

Faith Over Fear



10 Devotions from the Old Testament

By Major Beth Desplancke
Territorial Women's Ministries Program Secretary



When Life Changes

Read Joshua 1:1-9.

Change is inevitable! You decide whether you adapt! Change to the fearful is threatening because it means that things may get worse. To the hopeful it is encouraging because things may get better. To the confident it is inspiring because the challenge exists to make us stronger. Become a student of change. It is the only thing that will remain constant.

In Joshua 1:1-9, we see God's chosen people – the Israelites – facing a lot of changes. First, there was a change in leadership. Verse 1 tells us that Moses is dead. Suddenly Joshua goes from second lieutenant to the man with primary responsibility, under God, to lead Israel into the Promised Land.

Secondly, there was a change in location. God commissioned Joshua to lead the children of Israel into the promised land. For 40 years the desert had been their home – and being nomads had been their lifestyle. Now, it was time to finally enter the long awaited Promised Land – a land that God would give to them, but it was still an unknown land – there were people to be conquered, there would be the adjustment to living “city” life, and settling down, rather than just wandering.

Joshua realized the seriousness of being Israel's leader. All these changes seemed almost overwhelming, but God didn't leave Joshua alone with this task, but provided him with 3 "tools" for Joshua to rely on for help – three tools that each one of us can rely on when we go through changes in life. Those tools are: God's presence, God's strength and God's Word.

I. Joshua relied on God's presence.

The Lord reassured Joshua with the promise of His unfailing presence.

No one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life, as a I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go. Joshua 1:5, 9

This did not minimize the task Joshua faced; he would encounter giants and fortified cities, not to mention the difficulties of leading such a large group of people, but God's presence would make all the difference. God's enabling presence is assured. God is saying, "I will be with you to direct, sustain and assure success." In essence God is saying, "I will not drop or abandon you."

II. Joshua relied on God's strength.

Three times in this passage, Joshua is told to be strong:

Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their ancestors to give them. Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go. Joshua 1:6, 7, 9

Strength and courage seem to go hand in hand. Mere physical strength was not enough for Joshua to conquer the Canaanites and claim the Promised Land. Trying to deal with all the changes on his own strength, Joshua's task was doomed to failure; he would drown in the enormity of this task. Relying on one's physical strength will eventually lead to exhaustion and failure.

Because of the Lord's strength we can be courageous. The Hebrew word for "strong" refers to "sound legs," while the one for "courage" refers to "having a secure grasp." The point is clear: God was telling Joshua that his success as a leader depended on whether he could stand strong and hold on tightly!

III. Joshua relied on God's Word.

It's one thing to say to Joshua, "Be strong! Be very courageous!" and quite another thing to enable him to do it. Joshua's strength and courage would come from the presence of the Lord and from meditating on God's Law, believing its promises, and obeying what He said.

Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Joshua 1:7-8

Joshua had to obey the commands and guidance God had given through His Law for Joshua to succeed in dealing with the changes that lay ahead. The Lord's Word had to be a part of Joshua's daily life - it had to have impact. The same is true for us.

How does God's Word become a part of our daily lives? Having a Bible that sits on a shelf and is opened only on Sunday mornings isn't enough. Merely reading the Bible a few minutes a day isn't enough. Making God's Word a part of our lives requires time spent in reading and meditating on God's Word. . Instead of filling your mind and heart with news and fear, fill it with God's word instead.

We are all facing changes, but we can ride out the bumps that come from change if we rely on the same tools God gave Joshua: God's presence, God's strength and God's Word.

Whatever changes lie ahead, you aren't alone. God is there. You don't have to rely on your own strength - depend on the Lord's strength. With whatever changes that come, turn to the Bible for His guidance, comfort and reassurance.



Handling the “What Ifs” of Life

Read 2 Chronicles 20:1-24.

Life is full of “What if’s; it seems more so now than ever before. We are experiencing the unknown and it leads to “What If.” The “What if’s” of life can strangle and defeat us. Uncertainty is part of life – there is no way to eliminate it, so we need to learn how to face it and deal with it. Our story today looks at a time in King Jehoshapat’s reign when uncertainty was staring him smack in the face.

In 2 Chronicles 19 we read that Jehoshaphat had turned the people back to the Lord, and he appointed judges throughout the land. All was looking good, and then uncertainty entered. At the beginning of chapter 20, three armies came to wage war against Jehoshaphat.

The immediate future doesn’t look good for Jehoshaphat. Most people in his situation would be overwhelmed, scared out of their wits, and their immediate instinct would be to run away and hide, in hopes that the problem would disappear. From 2 Chronicles 20, we see three ways we can facing uncertainty and the “What Ifs” of life.

Step 1: Face Uncertainty with Focus.

