

Jehoshaphat Continues the Revival**Lesson Scope:** [2 Chronicles 17-20](#)

References in brackets relate to Lesson Scope unless noted otherwise

Lesson Focus

Under very favourable circumstances, Asa's son Jehoshaphat began his reign. Even though the final years of Asa's reign were clouded with failure, his "heart . . . Was perfect all his days" (15:17). In contrast, the nation of Israel, under the reign of king Ahab and influenced greatly by his wicked wife Jezebel, was moving further and further away from true worship. Jehoshaphat likely benefited much from the godly influence of his father Asa. He also understood the importance of obedience to "the law of the LORD." The earliest record of his life states well the general tone of his reign: he "sought to the LORD God of his father."

The influences from Israel seem to have been a constant threat to Jehoshaphat. His apparent success in acquiring wealth likely accelerated this challenge. In time, he succumbed to "help[ing] the ungodly, and lov[ing] them that hate the LORD." The prophet's rebuke challenged him to renew his commitment to the Lord as well as his charge to the people.

In this lesson we see how God blesses those who honour Him. Under the Old Covenant, this included material blessing as well.

Seeds for failure in the next generation, as will be seen in the next lesson, were sown by Jehoshaphat's failure. Be inspired to see the importance of instilling in the rising generation the principles taught in this lesson so that the failures in the generations that succeeded Jehoshaphat will not be repeated.

Be sure to spend time familiarizing yourself with the complete lesson scope. Details given in some of the verses not included in the printed text can enhance your lesson discussion and understanding.

The Lord's reviving work in one generation must be nurtured in succeeding generations. The commitment to seek the Lord and to obey His commandments is essential to spiritual success.

Lesson Aim: To discover principles for strengthening God’s people today.

Theme Verses: [Psalm 85:6-7](#). Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee? Shew us thy mercy, O LORD, and grant us thy salvation.

Lesson Text

“Walked in the First Ways of . . . David”

[2 Chronicles 17:1-10](#) ^(KJV) And Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his stead, and strengthened himself against Israel. ² And he placed forces in all the fenced cities of Judah, and set garrisons in the land of Judah, and in the cities of Ephraim, which Asa his father had taken. ³ And the LORD was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the first ways of his father David, and sought not unto Baalim; ⁴ But sought to the *LORD* God of his father, and walked in his commandments, and not after the doings of Israel. ⁵ Therefore the LORD stablished the kingdom in his hand; and all Judah brought to Jehoshaphat presents; and he had riches and honour in abundance. ⁶ And his heart was lifted up in the ways of the LORD: moreover he took away the high places and groves out of Judah. ⁷ Also in the third year of his reign he sent to his princes, *even* to Benhail, and to Obadiah, and to Zechariah, and to Nethaneel, and to Michaiah, to teach in the cities of Judah. ⁸ And with them *he sent* Levites, *even* Shemaiah, and Nethaniah, and Zebadiah, and Asahel, and Shemiramoth, and Jehonathan, and Adonijah, and Tobijah, and Tobadonijah, Levites; and with them Elishama and Jehoram, priests. ⁹ And they taught in Judah, and *had* the book of the law of the LORD with them, and went about throughout all the cities of Judah, and taught the people. ¹⁰ And the fear of the LORD fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that *were* round about Judah, so that they made no war against Jehoshaphat.

“Prepared Thine Heart to Seek God”

[2 Chronicles 18:1](#) ^(KJV) Now Jehoshaphat had riches and honour in abundance, and joined affinity with Ahab.

[2 Chronicles 19:2-4](#) ^(KJV) And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him, and said to king Jehoshaphat, Shouldest thou help the un-

godly, and love them that hate the LORD? therefore *is* wrath upon thee from before the LORD. ³ Nevertheless there are good things found in thee, in that thou hast taken away the groves out of the land, and hast prepared thine heart to seek God. ⁴ And Jehoshaphat dwelt at Jerusalem: and he went out again through the people from Beersheba to mount Ephraim, and brought them back unto the LORD God of their fathers.

“The Battle Is . . . God’s”

2 Chronicles 20:1-4 ^(KJV) It came to pass after this also, *that* the children of Moab, and the children of Ammon, and with them *other* beside the Ammonites, came against Jehoshaphat to battle. ² Then there came some that told Jehoshaphat, saying, There cometh a great multitude against thee from beyond the sea on this side Syria; and, behold, they *be* in Hazazontamar, which *is* Engedi. ³ And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. ⁴ And Judah gathered themselves together, to ask *help* of the LORD: even out of all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD. 2 Chronicles 20:15-17 ^{15 (KJV)} And he said, Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat, Thus saith the LORD unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle *is* not yours, but God's. ¹⁶ Tomorrow go ye down against them: behold, they come up by the cliff of Ziz; and ye shall find them at the end of the brook, before the wilderness of Jeruel. ¹⁷ Ye shall not *need* to fight in this *battle*: set yourselves, stand ye *still*, and see the salvation of the LORD with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them: for the LORD *will be* with you.

