

God's Story – Our Story
Characters and Character – Stand Still, Jehoshaphat!
May 26, 2024

Overarching Theme: 2024 – A Year in God's Story

Instructions:

When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.

Core Point: 2024 can be a year of living into God's Story as we journey from Genesis to Revelation together.

Reflect on this Scripture:

2 Chronicles 20:1-12; 17 (NRSVUE) After this the Moabites and Ammonites, and with them some of the Meunites, came against Jehoshaphat for battle. ² Messengers came and told Jehoshaphat, "A great multitude is coming against you from Edom, from beyond the sea; already they are at Hazazon-tamar" (that is, En-gedi). ³ Jehoshaphat was afraid; he set himself to seek the LORD and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. ⁴ Judah assembled to seek help from the LORD; from all the towns of Judah they came to seek the LORD. ⁵ Jehoshaphat stood in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the LORD, before the new court, ⁶ and said, "O LORD, God of our ancestors, are you not God in heaven? Do you not rule over all the kingdoms of the nations? In your hand are power and might, so that no one is able to withstand you. ⁷ Did you not, O our God, drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel and give it forever to the descendants of your friend Abraham? ⁸ They have lived in it and in it have built you a sanctuary for your name, saying, ⁹ 'If disaster comes upon us, the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we will stand before this house and before you, for your name is in this house, and cry to you in our distress, and you will hear and save.' ¹⁰ See now, the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, whom you would not let Israel invade when they came from the land of Egypt and whom they avoided and did not destroy, ¹¹ they reward us by coming to drive us out of your possession that you have given us to inherit. ¹² O our God, will you not execute judgment upon them? For we are powerless against this great multitude that is coming against us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you."

2 Chronicles 20:17 ¹⁷ This battle is not for you to fight; take your position, stand still, and see the victory of the LORD on your behalf, O Judah and

Jerusalem. Do not fear or be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them, and the LORD will be with you."

Commentary: So the Chronicler reminds the exiles of their history. He says, *"Listen, you who live in shaky times, with sinking sand all around, this is your story!"* In this portion of the story, the imperative is to *"stand still"* in jumpy places of fear. In fact, ten times some form of Hebrew words for "standing" is used. The Chronicler shows three pictures of what standing still or standing firm looks like.

The first picture of standing firm is in good King Jehoshaphat reaction to the enemy threat. Like everyone, he is terrified. But at this point he doesn't scramble to forge a treaty, or order arms, or find an alliance like he might have done in the past. No, this king calls the community to *pray* their fears. All the people- from every age, gender, town – gather in the temple and the king prays. He starts by acknowledging God's rule and promises and then lays out the situation. (An instructive pattern for prayer.) The king ends, *"We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you."*

Second picture of standing firm: Vs. 14 *"Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jahaziel (Jahaziel is a worship leader, from a long line of worship leaders.) and said: 'Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the battle is not yours, but God's!... You will not have to fight. Stand firm and see the deliverance the LORD gives you.'"*

These words remind of almost identical words spoken in another fearful place. At the Red Sea, when another enemy- Pharaoh and his army—were also threatening to eliminate God's people. The Lord promised in Exodus 14.13: *"Do not be afraid. Stand firm! The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still."* And Jehoshaphat's people, when they hear the Lord's assurance of salvation, when they remember the Moses story, they burst out into songs of praise. Yahweh hasn't done anything yet but give his Word. They react as if the battle is already won. Jehoshaphat goes a step further. He puts his military where his mouth is. He stations the worship leaders at the head of the army. By this outrageous song-service of a battle strategy, the people of God will show complete confidence in God's word. This too is a picture of standing firm. They sing their trust. As the praise of God ascends, God sends down ambushes, and in a classic Biblical pattern, the enemies panic and destroy each other and in a moment of faithfulness, Israel is saved.

-Adapted from online commentary by Rev. Lora A. Copely

Questions to Ponder for Accountability in the Group:

1. On the whole, King Jehoshaphat was a faithful king, yet for all of his faithfulness, he faced a catastrophic, multinational surprise attack from the east. Why do you think bad things happen to good people?
2. When Jehoshaphat heard this report, he was understandably really afraid. What do people generally do with they are really afraid? What did Jehoshaphat do?
3. Reflect on the end of Jehoshaphat's prayer – "*We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.*" How did this prayer position the people to receive an answer from God?
4. The Priest Jahaziel then prophesies *This battle is not for you to fight; take your position, stand still, and see the victory of the LORD on your behalf, O Judah and Jerusalem.*
Even though Judah had an army, this time the army and the people were instructed to *stand still*. When do you think it is appropriate to 'stand still'?"
5. Notice the power of prayer and worship in this story. How is prayer and worship empowering for you as you face life's battles? Can you think of a time when a worship song lifted you in a time of difficulty?

Activity for the Life of a Disciple:

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMCC.
2. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week:
2 Chronicles 20:17 ¹⁷ This battle is not for you to fight; take your position, stand still, and see the victory of the LORD on your behalf, O Judah and Jerusalem. Do not fear or be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them, and the LORD will be with you."