This pending war Jehoshaphat faced was a situation that called for focus and for seeking God. Jehoshaphat could have simply focused on the impossible threat that loomed before him; if he did that, he was defeated before the battle ever began.

Jehoshaphat refused to focus on the circumstances he faced; rather, he focused on God to guide him through this difficult time.

Alarmed, Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the Lord, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah. The people of Judah came together to seek help from the Lord; indeed, they came from every town in Judah to seek him. 2 Chronicles 20:3-4.

Focus is a matter of choice. We have the power to choose what we focus on - "Is the glass half empty or half full?" Jehoshaphat chose to focus on God instead of the circumstances he faced.

"Our God, will you not judge them? For we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you." Verse 12

What an expression of utter helplessness, and utter dependence upon and hope in God. When we focus is on God, our "***we do not know what to do,***" leads into "***but we are looking to You.***"

Step 2: Face Uncertainty with Trust.

Jehoshaphat's situation required a lot of trust in God. At the beginning of his prayer, Jehoshaphat declares why God is worthy of trust.

Lord, the God of our ancestors are you not the God who is in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. Power and might are in your hand, and no one can withstand you. Verse 6

Jehoshaphat had to trust God to resolve the problem, that included trusting when the solution seemed ridiculous, as Jahaziel explained in verses 15-17. They were to march down against their enemies. They were to take up their positions and then they were to stand firm and watch as God will deliver them.

As soon as Jehoshaphat had put his trust in the Lord the battle became the Lord's.

Early in the morning they left for the Desert of Tekoa. As they set out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, "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

Without trust in God, they wouldn't have succeeded. Faith is always productive even in the most oppressive circumstances.

Step 3: Face Uncertainty with Praise.

Instead of focusing on the what ifs that are in front of us, we should fill our lives with praise: praising God for who He is and what He has done. Praise isn't just for when things go our way, but praise is for every day, every situation, no matter what ifs are before us.

No matter what uncertainty we face, we must remember to praise God for who He is and what He has done. This doesn't just mean we should praise God when things go our way. We need to praise Him no matter what.

After consulting the people, Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the Lord and to praise him for the splendor of his holiness as they went out at the head of the army, saying: "Give thanks to the Lord, for his love endures forever." 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. Verses 21-22

Before the battle began, they were praising the Lord for His enduring love. Four days later, according to verse 26, they gathered together in a valley where they praised the Lord. That valley was named Berakah, which means praise.

When we are busy praising God, the situation doesn't look as scary. If we are praising, we can't be worrying or complaining about what lies ahead. Praise takes our minds off our problems and shortcomings and focuses them on God. When we fully trust in God, praise comes easier, than if we depended on ourselves.

No matter what uncertain event we face we can be like Jehoshaphat if focus on God instead of the circumstances that surround us, trust God even when God's response seems ridiculous, and praise God for who He is and what He does.



No Need to Fear

Read Psalm 3:1-8.

Fear is all around us these days. So much is happening in our world right now at a fast pace, so fear is inevitable. Fear can be paralyzing. But the good news is that we don't need to fear anything. If we fear God, if we are His child and love, respect and follow Him, we need not fear anything else in this world.

David was facing a fearful situation when he wrote Psalm 3. The inscription says that it was during the time David fled from his son Absalom. You can read the story in 2 Samuel 15. David was surrounded by his enemies who wanted to kill him. Absalom wanted to get rid of his dad, so he could be king. Not an easy time for David, and yet he wrote in verse 6: ***I will not fear though tens of thousands assail me on every side.***

We too, can be like David, and not be afraid because of three key things found in this psalm.

1. We need not fear because we are shielded by God.

The first reason David need not fear, is because He has God as his shield. Verse 3 says, ***But you, Lord, are a shield around me, my glory, the One who lifts my head high.***

The shield was an ancient warrior's primary defensive weapon. Using military imagery, he is making a connection between the protective properties of a shield in battle with God's protective care in life. David says he is surrounded by God; he is shielded on all sides. The protection from God is far above, beneath, around, without and within. Though David is feeling the pressure of being surrounded, he also recognizes that his protection is even better.

As God's child, we are promised His protection, surrounding us like a shield. You have a divine shield that never fails. Yes, you will have troubles. You will have difficulties. You will have temptations and you will sin. Still, you will be protected by God. He will only let happen to you what is in His perfect plan and purpose for you. You won't always understand what is going on in your life. But you can trust Him confident, that He is shielding you from danger.

2. We need fear because we are known by God.

David says in verses 4-5: ***I call out to the Lord, and he answers me in his holy mountain. I lie down and sleep; I wake again, because the Lord sustains me.*** David is confident in the fact that the Lord not only knows him and his predicament, God hears his prayers, and is watching over him.

