

# THE JEHOSHAPHAT STRATEGY

*By John Gagliardi*



As we workplace ministers trudge off each day to “do our thing” in the world of commerce, industry and the professions, there are two things that stand out with stark clarity:

- We are in a very real and present battle, every bit as palpable and deadly as the battles faced by the ancient kings who went off to war with sword and shield; we modern-day “kings” may go off to war with our laptops and our mobile phones, but the war is no less real and lethal for all that; and
- We are assured of the victory, and we are given the armour and the weapons we need to defeat our real enemies, the powers of this dark world and the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 6: 12) – *“the weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary they have divine power to demolish strongholds ...”* (2 Corinthians 10: 4).

The good news is that God not only gives us the power and weapons to use to “demolish strongholds”, He also gives us concrete examples to follow in His Word. In other words, He not only gives us the “what”, He also gives us the “how”.

One of the best examples of “how” occurs in the Book of 2 Chronicles, and in the person of Jehoshaphat, one of the (relatively rare) “good” kings of the Old Testament. Jehoshaphat and Judah are faced with a “vast army” of Moabites, Ammonites and Meunites. As we follow the story through Chapter 20 of 2 Chronicles, we see how Jehoshaphat goes about facing his overwhelming enemy.

Because he was a Godly king whose heart was “devoted to the ways of his Lord” and “sought the God of his father and followed His commands” (2 Chronicles 17: 4 and 6), he didn’t go into a panic, meltdown mode when faced with the “vast army”, but instead he *“resolved to inquire of the Lord, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah”* (2 Chronicles 20: 3).

Under Jehoshaphat's Godly leading, the people of Judah "came together to seek help from the Lord" (Verse 4). Jehoshaphat's next step was to praise and exalt the Lord:

*"O Lord, God of our fathers, are You not the God who is in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. Power and might are in your hands, and no one can withstand You, O our God" (Verse 6). And having reminded the people (and Himself) just Who God was, he honestly confessed, in contrast, his own weakness and powerlessness:*

*"For we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do" (Verse 12).*

But now comes the key to the "**Jehoshaphat strategy**":

*"...**But our eyes are on You!**"(Verse 12).*

Jehoshaphat got his priorities right – he humbled himself before a mighty and all-powerful God, openly admitted his own powerlessness, and threw himself totally on the mercy and compassion of the Lord. He and "the men of Judah with their wives and children and little ones" stood before the Lord in total surrender and trust.

We all love the very famous next few verses – but as you read them, remember again how Jehoshaphat totally humbled himself and surrendered to God as he faced overwhelming odds. Then God spoke through a prophetic voice:

*"Listen, King Jehoshaphat and all who live in Judah and Jerusalem! This is what the Lord says to you: Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's! Tomorrow march down against them ... You will not have to fight in this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm, and see the deliverance the Lord will give you, O Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the Lord will be with you" (Verses 15-17).*

Jehoshaphat's response? *"Jehoshaphat bowed with his face to the ground, and all the people of Judah and Jerusalem fell down in worship before the Lord. Then some of the Levites from the Kohathites and Korahites stood up and praised the Lord, the God of Israel, with a very loud voice" (Verses 18 and 19).*

They worshiped and praised the Lord, and Jehoshaphat – ever the leader – still further reminded them of where their real power came from ... faith in God: *"Listen to me, Judah and people of Jerusalem! Have faith in the Lord your God, and you will be upheld; have faith in His prophets, and you will be successful" (Verse 20).*

Imagine the wonder and awe in the faces of Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah as God did His miracle: *"As they began to sing and praise, the Lord set ambushes against the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and they were defeated ... (and) when the men of Judah came to the place that overlooks the desert and looked towards the vast army, they saw only dead bodies lying on the ground; no one had escaped" (Verse 24).*

Not only did God give Jehoshaphat a great victory, but He also gave him a huge amount of plunder – "more than they could carry away. There was no much plunder that it took three days to collect it" (Verse 25). Then the story goes on to say that the kingdom of Jehoshaphat entered into a period of peace and security, *"for his God had given him rest on every side" (Verse 30).*

Distilled down to a practical blueprint for us to follow, Jehoshaphat's strategy was simple but devastatingly effective:

- **Jehoshaphat lived a righteous life and sought God with all his heart**
- **When faced with an overwhelming threat and danger, he went straight to God and threw himself on His mercy**
- **He praised and extolled God and his omnipotence**
- **He humbled himself and honestly assessed his own lack of power and knowledge**
- **He stood before the Lord and told Him his eyes were on Him and Him alone**
- **After a powerful and encouraging prophetic word, he worshiped and praised God**
- **He reminded the people to have faith in God**
- **They began to sing and praise, as God acted and annihilated the "vast army"**
- **After spending three days picking up the plunder in the "Valley of Blessing", they continued to give thanks and praise the Lord, and joyfully "entered Jerusalem and went to the temple of the Lord with harps and lutes and trumpets**
- **And the kingdom of Jehoshaphat was at peace, for his God had given him rest on every side.**

Next time you face what seems like an overwhelming problem, a seemingly devastating attack – that lost contract, that unexpected tax bill, that trusted colleague who betrays us, that looming bankruptcy or family crisis – remember how Jehoshaphat faced his "vast army".

God in His Word tells us that no matter what trials and tests come against us, He is always faithful to give us a way out, "so that you can stand up under it" (1 Corinthians 10: 13). Probably not many of us will face the kind of "vast army" that Jehoshaphat did, threatening total destruction and death, but sometimes it can feel like it.

No matter what sort of personal attack you are facing – whether financial, relational, physical, emotional or spiritual - it no doubt is very real and very threatening. Every day we have to stand in faith, like Jehoshaphat, and push back fear. Every day there is a new attack, and every day we have an opportunity to push back and defeat the "powers of this dark world".

The Bible tells us to walk by faith, and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5: 7) – in other words, to trust God, and not the circumstances. Which is exactly what Jehoshaphat did – his "circumstance" was a "vast army" with deadly intent. But he chose to walk by faith, not by the very frightening sight, and God came through for him, just as he will for us if we stand firm and follow **the Jehoshaphat Strategy**.

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