

Facing a Crisis.

In 2 Chronicles chapter 20 in the Old Testament we read about Jehoshaphat the King of Judah. He faced a crisis. We read in 2Chronicles 20 verse 2, "Some men came and told Jehoshaphat, 'A vast army is coming against you from Edom'". The dictionary definition of crisis is this, "a time of acute danger or difficulty, a catastrophe, disaster, emergency, predicament, problem and a turning point". That describes Jehoshaphat's circumstances well. Things didn't look too good as he faced this major emergency. Crisis comes to all of us from time to time. Christians aren't exempt. Jehoshaphat was used in a revival. He destroyed the Idols of Baal. He sent teachers to teach the nation of Israel about the Lord. He was just, honest, and he revered God. He's described for us in 2Chronicles 17 verse 3 like this, "In his early years he walked in the ways that his father David had followed. He did not consult the Baals but sought the God of his father and followed his commands". You may be a radiant Christian involved in God's work. You might be a shining example to others of Christian commitment. But you're not immune from crisis in your life.

Notice Jehoshaphat's initial response. We read in 2Chronicles 20 verse 3 that he was, "Alarmed". If we're honest that's the way we all respond at first when we face a crisis. When some people get alarmed they give in at the beginning. Jehoshaphat could have said, "The Syrian army is too big". He could have conceded defeat without a fight. Some decide not to face the problem. Jehoshaphat could have buried his head in the sand like an Ostrich and hoped the problem would go away.

Some try to find their own solution in crisis. Jehoshaphat could have called on the pagan nations like Egypt for help. In crisis we often panic and look for a quick way out of the problem. We're too quick at taking the matter into our own hands. Others try to drown their fears. One main motive behind the excessive drinking of alcohol and drug abuse is the attempt to cover our fears. We talk about "drowning our sorrows". Fears don't sink. They're not like a brick in water. They're more like a piece of polystyrene. You try to push your fears under but they pop up again. How are you coping with your crisis?

What's the right way to respond to crisis in our lives?

We see it in the response of Jehoshaphat.

The first response is resolution. We read in 2Chronicles 20 verse 3, “Jehoshaphat resolved to enquire of the Lord”. Rather than panic in the crisis he resolved to be God-focused. He stopped, took a deep breath, and, looked to the Lord. He purposed to seek God’s help. He prepared himself spiritually to face the emergency. When crisis strikes stop and bring it to God. Verse 3 tells us, “He proclaimed a fast for all Judah”. Fasting is an act of humility before God and it shows our dependence on him. Fasting enables us to concentrate on God. It reflects a real determination to seek God for an answer.

Prayer was Jehoshaphat’s second response. We read in verse 3 that he, “resolved to enquire of the Lord”, and in verse 4 we read, “The people of Judah came together to seek help from the Lord”. In crisis we need help. There’s nothing better than seeking God’s help. Jehoshaphat’s prayer is found in verses 6 to 12. In it he recognised God’s ability to help. We read in verse 6, “Power and might are in your hand, and no one can withstand you”. He appealed to God’s special interest in the well being of his people. He says in verse 7, “Did you not drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel and give it forever to the descendants of Abraham?” God is concerned about your welfare too in your time of crisis. We simply need to recognise our inability and throw ourselves on the Lords goodness. Jehoshaphat prayed in verse 12, “We have no power to face this vast army”. Our extremity is God’s opportunity to work on our behalf. In doing so he shows his grace and power. God is seen to be strong in our times of weakness as he comes to our help in answer to prayer. William Gouge said, “God’s power is the best guard, the safest convoy, and surest castle that any can have”. We need to pray together with other believers too. The people of Judah came together. There is great power in corporate praying. Charles Spurgeon said, “We shall never see much change for the better in our churches in general till the prayer meeting occupies a higher place in the esteem of Christians”.

Jehoshaphat was encouraged from the word of God. We read in 2 Chronicles 20 verse 14, “Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jahaziel⁸.this is what the Lord says to you”. In crisis don’t put your Bible on the shelf. Open it and read it. God will speak to you through its pages. He’ll build you up to enable you to deal with the

emergency you're facing. You'll cope when you expose yourself to God's promises found in his word. God will have just the right word for your particular situation. Jehoshaphat was told by God what to do. We read in verse 16, "Tomorrow march down against them". He obeyed. God will bring a word to your heart in your crisis. It may come during your own personal devotions. It may be a word to you in Church as you listen to the preacher. When he speaks and challenges you to action, do it. There are some things only God can do and you can't. There are some things God won't do and you must. He gives the word, and, as you obey, he gives the enabling. But you must act in obedience before the word is fulfilled in your life. We crumble under crisis when we fail to do what God has asked of us.

Jehoshaphat praised and worshipped the Lord. We read in 2 Chronicles 20 verse 21, "Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the Lord and to praise him for the splendour of his holiness as they went out ahead of the army, saying: Give thanks to the Lord for his love endures forever". Is it possible to face your crisis with singing and a joyful heart? Yes it is! This is the praise of faith. It's possible because you've learned to move forward in obedience and trust assured that God has gone ahead of you. If God is in your tomorrows on your behalf what have you to fear? The problem may be gigantic but God has gone before you. Praise God now in your crisis. Thank him for what he's about to do to help you. Scripture says in 1 Thessalonians 5 verse 17, "Give thanks in all circumstances". Even in crisis? Yes, because you have the Almighty working things out for your good. Paul says in Ephesians 3 verse 20, "Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us. To him be glory".

Don't allow your present crisis to crush you or overwhelm you. Pray. Trust God's promises. Invite others to pray for you and with you. Be sensitive to God's voice to your heart through the word. Obey him. Praise him for the victories he'll give you as you trust him with your emergency situation. Remember, Jesus is the Christ of every crisis.