There is great comfort knowing that you haven't been forgotten or overlooked. We are seen by God. Nothing escapes His watchful eye. Everything we experience happened to us while God was watching over us. He sees and knows your predicament. He knows what you need. He will sustain you.

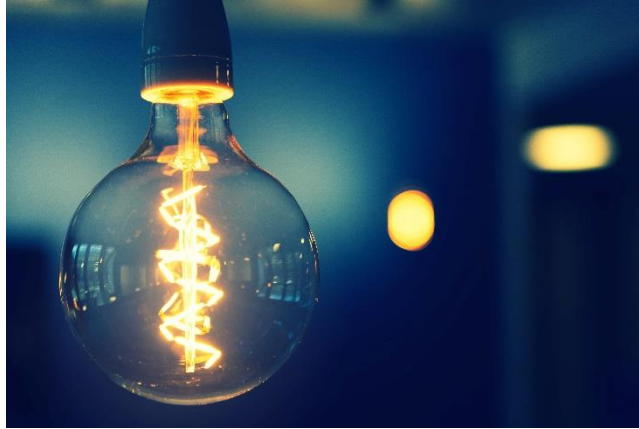
3. We are victorious in God.

Verses 7-8 David says, *Arise, Lord! Deliver me, my God! Strike all my enemies on the jaw; break the teeth of the wicked. From the Lord comes deliverance. May your blessing be on your people.*

There is a change of tone here. David seems more confident, triumphant. Had his situation changed? No! But David confidently knew that victory comes from the Lord. No matter what happened, God's purposes would be fulfilled.

We are not to live defeated, fearful lives. That is what our enemy wants. We are to live victoriously through our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. When we live in fear, the enemy wins. But he is a defeated foe. The Lord has already defeated him. We don't need to be afraid because God is greater than anything we face.

My dear friend, what fears are you facing today? We don't need to be overwhelmed with fear. If we are God's child, we need fear anything, because God is our shield, He knows where we are at and knows what we need, and He is the victor – and that makes us victors through Him.



Whom Shall I Fear?

Read Psalm 27.

In Disney's *Monsters Inc.*, there is a city of monsters and they thrive on the screams of children. The fear these monsters provoke in children is the source of their power to run the city. Monsters go into the rooms of kids through the closet door, scare the children, and collect their screams. The funny thing is these "scary" monsters are actually afraid of these children. A small child, "Boo," follows Sully – the best scarer of the monsters, through the closet into the monster world and these monsters are scared of this small child. It is humorous that a big scary monster would be fearful of a small child.

One person defined fear as **F**alse **E**vidence **A**ppearing **R**eal. Fear is universal – we all experience it. Fear is a force so great in our lives that it can become a totally controlling influence. Fear is a dark shadow that envelops us and ultimately imprisons us within ourselves. Max Lucado wrote, "Fear herds us into a prison and slams the door."

Each of us have been a prisoner of fear at one time or another. In his book, *Fearless*, Max Lucado wrote: "Fear at its center is a perceived loss of control. When life spins wildly, we grab for a component of life we can manage: our diet, the tidiness of our house, the

armrest of a plane.” But we can conquer fear by using the bright liberating light of the Lord who brings salvation.

The Lord is my light and my salvation – whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life – of whom shall I be afraid? Psalm 27:1

David teaches us that when we know the Lord and trust Him, He helps us overcome the fears that can paralyze our lives. Two times in this psalm, David boldly declares he will be confident.

Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then will I be confident. I am still confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Verse 3, 13

We too can be confident and declare “Whom shall I fear” when we remember these three things:

1. God hides us.

For in the day of trouble He will keep me safe in His dwelling; He will hide me in the shelter of His tabernacle and set me high upon a rock. Verse 5

Perhaps David is remembering what God did for Moses (*Read Exodus 33:18-23 for the whole story*). Just as God protected Moses, David realizes that God does the same for all His children.

When I was a child and afraid of thunderstorms, I would hide in my closet. I felt safe and secure in the little closet – I couldn’t even stand up in it – but it was my safe haven. I felt snuggled by the clothes and embraced by the small space. When fearful circumstances come our way, we can be confident that God is hiding us.

2. God holds us.

Though my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will receive me. Verse 10

I like how the New Living Translation puts verse 10: ***Even if my father and mother abandon me, the Lord will hold me close.***

When kids are hurt who do they run to? Mom. It is amazing how a little snuggle and hug and kiss on their boo-boo makes things feel better. There is healing power in touch, and in being held. Babies will die if they are not held; they may have food, clothing, shelter – but without human touch they fail to thrive.

We can face life confidently and without fear because God holds us close. Even if our mother and father abandon us, God will hold us close. He has His arms open and ready to embrace us, but we have to choose to enter His embrace.

