard the prayer. God delivered Jehoshaphat's army without them even going into battle.

The sea referred to in verse 2 is the Dead Sea. Jehoshaphat was alarmed to know that such a vast army was coming against him and his people. And so he proclaimed the first fast by authority (verse 3). The Judean people came from all over the country and assembled in Jerusalem to seek help from the Lord.

At the temple, Jehoshaphat stood before the new court at the entrance into the court of the priests, and the congregations stood opposite him. In his role as the leader of God's people, he worded a prayer to the Lord God for them all that day. God's Spirit came upon a man named Jahaziel and he proclaimed God's answer to the prayer in the hearing of all the people (verses 15-17). What reassuring words he uttered: "Do not be afraid or discouraged ... the battle is not yours, but God's ... Stand firm and see the deliverance God will give you ... Go out to face them ... the Lord will be with you."

The next day, in obedience to God, the army was going out, and as they passed through the gate of the city, the king encouraged them. In fact, after consulting with the people, he appointed singers to march in front of the army singing the words of thanks from Psalm 106:1 and 136:1.

After the battle was over, the people returned to Jerusalem and took the plunder to the temple. They gave the glory to the Lord.

-  [What happened before this story?](#)
-  [What happens after this story?](#)
-  [List of all Bible stories and themes on this website.](#)

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Way to Introduce the Story:

Let each child say one thing that is good about God. Let the children keep thinking of things until they run out. Then lead a prayer and praise God for the good things He has done. If you are able, lead the children in some songs that praise God (Praise Him, Praise Him! I Sing Praises to Your Name. God Has Done Great Things. etc.) In today's story we are going to learn about a time when an army was lead by people who were singing praises to God.

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The Story:

At the same time that King Ahab and Queen Jezebel were being bad rulers in the country of Israel, King Jehoshaphat was being a good ruler in the country of Judah. King Jehoshaphat loved the Lord and tried to obey him. He taught the people how to worship God and do what he commands.

Judah had enemies. The enemies were some of the countries nearby. Sometimes these enemies would try to attack the country of Judah. One time the enemy was getting very close to attacking. Jehoshaphat was afraid for his people, so he decided to ask the Lord what to do. He told all the people that no one should eat during this special time of prayer. Deciding not to eat so that you can concentrate on prayer is called fasting.

All the people of Judah came together to ask God for help just as King Jehoshaphat told them to. Fathers, mothers and children all gathered for this special prayer.

When all of the people had gathered together, Jehoshaphat began to pray to God. “Lord, You are the God of everything. You have power and strength. No one can stand against You. You gave us this land. When trouble comes, we come to You and You hear us and You save us. Now these people have come and are trying to force us out of Your land. We have no power against their large army. We don’t know what to do, so we look to You for help.”

As the people all stood in front of the temple listening to their king pray, God spoke to them through one of the priests. He said, “Do not be afraid or discouraged ... for the battle is not yours, but God’s. Tomorrow, go down and stand before those people. You do not have to fight. The Lord will save you. Do not be afraid.”

When King Jehoshaphat heard God’s words, he began to thank Him. He and all the people bowed down before God and worshipped Him for hearing their prayer.

The next day Jehoshaphat and his army went out into the desert and marched to meet their enemies. Jehoshaphat put a special group of men in front of the army. These men sang songs of praises to the Lord. The army followed them.

When the army arrived at the place where the enemy had been they received a big surprise. They did not find a strong army of soldiers to fight. Instead, they found that the battle had already been fought. The Lord had caused all of the enemy armies to fight each other. By the time Jehoshaphat and his army arrived, all of the enemies were dead! The Lord had been right! The battle did belong to the Lord. The Lord had fought the battle for Jehoshaphat and his people.

King Jehoshaphat and all of the soldiers returned to Jerusalem praising the Lord. They went to the temple and worshiped Him. They wanted to thank the Lord for answering their prayer! It had seemed like it was impossible to beat such a strong enemy. But God can do anything.

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Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using a variety of methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection, student interaction and/or emotion.

[Click here for visual aids and story-telling methods.](#)

[Click here to download these illustrations and slideshow.](#) Be selective. Each teacher is unique so only use the illustrations that best relate to the way YOU are telling the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

Review Questions:

1. Who was the good king of Judah who taught the people how to worship?
Jehoshaphat
2. What did Jehoshaphat do when he found out enemies were going to attack Judah?
He led the people in fasting and prayer.
3. Who did King Jehoshaphat put in front of the army when they went into battle? Men who sang praises to God
4. What did Jehoshaphat and the army find when they arrived for the battle? The enemy armies had killed each other.

Song Suggestions:

- [Love is Something If You Give It Away Song](#)
- [My God is So Big Song](#)
- [Books of the Old Testament Song](#)
- Refer to the [Song Page](#) on this website for more options.

Learning Activities and Crafts:

[\(How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation\)](#)

Activities:

- Use a bible atlas to look up some of the places mentioned in the story.
- Spend time practicing the basics of how to pray. Do not assume all of the children know how to pray.
- Have a chain prayer where everyone says one sentence.
- Write the memory verse on the chalk/white board. Read and say the verse together. Erase one word and read and say it together again. Keep erasing words and repeating the verse together until it is all memorised.
- Younger children can practice marching around the room in a group while being led by someone who is singing praises to God.
- See [Prayer in Bible Class](#) for more ideas about prayer.
- Tell this story using this downloadable [Flip Chart: Jehoshaphat and the People Pray](#) (Click on the link above for the entire downloadable file with pictures and words or view it below).

Crafts:

- Help each child trace a hand (fingers together) on paper to form praying hands. Write prayer requests on the paper.

Check the [Teaching Ideas](#) page on this website for ideas that are adaptable to any lesson.



Timelines



Story Cards



Bookmarks



Small Pics

[Click here for "Jehoshaphat and the People Pray" printables to print on A4 size paper](#)

[Click here for "Jehoshaphat and the People Pray" printables \(Letter size-USA\)](#)

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Other Online Resources:

- [Lesson plan at http://ministry-to-children.com/](http://ministry-to-children.com/)
- [Additional study on Jehoshaphat at http://www.studylight.org/](http://www.studylight.org/)
- [Activity: "Five finger prayer" to teach children to pray at http://ministry-to-children.com/](http://ministry-to-children.com/)
- [Lesson on prayer for children at http://ministry-to-children.com/](http://ministry-to-children.com/)
- [Explaining how to teach children to pray at http://ministry-to-children.com/](http://ministry-to-children.com/)

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