

Jehoshaphat and the People Pray



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

Suggested Theme: God helps us when we are afraid. Ask for His help in times of trouble.

Memory Verse: “So don’t worry because I am with you. Don’t be afraid because I am your God. I will make you strong and will help you. I will support you with my right hand that saves you.” [Isaiah 41:10, ICB](#)

Story Overview:

Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, led his people and wanted them to trust God. Everyone was very afraid when a huge army was about to attack Judah, so 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, different to other battles, he placed 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 Judah’s fourth king after the kingdom 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.](#)

When 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 and would help if an outside nation attacked. 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 worship the Lord properly.

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 several centuries 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. Their chief city was near Mount Seir in Edom.

All three of these nations were located 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 (also known as En Gedi, 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, who 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 city gate, 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 [Psalm 136:1](#).

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

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 can, lead the children in 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 will learn about a time when an army was led by people who were praising God.

The Story:

Have you ever been afraid? Sometimes children are afraid, and sometimes adults are afraid. Today, we will learn about a time when even a king was afraid.

At the same time that King Ahab and Queen Jezebel were bad rulers in Israel, King Jehoshaphat was trying to be a good ruler in Judah.

The country of Judah had enemies. Some of the nearby countries wanted to hurt them. Some of the enemies were called "Moabites," some were "Ammonites," and others were "Meunites."

One time, the enemies were coming closer and closer, and the people of Judah became very frightened. Even King Jehoshaphat was afraid. Sometimes, people run away or hide when afraid, but that is not what King Jehoshaphat did. The king decided to pray to God instead. He knew that God would help.

The king understood that this was a very important prayer. He told everyone that no one should eat during this special time of prayer. Deciding not to eat to concentrate on prayer is called "fasting."

So the people fasted and prayed. Judah's people came together with the king to ask God for help. Fathers, mothers and children all gathered for this special prayer.

King Jehoshaphat began to pray to God.

He said, "Lord, you are the God of our ancestors. You are the God in heaven. You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. You have power and strength. No one can stand against you. Our God, you forced out the people who lived in this land... Trouble may come to us. It may be war, punishment, sickness or a time of hunger. If it comes, we will stand before you and before this Temple where you have chosen to be worshipped. We will cry out to you when we are in trouble. Then you will hear and save us."

As the people stood in front of the temple listening to their king's prayer, one of the priests (Jahaziel) stood up and gave this message from God.

He said, "Listen to me, King Jehoshaphat! Listen, all you people living in Judah and Jerusalem! The Lord says this to you: 'Don't be afraid or discouraged because of this large army. The battle is not your battle. It is God's battle. Tomorrow go down there and fight those people. They will come up through the Pass of Ziz. You will find them at the end of the ravine that leads to the Desert of Jeruel. You won't need to fight in this battle. Just stand strong in your places. You will see the Lord save you. Judah and Jerusalem, don't be afraid. Don't be discouraged. The Lord is with you. So go out against those people tomorrow!'"

When King Jehoshaphat heard this message, he began to thank God. He and all the people bowed down and worshipped God for hearing their prayer.

The next day, Jehoshaphat and his army went out into the desert and marched to meet their enemies.

Usually, when an army goes into battle, strong soldiers with weapons lead the way. But King Jehoshaphat did something very different. Instead of soldiers, he put SINGERS at the front. The singers led the way by singing songs of praise to God. The army followed the singers. That showed everyone how much the king trusted God to take care of the soldiers.

When the army arrived at 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 was already over. The Lord had caused all of the enemy armies to fight each other.

By the time Jehoshaphat and his army arrived, all 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 worshipped Him. They wanted to thank the Lord for answering their prayer! It had seemed impossible to beat such a strong enemy, but God could do anything.

Do you think King Jehoshaphat was happy that he had trusted God that day? God can help a king when he is afraid.

What about you? What are you afraid of? Let's pray about that right now so that God can help you.

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Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using various 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 or other group participation.

Be selective. Each teacher is unique, so only use the illustrations that best relate to how YOU tell 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.

[Click here for visual aids and more storytelling methods.](#)

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Review and Reflection Questions:

Review questions help children remember and know the facts of a story. Reflection questions encourage them to internalise the meaning and implications for their lives. Asking at least one of each type of question can help strengthen a child's spiritual development and help them connect to God. [Click here to learn more about review and reflection questions.](#)

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Review:

- Who was the good king of Judah who taught the people how to worship the Lord God? (Jehoshaphat)
- What did King Jehoshaphat do when he found out enemies were going to attack Judah? (He led the people in fasting and prayer)
- What did God tell the people through the Jahazeil the priest? (He would be with them, and they wouldn't even need to fight)
- What is fasting? (Not eating food to focus on prayer instead)
- Who did King Jehoshaphat put in front of the army when they went into battle? (Men who sang praises to God)
- What did King Jehoshaphat and the army find when they arrived for the battle? (The enemy armies had killed each other and there was no one left to fight)
- What did you learn about God from this story?
- What do you think the Israelite soldiers learned about God from this story?

Reflection:

- What made King Jehoshaphat a good king?
- King Jehoshaphat and the people were afraid of their enemies, but God sent them a message through the prophet Jahaziel that He was on their side, and that they'd win the battle. How do you think everyone felt after hearing this? Do you think they were still afraid?
- What do you think the Israelites who sang and praised God in the army looked and sounded like? What might their songs have sounded like?
- Do you think these singers felt brave or afraid to walk into battle?
- What are you afraid of?
- Do you think adults get scared too? (Suggestion: Share a time you've been afraid as an adult)
- What do you do when you are afraid? Do you run away, find someone you trust (like a parent), fight, or freeze? Do you pray when you are afraid?
- What can you say to God in prayer when you are afraid?

Prayer:

It is important to guide children in learning how to pray. In prayer, children can connect with God and learn that He hears and answers them. God can become a life-long friend who is with them every moment of their lives. Try using a variety of prayer methods from time to time so that the children can learn to connect with God in different ways. Note that you can pray at any time throughout your lesson. [A variety of prayer methods are found here.](#)

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 song options.

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Activities and Crafts:

- [How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation.](#)
- [Visit the activities and songs pages for additional activities and crafts.](#)

Activities:

- Use a bible atlas to look up some places mentioned in the story.
- Spend time practising the basics of prayer. 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/whiteboard. 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 singing praises to God.
- See [Prayer](#) for more ideas about prayer.

Invite the children to respond to this story using the adaptable “God’s Story” printable reflection page. [Free printables for this story.](#)

Crafts:

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

Print and use these free bookmarks, trading cards or timelines. [Free printables for this story.](#)

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Other Online Resources:

- [Activity: “Five finger prayer” to teach children to pray \(Ministry to children\)](#)
- [Lesson plan \(Ministry to children\)](#)
- [Lesson on prayer for children \(Ministry to children\)](#)
- [Additional study on Jehoshaphat \(Study light\)](#)
- [Explaining how to teach children to pray \(Ministry to children\)](#)

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