3. God helps us.

Teach me your way, O Lord; lead me in a straight path because of my oppressors.

Verse 11

David had a teachable spirit; in other words, he was willing to ask God for help! God helps us by pointing the way in which we should go. This verse tells us that God is willing to lead us in a straight path. In verse 1, David mentions He is a light – He lights the way for us.

He is always ready to help; He has His arm outstretched to you and I; when we are fearful we just have to simply reach out and take His hand. God offers us His hand, to lead us down the right path, and many times we refuse to grab hold of His hand and let Him do the leading. He offers help, but you have to accept His help.

With God we no need to fear, Max Lucado wrote, “When Christ is great, our fears are not. As awe of Jesus expands, fear of life diminishes. A big God translates into big courage. A small view of God generates no courage.”

In Your Arms

I need not quake, tremble or fear
For You, Lord, are always near.
Hidden in the crook of Your arm,
I am concealed and protected from harm.
Held closely to You, in a loving embrace
Confidently, journeying forward, no matter what I face.
With you holding my hand,
I can take a stand.
With you pointing the way,
I go, because You are my light and stay.
With Your arms tightly around me,
I am able to be brave and wait patiently.
~ Beth Desplancke ~



Saddle Up!

Read Psalm 31:1-24.

From 1875 to 1883, the infamous Black Bart robbed 29 Wells Fargo stagecoaches, and managed to strike fear in the hearts of his victims. Bart used fear to get his victims eyes on their circumstances. He knew distracting his victims from what was true was his only hope for a successful robbery and get away. The interesting thing about Black Bart was in all 29 robberies he never fired his gun or took a hostage.

Like Black Bart, Satan – the enemy of our souls – uses fear as a tool to distract us from what is true; he wants us to be afraid. He wants us to be so overwhelmed that we cannot accomplish the things we need to do. When we give in to fear, the devil has the reins on us, and he has us right where he wants us.

John Wayne said “Courage is being scared to death and saddling up anyway.” I love the fact that John Wayne, a big, tough, cowboy, talked about fear. Fear affects us all. Even David in the Bible, who was known for being brave enough to face the giant, Goliath wrote about being afraid in Psalm 31. Using the word fear, each letter is going to give us a way we can saddle up even when we are afraid.

F – Fix your eyes on God. When we are afraid, we need to look to God, not on the circumstances around us, or even the feelings we are experiencing. We are to fix our eyes on God and who He is.

The enemy would love to keep us trapped by our feelings. David expresses his feelings in verses 12, 22. He declares he *is forgotten as though he were dead, and in his alarm he declares he is cut off from God's sight*. That isn't true but that is what he feels. Instead of focusing on how he feels, he focuses on God.

Read verses 1-4. We are to fix our eyes on God who is our refuge, a rock, a strong fortress, a place of safety. Fear tells us that circumstances are bigger than God's power and ability. But by fixing our eyes on God, and focusing on who He is, helps us see that whatever it is we are fearful of, God is bigger; God is stronger; God is greater.

E – Expect God to act and to be present. David anticipated that God would do something about his situation. In verses 1-4 he is asking God to deliver him, to turn His ear to him and come quickly to his rescue, to lead and guide him, to keep him free from the trap that is laid for him. **Read v. 7-8.** David makes this statement before God has answered his prayer. David is expecting God to act. David is confident God will do something. Notice the verbs (the action words) are in past tense – they are finished, a done deal.

In times of fear, we need to expect or anticipate that God will respond. It doesn't mean that He will always take away the fearful situation but God will do something. When we expect Him to act, it may be that God will calm your heart, and give you the strength you need to journey through the difficulty.

Expect God to do something, but also expect God to be with you. Whatever fearful situation we are experiencing, we are never alone. God doesn't expect us to face it alone. The antidote to fear is the promise of God's presence. **Read verse 20.**

A – Affirm your trust in God. Things are not easy for David, and he can't control his circumstances, but he can control his response. We can't control everything that comes our way, but we can control how we respond. We don't have to let fear take control of our hearts and lives. We can choose to affirm our trust in God.

Read v. 5-6. Does verse 5 sound familiar? Jesus said those same words on the cross. Jesus was trusting the outcome to His heavenly Father. He was trusting God; not His circumstances.

Rick Warren wrote, "Your fears reveal where you do not trust God." Ouch! Choosing to trust God is a choice. **Read v. 14-15.** Fear says "this is bigger." Trust of faith in God says, "God is bigger."

R – Respond to God with worship. Fear and anxiety go hand in hand. When we become fearful we also can become filled with worry and stress. We can allow fear to paralyze us, to fill us with worry, and anxiety, to panic. But instead, respond with worship to the Lord. **Read v. 7-8.** Rejoice in the fact that God is loving, and He is aware of the fearful situation you are facing.

