

Life Group Topic # 1: The Prayer of King Jehoshaphat

January 11, 2009

WELCOME: (15 minutes)

How has all the snow, rain and floods affected you personally this winter? What unique opportunities did it open up to you?

WORSHIP: (15 minutes)

Use whatever means possible to turn the group's attention to the wonder and majesty of our God.

WORD APPLICATION: (45 minutes)

Briefly read or paraphrase the following sermon summary before moving to the heart of this section: the discussion around the application questions.

II Chronicles 20:1-24

When John Kavanaugh went to work for three months at "the house of the dying" in Calcutta, he was seeking a clear answer as to how best to spend the rest of his life. On the first morning there he met Mother Theresa. She asked, "And what can I do for you?"

Kavanaugh asked her to pray for him. "What do you want me to pray for?" she asked.

"Pray that I have clarity." She said firmly, "No, I will not do that."

When he asked her why, she said, "Clarity is the last thing you are clinging to and must let go of." When Kavanaugh commented that she always seemed to have the clarity he longed for, she laughed and said, "I have never had clarity; what I have always had is trust. So I will pray that you trust God."

Logical thinking cries out for clarity...theological thinking reaches out in trust. II Chronicles 20 calls us to closely analyze how logical thinking and trust differ.

...some men came and told Jehoshaphat, "A vast army is coming against you—it is already near...alarmed, Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the Lord, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah. The force coming against them was vast and unbeatable...logic would say surrender, be assimilated and survive for another day. Theological thinking is as alarmed as anyone but decides to inquire of God and to do so in the context of a fast. You fast when...

1. Your desire is too deep for words
2. You are humbling yourself before God

Jehoshaphat's prayer affirms God's sovereignty and ability...v5-12

1. He rules everywhere
2. His power cannot be stopped
3. He regularly intervenes on behalf of His people
4. He responds to His people's cries for help
5. INVOLVEMENT IS UNIVERSAL...v 4, 13

...the people of Judah came together to seek help from the Lord...all the men of Judah, with their wives and children and little ones, stood there before the Lord

Everyone knew what the crisis was...everyone knew their future was a stake...everyone was awake and involved. They prayed and then stood there waiting for an answer.

We need our leaders to pray but we need the intensity of concern that would move **all of us to call on God** and wait with expectancy for His answer. Nothing is done in the backrooms of leadership...all the people are awakened and standing in anticipation. Logical thinking says that only a few need to be awake and concerned and interceding. Theological thinking says awaken and involve everyone.

• **THE BATTLE IS NOT YOURS, BUT GOD'S...v 14-17**

...do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours but God's
The answer comes through an unknown Levite, Jahaziel. But the answer requires a unique blend of faith and action...*tomorrow march down against them...you will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the Lord will give you.* Logical thinking says that if it is God's battle, I can go back to my armchair. Theological thinking says that faith, strength and dependence are learned at the battle not at home in the armchair.

• **FAITH GIVES US ASSURANCE ABOUT THINGS WE CANNOT SEE...v 18-22**

...have faith in the Lord your God and you will be upheld; have faith in his prophets and you will be successful...and they praised the Lord with a very loud voice

It was finished in their minds...God had promised it and they were moving forward on the promise as fact. Jehoshaphat and the people worshipped and praised as if it had already happened. Faith expressed in worship was the weapon they used to go into battle and it was *as they began to sing and praise, the Lord set ambushes against the enemy...and they were defeated.*

Word Application Questions:

Prelude: Please keep in mind that these questions are meant as catalysts designed to get the group talking about life application.

1. Jehoshaphat woke up one morning to the bad news that a vast army was coming against him (vs.2). Have you received some bad news lately that has overwhelmed you?
2. Read together the prayer of the king in vs. 5-12. What do you see in this prayer that could be a pattern for your own prayers in personal crisis?
3. Read vs. 3,4,13 and notice how the king rallied all the people together to pray expectantly. What priority does prayer have in the gathered people of God in your Life Group?
4. What "armies" will your Life Group stand against this year?
5. Note God's answer to the people's prayer in vs. 15-17. Their faith in God's supernatural power still called them to march against the enemy. What securities might God be asking your Life Group to give up for the chaos of faith?
6. If there had never been such a crisis to threaten the survival of God's people in that day, they would never have seen the supernatural power of God at work on their behalf. Do we face such crisis today? Will we pray to see God's name exalted in the world today in such times of crisis?

WITNESS: (15 minutes)

This section is a vision-casting time designed to get the group strategizing and making concrete plans towards reaching outward to a lost world. Relational outreach always has the goal of ultimately enfolding those we reach into the Life Group.