2 Chronicles 20:22 ^(KJV) And when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten.

Questions for Study

“Walked in the First Ways of . . . David”

1. Why did Jehoshaphat see it as being important to strengthen himself against Israel?
2. Enumerate actions of Jehoshaphat that strengthened Judah.

3. What enemies are at work against God's people today? How can we fortify ourselves?

“Prepared Thine Heart to Seek God”

4. What was Jehoshaphat's transgression?

5. In what areas might we fail to draw clear lines of separation from evil?

6. What attitudes will restore our effectiveness in times of failure?

“The Battle Is . . . God's”

7. What actions of the people solicited God's help, resulting in a miraculous deliverance?

8. What are some expressions of gratitude for God's work in behalf of His people?

Analysing the Passage

Jehoshaphat evidently understood that the influences of sinful Israel were a threat to Judah, so he “strengthened himself against Israel” (17:1). Under the reign of Ahab, the “doings of Israel” (17:4) included many of the abominations of the heathen.

“In the first ways of his father David” (17:3) suggests “before being marred by failure.” The “first love” of the church at Ephesus is a similar New Testament thought (Revelation 2:4).

In contrast to other kings whose hearts were lifted up in self-confidence and arrogance, Jehoshaphat's “heart was lifted up in the ways of the LORD” (17:6). He made the ways of the Lord a top priority and experienced the rewards of doing so. Jesus' Words to us are “seek ye first the kingdom of God” (Matthew 6:33).

Jehoshaphat went a step further than his father by removing “the high places and groves out of Judah” (17:6). He taught military strategy as well as the importance of the Law (17:7-9).

In the unfolding of events in chapter 18, it appears that Jehoshaphat had reservations about his affinity with king Ahab, but he moved ahead.

His entrance into battle almost cost him his life (18:31).

Jehoshaphat's fear caused him to “seek the LORD” (20:3). This rallied his people to do the same (20:4). Calling upon God in times of fear or uncertainty bespeaks trust and confidence in Him.

Salvation as used in 20:17 speaks of “deliverance, victory in battle.”

Jehoshaphat's words "stand . . . still, and see the salvation of the LORD" echo the words of Moses in Exodus 14:13 when God was about to deliver His people and destroy the Egyptians in the Red Sea.

Principles and Applications

"Walked in the First Ways of . . . David"

1. Clearly defined loyalties strengthen God's people (17:1 -2). God's blessing was upon the united efforts of the people to return to true worship. The devil would have the pressures and influences we face distract us from a common goal, and thereby render us weak or unprepared. Is it clear to our brethren where our loyalties are? Or do our business relationships, vocational interests, or fellowship with people from liberal church groups cause them to question our position?

2. A singular affection for God is essential for spiritual strength (17:4-6). We must each have a personal relationship with God, a personal determination to identify with truth, and a personal desire to be faithful in every area of life. Just like Jehoshaphat, we must be willing to remove influences from our lives that will hinder our commitment. Many have testified how victory over an old habit was the key to a more meaningful relationship with God and His people.

3. An organized teaching program of God's Word is essential for strengthening God's people spiritually (17:7-9). The Levites taught the Law, the priests offered sacrifices, and the princes judged the people. Strong church life results when leaders call their people to God, teach God's Word, and make judgments according to God's Word. God expects each generation to identify the "gods" of their day. Are our lifestyles, vehicles, electronic devices, and recreational activities in keeping with Bible principles?

4. Growth in spiritual understanding strengthens God's people and leaves a powerful testimony to those around them (17:10). In the past, the people of God have needed to reject and eliminate some inconsistent practices. The world many times has expectations of us as God's people.

May we never disappoint them by inconsistencies. Sometimes their perception can actually help us determine a safe course.

"Prepared Thine Heart to Seek God"

5. Joining affinity with the ungodly weakens God's people and incurs

God's wrath (18:1; 19:1-2). The potential to become ensnared by wickedness is always present. We should be very grateful for brethren who remind us of things they observe in our lives that could potentially threaten our relationship with the Lord. (See Psalm 141:5.)

6. Rising above our mistakes and changing our course are strengthening to the people of God (19:4). To admit failure can be humiliating, but is that not what God wants? "If my people . . . shall humble themselves . . . and turn from their wicked ways; then will I . . . forgive" (2 Chronicles 7: 14).

"The Battle Is God's"

7. Spiritual strength does not entirely remove the challenge of fear from the people of God (20:14). We can all identify with the "torment" of fear. But as we, like Jehoshaphat, "set [ourselves] to seek the LORD," we can experience the "perfect love [that] casteth out fear" (1 John 4:18).

8. Complete trust in God is a sign of spiritual strength (20:3-4). The difficult experiences of our lives can teach us a greater trust in God. Fasting and prayer are expressions of our recognizing our own inability, and they connect us to divine power. Also, to share our burdens collectively as Judah did (20:4) gives an added measure of strength to the individual believer.

9. Real strength lies in God above (20:15). God's call was to "stand ye still and see." While God does have a part for man to do, perhaps sometimes we spend too much time trying to manipulate all the details rather than trusting Him. We must remember that God "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Ephesians 3:20).