Read v. 19-21. We worship the fact that God is good all the time. We worship that He is a source of refuge and safety, we worship Him for the wonders of His love. Worship makes God bigger and the situation smaller. The more we worship God, the less we will listen to the enemy's lies.

David concludes with these words: ***Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the Lord (NIV).*** Verse 24 in *The Message* puts it this way: ***Be brave. Be strong. Don't give up. Expect God to get here soon.*** We don't need to panic. We can be strong and take heart, because we hope in the Lord.



Be Still

Read Psalm 46.

Fear and panic are normal human emotions. But we all know that fear and anxiety can paralyze us, and even hurt us. Despite these common feelings of fear and anxiety, God's Word tells us in Psalm 46:10, ***Be still and know that I am God.***

How can we be still when life is spinning in control? When anxiety or fear make our bodies anything but still – our heart beats faster, our hands may sweat, our mind swims. This Psalm is the meditation of a man holding back fear with faith, and the psalmist focuses on what he knows to be true about God. Psalm 46 teaches us how we can be still when life is not.

1. We will be... Confident, Not Fearful.

Our natural response to when difficulty or uncertainty hits is to be fearful. But instead, we can be confident according to verses 1-3. How can we be confident? It isn't a confidence in ourselves, but a confidence in who God is and what He does. Verse 1 tells us

why we can be confident and not fearful. It is because of who God is to us. He is our refuge. A refuge is a tower, a fortress, a place of safety and a place to hide. During times of trouble, fear and anxiety, we need to admit that God is our refuge and we must admit that we can't cope. As a refuge, we can flee to God and find relief and comfort.

Verse 1 also says that God is our strength; He is omnipotent. There is a chorus that says: *My God is so great, so strong and so mighty, there's nothing my God cannot do!* God is the God of the impossible – there is nothing too hard or too difficult for Him to do. There is no way trouble can come into a person's life – however overwhelming it might be – there is no way it can come and be greater than the strength of God to enable you to survive it. It's His strength, not ours. He gives His strength so we can face it.

Thirdly in verse 1, we see that God is an ever-present help in trouble. Ever-present means He is always there; God is omnipresent. No matter what you face, you can be assured God is right by your side and is ready to help.

2. We Will Be... Joyful, Not Fretful.

In verses 4-7, the psalmist begins talking about the city of God – Jerusalem or Zion. The psalmist is referring to a place where God is seated on His throne and He is in charge. We too can rejoice no matter what happens, because if we are God's children, we have received Christ as our personal Savior, we know that His Holy Spirit lives inside of us. We are the temple of the Holy Spirit. The river the psalmist is talking about refers to the Holy Spirit.

Verse 5 can be claimed as a personal promise as a believer: ***God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day.*** You can put your name in place of her.

Verse 6 tells us that God's voice transcends our troubles. The nations are raging but the city of God is calm! In the midst of trouble you know what it is to have a God alive and alert within you. God is seated on the throne. We can be joyful knowing He has power and purpose, and whatever the trouble that has come our way, has not usurped God from His throne.

Verse 7 once again speaks of God's presence. The Lord Almighty is with us.

3. We Will Be... Still, Not Frantic.

Verses 8-9 tells us to come and see what the Lord has done. Look to God; don't look at your circumstances. Never forget that God is at work, even when our world is shaking. God is not feared or fazed; He is in total and absolute control. God brings desolation on the earth, makes wars cease and shatters and destroys all weapons, so we can relax.

Verse 10 declares that we are to be still, which literally means relax. It is a call to us to do nothing and let God do everything. Be still means to cease striving, to stop and consider, to ponder, to cease and desist!

Being still means we are going to have to resist the natural impulses that rage in our hearts and minds. Being still means we differ to Him as our ruler; we bow to His ways. He is God; we are not. When trouble hits don't strive against God. Know that He is the Sovereign God, even over the crisis.

Notice the verse says ***Be still and know that I am God.*** It does not say “be still and know the details” or “be still and know the reasons.” As important as those things are, they pale before the knowledge of God Himself.

Verse 11 is a repeat of verse 7. This is the third time that we are reminded that God is with us; we are not alone. Verse 11 also ends with the focus on God being our fortress. We began the psalm with focusing on God being our refuge. The psalm begins and ends with focusing on God and not our circumstances, that is the secret to being still.

How is your earth giving way today? What mountains are quaking in your life today? What storms are surging around you? Whatever you face, whatever the storm, difficulty, struggle or trial it is, you and I can be still as the word commands in Psalm 46:10. We can choose to be still. We can declare: “I will be... confident, not fearful; joyful, not fretful; still, not frantic.”



When You Feel Overwhelmed by Troubles

Read Psalm 55.

