

## Wrestling with Fears of the Unknown

August 24, 2023

*What do you do when you feel anxious or afraid?*

Ask a friend for advice? Roll over everything endlessly in your head? Try to distract yourself?

Or do you go immediately to God?

I'm learning to do the latter but it's still not instinctive. I've been dealing with multiple unrelated health issues, some of which have felt crushing. I'm tired of doctors' appointments, and often hesitant and fearful to leave the house. And I'm worried I won't be able to fulfill my existing obligations — whether they be ministry related or personal. **As I was wrestling with my fears of the unknown, I turned to a favorite passage, 2 Chronicles 20, where God met me once again. In the end, I offered to the Lord, "We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you" (2 Chronicles 20:12b).**

2 Chronicles 20 is set in about 850 BC, after the kingdom was divided. Jehoshaphat was the fourth king of Judah, a king who had been faithful to God. The Lord had rescued him from all his enemies yet now, without warning, his enemies banded together to battle against him. Jehoshaphat was shaken and shocked.

Have you ever had that happen? Believing things were fine and then suddenly you realize they're not? For me, a minor arm pain led to a diagnosis of post-polio. And one abnormal test result led to months of unanswered questions and medical issues. **We often don't see trouble coming until we are in the middle of it.**

Some men told Jehoshaphat, "A great multitude is coming against you from Edom, from beyond the sea; and behold, they are in... Engedi." In other words, people have been coming from far away to attack and now they're close by. You didn't see this coming earlier, but now it is upon you.

That was terrifying news to the king as we learn, "Jehoshaphat was afraid and set his face to seek the Lord" (2 Chronicles 20:3a). In his fear, Jehoshaphat's first reaction was to seek the Lord. Perhaps it was a natural response for him, but it isn't often for me. **Too often, I go to Google instead of God. I ask friends what they think. I say a quick prayer, but most of my time and energy isn't spent in seeking God.** It's spent figuring out a solution. And after I come up with a plan, I ask God for his blessing.

It's comforting to me to know that Jehoshaphat was afraid. It wasn't that he fearlessly trusted God, confident that God would deliver from the beginning. No, **it was only after Jehoshaphat went to God with his fears that his trust grew. Then his fears dissipated.** We see that pattern in Psalm 56, when David first said, "When I am afraid, I put my trust in you" and in the very next verse declared, "In God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can flesh do to me?" (Psalm 56:3-4). What changed? David put his trust in God even as he feared. And after that deliberate decision, he realized that his enemies were no match for God.

**Just as David's fears turned to trust in Psalm 56, Jehoshaphat declared he was confident in the Lord's power, sure that no one could withstand him (6).** He wasn't marshaling his own resources but reminding God of his promises to help them. Then Jehoshaphat reminded God of what he had done in the past (7). In doing that, he was also reminding the people of God's power. **It's easy to forget who we are praying to, ignoring or perhaps forgetting the limitless power of our God. Nothing is impossible with God (Luke 1:37).**

We need to keep telling one another that our God can do anything- nothing is too hard for him (Jeremiah 32:27). This means recounting all that we know to be true, paying special attention to what God has done for us in the past. Remembering. Reciting. Reminding each other. Rehearsing the truths we know.

**Finally Jehoshaphat laid the situation before the Lord. He told the Lord that they were being attacked and admitted, “For we are powerless against this great horde that is coming against us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you” (2 Chronicles 20:12).**

They simply told God their situation and expressed their helplessness, leaving the rest to him.

In my study Bible notes about this passage, I read this by Charles Spurgeon:

*“One of the most prevailing arguments to be used in prayer with God is a truthful statement of our condition, a confession of our sad estate. Perhaps we think that is not praying. But it is the most powerful form of prayer, just to set our case before God, just to lay bare all our sorrow and all our needs and say, “Lord, there it is.”*

*What did they do after asking for help? They said, “we look to you.” What did they mean? They meant, “Lord, if help does come, it must come from you. We are looking to you for it. It cannot come from anywhere else. We believe it will come... We do not know how, so we are looking. We do not know when, but we are looking. We do not know what you would have us do... So we are looking to you.”*

When we put our eyes on God, we are fully engaged with him. We aren't looking away, focusing on our problems, as Peter did when he looked at the powerful storm instead of Jesus. Peter let the enormity of his circumstances overtake him and then he began to sink (Matt 14:28-33).

**Sometimes we also look away when we've been disappointed by God, not wanting to maintain a gaze of trust. I've been a “quiet quitter,” not overtly walking away but passively disengaging from him. I've gone through the motions of faith while focusing on everything but God. But when I've looked directly at God, riveting my eyes on him, I've been drawn into his presence. In his presence, I've felt lasting comfort. In his presence, I've found peace in the storm. In his presence, I've found inexplicable joy.**

As I reread this account of Jehoshaphat's pleas, God met me in an unmistakable way. ***I don't need to figure out a plan. There are so many unknowns in the future and God is asking me to trust him. Not necessarily assuming that everything will turn out as I want but simply leaving it all with him.*** Trusting him moment by moment. Responding to the prompting of the Spirit if there is something I am to do. And above all, letting my heart rest in him as I keep looking to the Lord.

***Trusting God means holding on to him, not the outcome I want.***

And so I keep repeating these precious words, “I do not know what to do, but my eyes are on you.”

Is there a situation in which you need to keep praying those words today?