10. Praise and thanksgiving to God are evidence of spiritual strength and open the door for God to work (20:22). History contains testimonies of the strength that singing gave to persecuted Christians. The singing of God's people, whether in times of joy or sorrow, will connect their soul and spirit to the powers of heaven. One can observe a direct connection between the quality of singing and the spiritual vibrancy of the group.

Important Teachings

1. Clearly defined loyalties strengthen God's people (17:1-2).

2. A singular affection for God is essential for spiritual strength (17:4-6).
3. An organized teaching program of God's Word is essential for strengthening God's people spiritually (17:7-9).
4. Growth in spiritual understanding strengthens God's people and leaves a powerful testimony to those around them (17:10).
5. Joining affinity with the ungodly weakens God's people and incurs God's wrath (18:1; 19:1-2).
6. Rising above our mistakes and changing our course are strengthening to the people of God (19:4).
7. Spiritual strength does not entirely remove the challenge of fear from the people of God (20:1-4).
8. Complete trust in God is a sign of spiritual strength (20:3-4).
9. Real strength lies in God above (20:15).
10. Praise and thanksgiving to God are evidence of spiritual strength and open the door for God to work (20:22).

Answers to Questions

1. Why did Jehoshaphat see it as being important to strengthen himself against Israel?

Israel was becoming more of a political enemy, but Jehoshaphat's primary concern appears to be to protect Judah from the idolatry and pagan worship that Israel was steeped in.

2. Enumerate actions of Jehoshaphat that strengthened Judah.

Jehoshaphat sought the ways of the Lord and obeyed His commandments. He also taught the people to do the same. He desired to protect his people from the influences of Israel and placed forces in the border cities. His removal of the high places and groves proved his desire to establish true worship. First Kings 22 tells us he removed the Sodomites out of the land.

3. What enemies are at work against God's people today? How can we fortify ourselves?

The anti-authority mindset, casual Christianity, influences from apostate relatives or friends, and a society steeped in immorality are pressures without. Within, we face the temptations of pride, lust, intimidation, and discouragement or loneliness. We fortify ourselves in the same way Jehoshaphat did: following the Lord with a true heart, obeying His

Word, identifying deceptive influences around us, and walking in the ways of the faithful of the past.

4. What was Jehoshaphat's transgression?

The prophet's message to him from God was that he loved those who hated God and that he helped the ungodly. Micaiah's word from the Lord in the previous chapter should have awakened Jehoshaphat to the dangers of an affinity with Ahab. This alliance jeopardized his relationship with God. His miraculous escape from death was an act of God's mercy.

5. In what areas might we fail to draw clear lines of separation from evil?

In a world that is ego-expressive, we may be tempted to unduly promote our persons or businesses. Our dress should express modesty and simplicity. Modern methods of communication can be a snare to us. Wrong music will erode our spiritual life. Lack of reserve between the genders is a sure road to moral failure.

6. What attitudes will restore our effectiveness in times of failure?

We do well to recognize that "it is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed" (Lamentations 3:22). Admitting our wrong and asking for forgiveness validates true repentance. We must take personal responsibility for our failures and not blame others. David said, "These sheep, what have they done?" (2 Samuel 24:17). Sometimes restitution may be necessary. It appears that Jehoshaphat understood that his failure also affected the people, and in 2 Chronicles 19 we see that he again established an order for the spiritual welfare of the people.

7. What actions of the people solicited God's help, resulting in a miraculous deliverance?

Jehoshaphat and his people gathered together to seek the Lord (20:3-4) "all Judah . . . with their little ones, their wives, and their children" (20:13). A fast was proclaimed. Jehoshaphat, standing in the court of the house of the Lord, cried out to God, acknowledging Him as He who had driven out the enemy nations in the past, and who had promised to hear and help those who cried to Him from "before this house." As they went to battle, they sang and praised the Lord and the enemy nations actually destroyed themselves.

8. What are some expressions of gratitude for God's work in behalf of His people?

Singing is an expression of heartfelt thankfulness. Our prayers must include thanksgiving. We should thank God specifically for answered prayer for specific needs. Imploring God's help for the future in faith and confidence should include expressions of gratitude for His work in the past. Helping others expresses gratitude for what God has done in meeting our needs. Walking in the ways of our fathers attests to recognizing God's work in the past.

Summarizing the Lesson

The victory experienced by Judah (see 20:22) was directly linked to the steps they took at the beginning. When man completely surrenders himself to God and walks in His ways, he can experience God's protection and blessing. Conversely, an unwillingness to fully surrender ourselves to God and separate ourselves from evil will result in failure and the loss of God's blessing.

Research Guide

1. Read the parallel passage to the lesson scope in 1 Kings 22. First Kings 16:29-34 tells how Ahab introduced Baal worship to Israel.
2. Look up the word affinity in Strong's Concordance, number 2859. It will help you understand that Jehoshaphat's involvements with Ahab likely included the marriage of Jehoshaphat's son with Ahab's daughter.
3. Read Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple (1 Kings 8; 2 Chronicles 6).