When you feel overwhelmed by troubles what do you do? Do you get angry? Do you shut down? Do you try to comfort yourself with food or shopping? Do you try to hide like an ostrich who puts its head in the sand and pretend the problems are not there? David was feeling that way when he wrote Psalm 55. ***Read v. 1-5.***

What do you do when you are in that kind of situation? Hiding our heads in the sand doesn't solve the problems. David gives us three practical tools to use when we can't take it anymore and are overwhelmed by troubles.

1. Flee to the Lord.

In verses 6-8, David desires to run away. But just running away won't do it. He is running to God. In times of overwhelming trouble flee to the Lord as soon as possible. David realizes the only rest he can find in the situation is in the Lord.

Too often we flee to the Lord as the absolute last resort. We try everything else first. But David realized where his shelter was, and verse 8 says he hurries to his place of shelter, far from the tempest and storm. Where is David's shelter – it is in the Lord. We know this because of some of his other writings

The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble.

Psalm 9:9

How priceless is your unfailing love, O God! People take refuge in the shadow of your wings. Psalm 36:7

The righteous will rejoice in the Lord and take refuge in him; all the upright in heart will glory in him! Psalm 64:10

2. Fellowship with the Lord.

In verses 13-14 David is feeling disconnected with God. Remember a big part of their worship in Old Testament times was being able to physically go to the Temple and worship. David was on the run and being hunted by his enemies, so he couldn't just walk into the Temple to worship God. He is feeling disconnected. He remembers times when his fellowship with the Lord was closer.

So often when life gets overwhelming, our time of fellowship with the Lord is shortened or downright neglected. Instead of praying or reading our Bible, we stress and fume and try to deal with the problems that are weighing us down. Sometimes when life gets overwhelming we feel like God has left us. But He hasn't. Sometimes we blame God and are angry at Him for allowing these bad things to happen, and we separate or distance ourselves from God.

But this is the last thing we should do. These are the times we should draw close to the Lord. And that is what David does in verses 16-19. He is spending time in fellowship with God through prayer – talking with his heavenly Father. During times of trouble we need to fellowship with the Lord, despite how we feel.

3. Fling your burdens to the Lord.

So often the reason we feel overwhelmed by troubles is because we decide to carry all of our burdens ourselves. We try to solve our problems on our own. God never intended for us to deal with our burdens on our own. He gives us a beautiful invitation:

Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous be shaken. Psalm 55:22

He wants to carry our burdens for us. The word burden means something that is carried. The word burdened means to weigh down, to load or overload. Even small things if they are carried for a long time get heavy and load us down. Since the burden is too heavy for you, give it to the Lord to carry.

The word cast literally means “to fling or hurl.” It requires and denotes action and effort. This verse is telling us throw our problems to Him. Part of flinging our burden to the Lord, is leaving it there. God wants to do all the carrying. So often we pray and say God I’m giving you this problem, but the minute we are done praying we are carrying the burden all over again.

Once we have cast our burdens upon the Lord, He assumes full responsibility for the burdens for us, and He promises to sustain us and to uphold us! ***He will never let the righteous be shaken!***

Part of flinging our burden to the Lord is trust – we are trusting Him to do the carrying and work in that situation. At the conclusion of this psalm David declares: **...But as for me, I trust in you.** Verse 23b

This psalm reminds me of what Paul writes in the book of Philippians:

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6-7.

We fling our burdens to the Lord through prayer. God has His hand ready to catch whatever we throw His way.

When troubles around you feel overwhelming the best thing to do is to flee to the Lord as your refuge and safety, continue to fellowship with Him despite your feelings, and fling your burdens onto the Lord.



Rest in God

Read Psalm 62.

I don't know about you, but all that is happening in the world is affecting my ability to sleep. Although I try not to worry, the minute I lay down to sleep, my mind begins to spin. When I wake up in the middle of night, the worries comes again. Rest seems to allude me.

During the day, I try to keep myself busy so that I do not dwell on all that is going around on me. When things slow, and I am no longer distracted, fear and worry set in.

Jesus gives us the wonderful invitation to rest in Him:

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. Matthew 11:28-30

What does it mean to rest in God? This is the picture that comes to my mind: baby sleeping in dad's arms. All is secure. The baby has no worries or concerns; baby knows that Dad is bigger than anything he could ever face. David gives us a beautiful picture of a life that is resting in God, in Psalm 62.

***Truly my soul finds rest in God; my salvation comes from him.
Yes, my soul, find rest in God; my hope comes from him.*** Psalm 62:1, 5

Rest comes from God alone. No other person can give me true rest. I must turn to God alone to find the rest my spirit is craving. Using the word rest, let's see what resting in God looks like in our daily lives.

R – Relaxed, not worried.

