

The Discipleship Project-Summer 2021

Series 3: Victorious

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Weapons of Praise

Series Big Idea

Because our battles belong to the Lord, we must trust God to bring victory.

Lesson Big Idea

Because our battles belong to the Lord, we must praise Him as He leads us to victory.

FOUNDATION

Scripture Focus: II Chronicles 20:15 (PPT)

The king saw the lad running toward him before he heard the lad's frantic words. A great army was marching toward them prepared for battle. When Jehoshaphat heard which cities were united against them, he was caught completely off guard. These kings were supposed to be his allies. The logistics of their opposing foe sent a chill down Jehoshaphat's spine. He fought panic as he turned to God. If God did not help them, they would all be destroyed. Jehoshaphat called all the people from every city of Judah to gather at God's Temple to fast and pray.

When everyone arrived at the Temple in Jerusalem, they began to pray. Every family came at the request of the king, including the wives and children. When they were all assembled, King Jehoshaphat raised his voice, and everyone heard him call upon the Lord for help. God's children were outnumbered and powerless. "Nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are upon You" (II Chronicles 20:12-13, NKJV).

As the children of Israel stood in the presence of God, Jahaziel, a respected prophet and minister, spoke up with a loud voice. Through Jahaziel, God told His people not to be afraid or discouraged because of the vast army. This was God's battle, not theirs. He told them exactly what to do and where to go. He told them exactly where the enemy would be located. They were to position themselves for battle and then stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. They had no need to fear. God would fight the battle.

Everyone fell on their faces before God, thanking Him for coming to their rescue. Suddenly they heard movement and looked around to see all the ministers standing to their feet, worshiping loudly in a powerful demonstration of trust. They were praising God for the victory in advance.

The next morning they headed out. As they came into a valley, Jehoshaphat stopped them and gave them more words of encouragement. He told them to believe in the Lord and they would be established and to believe His prophets and they would prosper. Jehoshaphat appointed singers to march at the front of the army. They moved forward saying, "Praise the LORD, for His mercy endures forever" (II Chronicles 20:21, NKJV).

When it was time for the singers to worship, God stirred up great confusion among the enemy armies; they started fighting one another. They did not even realize who they were fighting. They just drew their swords and killed everyone in their path. Before long the entire army was dead, and Judah had not even reached the battlefield yet. When Jehoshaphat's army came over the hill, all they saw were dead bodies. God had completely obliterated the army that threatened them. It was evident God had surely fought this battle for them.

With Jehoshaphat in the lead, his army entered Jerusalem, rejoicing for the victory. They gathered up their musical instruments and assembled at the Lord's Temple. They spent the day singing and worshiping God for giving them victory over their enemies. A song was powerful when fighting the battle, but oh the joy to sing a song of victory.

Word spread fast that God had fought for Judah. The surrounding kingdoms had a newfound respect for the Israelites because they learned that the Lord had fought against His children's enemies, not with a sword but with a song.

FRAME

When Jehoshaphat did not know what to do because he was outnumbered, he went to God for help.

(PPT) So many times we forget to go to God first with our problems. We reach for the pain killer before asking Him to heal us. We become frantic when we face unemployment rather than falling on our knees and talking to God who owns all riches. King Jehoshaphat was comfortable with admitting he could not fight this battle. He was also quick to acknowledge his faith in God. He repeatedly reminded his people to keep their focus on God (II Chronicles 20:12).

Rather than going to God before we have tried all else and failed, we often seem to seek Him as a last resort. We must break this trend. With the help of God's Word, we can turn our priorities around.

The Bible says we have not because we ask not (James 4:2). God wants to do so many things for us if we will only ask. The fact of the matter is: God is just waiting for us to find our resource in Him. He looks for ways to show Himself strong on our behalf. We must allow Him to do His work in our present situations.

We can be thankful for the wisdom of health-care providers and the good that medicine has done, but these things should not be our first priority.

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33, KJV). (PPT) The Word of God reminds us of our priorities. Before we reach for the phone to call the doctor, we should call on the name of our God. Trusting in Jesus gives us a calm assurance that He is in control of every situation, whether it is our livelihood, our health, or other decisions we make in life. We trust Him when we let Him lead us to make the right decisions in the process.

Perhaps God is just waiting for us to make Him our priority. What would happen if we learned to seek Him first? Jehoshaphat did not seem to take long to call on God for help. He did not have time to seek the council of his advisors and outline a war strategy. He was desperate for help. As the impending reality set in, Jehoshaphat knew God was the only hope. Without God's intervention, all the people would have been slain or taken into captivity.

- **How can we prepare ourselves to trust God first during a crisis?**

Whole families came to call upon the Lord. We should also lead our families to call on God when we are in trouble. The Bible is intentional about mentioning that the whole family came to call upon the Lord for help with this formidable battle. The enemy was vast, and Judah seemed destined to be annihilated. We must teach our children that God is our helper. We should teach our children to trust God for every need. If they are close enough to watch us as parents call on God when we are facing battles, our children will learn where their help comes from when they face a crisis of their own.

- **Do you think God hears children's prayers? Explain.**

As the families began to pray, the children were crying out to God right along with their parents. Children have a unique connection with God. They are young and uninhibited in their faith. Their minds are typically not yet jaded by life's disappointments. A child's prayers are the closest thing to pure faith and unfettered trust. We should not hesitate to ask our children to join us in prayer for our needs. We need the prayer, and they need the practice.

The Scripture seems to indicate that the normal procedure was to bring their families to the Temple of God. Taking our children to church teaches them commitment in a world where stickability is rare. People are forsaking commitment in many areas of their lives. Many are no longer committed to a lifetime career, a marriage, or a church. Never before has the attitude to look out for yourself been so prevalent. Teaching children to stick with it, see it through, and finish what they start will give them a paradigm of commitment.

