***Anxiety***

Through the eyes of King Jehoshaphat

2 Chronicles 20

There are times in life when anxiety and fear are overwhelming. All of us will face times of trouble. But God can use even the most difficult times to help us learn to look to him for help, direction and peace.

Let’s take a moment to study the person of King Jehoshaphat found in 2 Chronicles 20.

**The problem**

Jehoshaphat was a good king of a country called Judah, and things were going quite well for them. He made mistakes sometimes, of course, but he loved and obeyed God. He was loyal to God too.

Then, there was sudden trouble.

* The two countries on either side of Judah sent their armies. They even got extra military help from other nations. They all came to attack Judah.
* It was a complete surprise. So, he was not prepared at all. He only had a small army. He knew that the people in Judah could never overcome the enemy. Jehoshaphat—the King who everyone was looking to for answers—was helpless! God was their only hope.

It would be natural for King Jehoshaphat to be very anxious, fearful, and overwhelmed. In 2 Chronicles 20 we see how King Jehoshaphat responds to this situation. We can also learn from his response. Although we aren’t facing an army of soldiers and horseman, we are facing a different type of battle. Our battle is against an invisible disease and the economic hardship that it has brought. It’s a battle that is creating fear and stirring up anxiety. Like the situation of King Jehoshaphat, it has caught us by surprise, we were unprepared, and now we are helpless.

***King Jehoshaphat does 3 things – Things we must do today.***

1. **Pray**

‘“*A vast army is coming against you from Edom, across the other side of the sea….” Alarmed Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the Lord, and he proclaimed a fast for all of Judah*.’ (v.2-3)

King Jehoshaphat’s first response was to go to God and to tell the people to do the same thing.

That’s the first thing we must do as well. When anxiety begins to creep in, when we start to get a little nervous, we should go to God in prayer.

Jehoshaphat first went to God. He did that by praying. God hears every prayer we give. Your prayer doesn’t need to be beautiful, but simply sharing your feelings. You can say, ‘God, I’m feeling overwhelmed. Feeling angry, depressed, or disappointed.’

Whatever we pray, God is listening. We see this is true when we look at Psalm 55:16: ‘*I call to God and He saves me. I cry out in distress and He hears my voice*.’ What do we see? ***God hears, God cares, God saves.*** We are not alone in this crisis – God is with us.

So first, we need to pray and look to God.

1. **Be Grateful**

As he prays, Jehoshaphat begins to remember the things of the past—the ways that the nation of Judah has been blessed and cared for. He’s thankful! He worships God.

When you are in trouble, don’t let anxiety control your thoughts. In our stress, it is easy to look around at the present and to think about all our problems. Sometimes it takes gratefulness to stop worrying.

Be thankful for the good things you have – your family, your home, that you had some food today, that you can go to God in prayer and he hears you.

**One of the best ways to start fighting anxiety is with gratefulness.**

Let’s see what Jehoshaphat does:

**First,** he praises God - the King and Creator. ‘*You rule over the kingdoms of the nations in this world. Power and might are in Your hand, and no one can withstand You.’* (v.6)

**Secondly**, He thanks God for His blessings in the past. ‘*O our God, did You not drive out the inhabitants of this land before Your people and give it forever to the descendants of Abraham your friend*…’ (V. 7). He remembers how God has cared for Judah and the people. Then he gives thanks for God’s faithfulness in the past.

*Try it now.* Make a list of 15 things you are thankful to God for. Praise Him for these things. It will help you fight your anxiety.

1. **Be obedient**

This story has an incredible ending. The King stands in front of the people and calls for prayer and fasting. The very next day, God gives them direction on what to do and how to fight the battle. Jehoshaphat and his people are quick to obey what God tells them to do (v. 13-18).

Here is a summary of what happened.

Early the next morning, they left for the desert (where the battle was going to happen). Jehoshaphat appointed men to lead the army, and these men sang to the Lord and praised Him for His holiness. As they sang and praised the Lord, the armies that had come to destroy Judah began to fight amongst themselves and destroyed each other! When the army of Judah came to the overlook of the place where their enemies had gathered, they looked toward the vast army and all they saw was the dead bodies lying on the ground. It then took them 3 days to gather up and take home all the weapons and treasures left by those armies.

What an amazing thing. God, in His sovereignty and power, protected the people and rescued them. He even turned their terrible trouble into a blessing!

It can be the same for you. Right now you might be facing difficulty. You might be sad or worried or frustrated. **But we need to bring that to God and see what He does.** Perhaps one day you too will look back at this time in your life and say that something good has come out of it.

Decide to give your anxiety to God – knowing that as you do, He will change you. He will provide for you. He will strengthen you. And He will turn this valley into a valley of blessing.

May you find encouragement and hope in the story of Jehoshaphat, the man who turned to God with his anxiety and saw God rescue the nation from their enemies.

**So let’s remember what we learned. Pray about the things that might be causing you stress. Pray for wisdom and for rescue, choose to be grateful, and be obedient to His word.**

**As you face your anxiety, remember what King Jehosephat said ‘**“*Act with courage, and may the Lord be with those who do well.*”