David knew whatever came his way he could run to God, who was his Rock and Fortress. Verses 3-4 tells us what David is facing. David is surrounded by people out to get him. But before and after he proclaims he find rest in God alone.

Despite what David is facing he is able to proclaim that God is his rock and refuge.

Truly he is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will never be shaken.

Truly he is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will not be shaken. My salvation and my honor depend on God; he is my might rock, my refuge. Verses 2, 6-7

David is resting in God because he is relaxed and not worried. He knows his mighty Rock will protect him. David knew that circumstances didn't have to overwhelm him, because God is trustworthy, and He is a mighty rock, a refuge of protection.

E- Expectant, not Hopeless.

David is expecting God to do something. David turns to God, who is his hope (v. 5). Hope is the general feeling that some desire will be fulfilled. It is an optimistic outlook. David bases his hope in who God is. We already mentioned that David knew God to be his rock, fortress and salvation. In verse 8, David declares we can trust Him at all times for He is our refuge. In Verses 11-12, David is placing his hope in God who is loving and strong.

S - Stirred, not Shaken.

Because we rest in God doesn't mean we won't face difficulties. But when we rest in God we will be stirred, but not completely shaken. In verses 2 and 6, David proclaims that he won't be shaken, no matter what people try to do to him.

It reminds me of the parable of the wise and foolish builder Jesus told in **Matthew 7:24-27**. Both experienced the same storms, but only one was stirred not shaken – the one who built on the Rock, which is Jesus.

T - Trusting, not Terrified.

Instead of David being filled with fear regarding the opposition he was facing this psalm is filled with proclamations of trust. David trusts in God, who is his rock and fortress, (v. 7-8.) David is trusting God in the bad times. He knows God is still God.

David isn't trusting in his own abilities. He isn't trusting in his own solutions to the problem. He is turning to the one he can trust – God! Trust and fear can't go together. If we are terrified of what will happen, then we aren't truly trusting God. When we trust God, He takes the fear away.

David rested in God. He didn't try to do it all on his own. He relied on God. That is what resting in God is. To rest in God is to be relaxed and not worried – knowing God is going to take care of all the details. To rest in God is to be expectant not hopeless – expecting God do something great. To rest in God is to be stirred but not shaken. Things will stir us; but difficulties and troubles don't need to shake us that it knocks us down and defeats us. To rest in God is to trust and not be terrified – trust in God defeats fear.



God Is Greater Than Our Circumstances

Read Isaiah 40.

A little girl walking in a garden noticed a particularly beautiful flower. She admired its beauty and enjoyed its fragrance. "It's so pretty!" she exclaimed. As she gazed on it, her eyes followed the stem down to the soil in which it grew. "This flower is too pretty to be planted in such dirt!" she cried. So, she pulled it up by its roots and ran to the water faucet to wash away the soil. It wasn't long until the flower wilted and died.

When the gardener saw what the little girl had done, he exclaimed, "You have destroyed my finest plant!"

"I'm sorry, but I didn't like it in that dirt," she said. The gardener replied, "I chose that spot and mixed the soil because I knew that only there could it grow to be a beautiful flower."

Often we murmur because of the circumstances into which God has sovereignly placed us. We fail to realize that He is using our pressures, trials, and difficulties to bring us to a new degree of spiritual beauty.

We all have circumstances that bring stress and challenges – we don't have a choice about them, but we do have a choice in how we respond to those circumstances. Corrie ten Boom wrote, *"If you look at the world, you'll be distressed. If you look within, you'll be depressed. If you look at God you'll be at rest."*

In the Book of Isaiah, chapter 40, we see how God is greater than any of our circumstances if we will just look to Him. Verse 1 says, ***"Comfort, comfort my people," says your God.*** The answer to dealing with circumstances is turning to God.

This chapter of Isaiah is prophetic – meaning when Isaiah spoke these words, the events hadn't happened yet. In this chapter, Isaiah is speaking about events 100 years in the future. In his prophecy, God's children have been in exile in Babylon and have languished there so long that they have given up hope of returning to their homeland. Isaiah gives them words of comfort and prophecies that they will return to their homeland. Although our circumstances are different, who God is has not changed, and Isaiah 40 focuses on three attributes or qualities about God that can bring us comfort during the difficulties we face.

1. We have the comfort of God's presence.

He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young. Verse 11

God is our shepherd and He cares for His children. We can take comfort no matter what we face that our Shepherd is there to lead and guide us. He is also there right beside us. God doesn't just point and say, "Go that way," but He journeys with us. We are not alone to face our circumstances. He is omnipresent, which means God is always present with us.

Whatever you are facing, if you look to God to see Him as Shepherd, who not only leads us but also walks beside us, you will be blessed during your circumstances.