The Word promises that when we take the time to teach our children how to follow the right path, they will never forget the lessons. (PPT) Whether they follow the lessons is their decision, but our job is well done if we teach them. Many wayward children who come back to God after straying away declare that the prayers and lessons of a faithful parent tugged on their hearts until they finally returned home. Hopefully these lessons will be passed along to the next generation.

- **What are some ways to teach children how to trust in God as a first response in crisis?**

In the same manner Jerusalem and Judah listened to God's prophet, we should trust those God puts in our lives to speak His truth to us. (PPT) Jehoshaphat knew the value of priority. He stopped the people on their way to battle to remind them to trust God so they would be established. He also reminded them to trust the prophets so they would prosper. Why would he take valuable time to stop a very large group of people in the middle of the wilderness to remind them to listen to other human beings, the prophets? Jehoshaphat acknowledged the value of a man of God in their lives and admonished his people to trust him.

God places ministers, pastors, teachers, and evangelists in our lives to guide us and lead us to Him. If we will let them, God can use them to help us make better choices. We should allow the pastor to speak into our lives. If we will listen to counsel and heed warnings, God will use the mentors in our lives to speak truth to us, so when a crisis crashes our world, all is not lost. We prepare ourselves by leaning on the people God has strategically placed close to us to help guide us through difficult circumstances.

- **Who are some of the people God has appointed to speak into your life?**

As Jehoshaphat trusted the Lord that this was not his battle but the Lord's, we should also put our trust in God. (PPT) The battles we face may seem insurmountable. When Jehoshaphat realized the extent of the army coming to attack Judah, his first thought was that his army would have to fight, even if it meant death. Realizing this would be a futile effort because they were sorely outnumbered, he quickly turned to God. God assured Jehoshaphat that he did not need to worry. This battle was not his to own, win, or lose. This battle belonged to the Lord.

God is ready and waiting to fight for us. (PPT) He assured the people of Judah not to be afraid or dismayed. He wanted them just to trust. When we are facing a difficult situation, just trust are two very difficult words to remember. These two words really mean we must shut out all other fears and alternatives and simply trust God. Trusting God is often easier said than done. When we are sick, lying in the hospital with tubes hanging above our heads and machines beeping like panic buttons, trust is challenged. When our boss says, "You are laid off," trust becomes illusive. When our child stomps out of our lives to do his or her own thing, our trust may waiver.

However, we must remember that in every circumstance and every battle, trust is the most powerful tool at our disposal. We must engage trust. Trust gives us peace when we are in pain. Trust gives us hope while we pack our desk at work or when we watch our child drive away from the security of home and family. Trust will open our eyes to see all the angels of Heaven coming to secure our safety, hope, healing, and provision. God has promised to fight for us. Trust helps us know He is enough.

Worship is a vital ingredient for victory through our battles. God used the sound of worship to confuse the enemy and win the battle. (PPT) When we learn to trust, it is time to worship. The people of Judah were showing trust when they prepared for battle. They were putting their faith in a prophet and a king, but the war was still ahead of them. Blind faith had gotten them that far. It appears Jehoshaphat followed the counsel of the people when he assigned singers to the front lines. God put the idea in their hearts because He used praise and worship to confuse the enemy. To the unbeliever this sounded like war, but to the children of God, it was beautiful worship.

- **Can you think of some worship songs that have helped bolster your faith during tough times? Explain.**

When we face giants, demons, and battles, the sound of worship is a sound of war to the enemy. As we lift our voices in praise, the devil has to flee. When we exalt Jesus, the enemy becomes disoriented and dismantled. No wonder King Jehoshaphat put the worshipers on the front lines. God knew they would not need swords. Their weapon was praise.

FINISH

We should never underestimate the power of praise.

While Paul and Silas were evangelizing in the region of Macedonia, God used singing and worship to deliver them out of prison. The amazing conversion of Lydia, a well-known merchant of royal fabrics, was fresh in their minds. In the midst of their rejoicing, a young woman began to follow them around saying, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation" (Acts 16:17, NKJV). Even though her words were true, her spirit annoyed Paul. So after many days of her mocking the men of God and their mission, Paul had enough. He rebuked the evil spirit out of her. Finally they would have peace. Not so, Paul. You have just cast out the fortune-telling spirit that helped some highly rich men gain their wealth. They were furious. They dragged Paul and Silas into the marketplace and demanded they be put into prison on some false accusations. They were brutally beaten and put into a secure part of the prison.

Paul and Silas could have been discouraged at their predicament. Here they were just trying to share the gospel, and people had misrepresented and lied about them. They ended up in excruciating pain from the beating and were bent over in an uncomfortable position locked in stocks. Rather than complain about their situation, Paul and Silas began singing hymns. Their songs echoed throughout the halls of the prison, and the other prisoners gained encouragement and strength from their praise. Suddenly about midnight, as they were singing, a mighty earthquake shook the area. All the doors of the prison shook violently until they swung open. The shaking was so violent that the chains and restraints of all the prisoners fell off. Everyone was set free.

Paul and Silas did not take the opportunity to run; they made sure all the prisoners were accounted for. The jailer turned his heart to the Lord, and Paul and Silas were free to stay a few days encouraging the people of God.

We never know what is going on in the spirit world when we raise up our voices and give God all the praise and honor through song. We sing songs of victory and are encouraged when we listen to Christian worship music.

God uses the medium of music to speak into our spirits. He can also use music to speak into another person's life from our own lips of praise. Whether we are headed into an insurmountable battle, or the constraints of the enemy have us tightly bound, praising God with a song may be the powerful tool we use to loose the chains and win the victory.

"And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD" (Psalm 27:6, KJV).