2. We have the comfort of God's concern.

Sometimes during difficult circumstances, it is easy to feel insignificant and as if nobody cares. Do you ever feel like God is so busy taking care of the entire world, He couldn't possibly have the time to deal with your seemingly insignificant circumstances? God is greater than our circumstances because He is omniscient – He knows everything. Verse 26 tells us that God not only created all the stars in the universe, He knows each one by name. If He knows the names of the stars, He surely knows you – every detail of your life.

God knows everything and is truly concerned, and we can never complain that our way is hidden from the Lord (v. 27).

Whatever you are facing, if you look to God and remember He even knows every star by name and He knows you and cares about you, you will be blessed during your circumstances.

3. We have the comfort of God's strength.

No matter what circumstance you face, trying to deal with it on your own strength and energy means you will eventually get tired and run out of steam. The good news is God is omnipotent – He is all powerful.

Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall. Verses 28-30

We can face any circumstance by waiting or hoping in the Lord (verse 31). Wait doesn't suggest that we sit around and do nothing. It means "to hope, to look to God for all that we need." Those that trust or wait in the Lord will find new strength – strength that comes from Him. As we wait before Him, God enables us to soar when there is a crisis, to run when the challenges are many, and to walk faithfully in the day-to-day demands of life.

Someone has defined “circumstances” as those nasty things you see when you get your eyes off of God.” If you look at God through your circumstances, He will seem small and very far away; but if by faith you look at your circumstances through God, He will draw near and reveal that He is greater than any circumstances you could ever face.



He is Able

Read Jeremiah 32:16-27.

There's a chorus that many of us learned as kids. It says, "My God is so great, so strong and so mighty, there's nothing my God cannot do." It is easy to sing this, but do we truly believe it? Be honest. In your heart of hearts is there something in your life that you are struggling with that you think God can't deal with?

Our first response is to say "no," but what situation are you facing that you are stressing about or trying to solve on your own? Anything that we are stressing about is simply our way of telling God that the situation is impossible for Him to deal with and thus our need to worry. Worry is unbelief and lack of trust in God. By worrying and fretting over a situation, we are saying that God is not able to deal with it.

Jeremiah was commissioned by God to proclaim a very unpopular message that Judah was about to be destroyed by the powerful country of Babylon. That was his job. Beginning in chapter 30, Jeremiah looks beyond the impending judgment to Judah's restoration and

salvation. God's people will be conquered and then deported to Babylon, but will return 70 years later.

In chapter 32, the prophet has been imprisoned again. The king was upset because Jeremiah was advocating that they surrender to the Babylonian Army. We see in v. 2 that Nebuchadnezzar and his army were right outside the walls of Jerusalem. Amazingly, in all this chaos and uncertainty, God tells Jeremiah to buy some property from his cousin. This is strange when you think about it because the entire land was about to be subjected to years of desolation, filled with darkness and despair. God makes it clear to Jeremiah that the land ultimately would be restored.

Things don't make a lot of sense to Jeremiah – it seems like an impossible situation. But Jeremiah looks to God and not what is impossible and prays a beautiful prayer proclaiming God is able!

1. God is Able... Because He is Over-All!

The first attribute of God we see is that God is over-all or He is sovereign. Two times in this passages, verses 17 and 25, Jeremiah calls God sovereign. God is sovereign means that He is in control. The word "sovereign" is both a noun and a verb. As a verb it means "to rule" and as a noun it means "king" or "absolute ruler". To say that God is sovereign, is to say that God is in charge of the entire universe all the time. In a nutshell, God's sovereignty means that He is absolutely free to do as He pleases and to demonstrate His absolute control over the actions of all His creatures. Sovereignty reminds us that God is God and we are not.

God is sovereign because He is the creator of everything, verse 17. God's sovereignty is demonstrated by His performing miraculous signs and wonders in the Israelites' lives, v. 20-21. God's sovereignty is demonstrated by the fact that He is punishing the Israelites' for failing to obey Him, v. 23-25.

2. God is Able... Because He is Omnipotent!

Omnipotent refers to the fact that God's power is infinite and unlimited. The word omnipotent is defined by the biblical word, "Almighty," which occurs 345 times in the Bible, and it is never used of anyone but God. Jeremiah calls God Almighty in verse 18.

Throughout history, God has revealed His power through mighty miracles over nature. No one else could part a sea and allow people to walk on dry land between two walls of water; but God can! No one else can tell the winds and wave to stop and they obey; but God can. The same power that raised Christ from the dead is available to help us with our daily problems.

When we say God is omnipotent, we're saying that He has the ability or the strength to perform anything He needs to perform, to accomplish His purposes.

3. God is Able... Because He is Omniscient!

Omniscient means having total knowledge or knowing everything. In verses 19 and 24, Jeremiah describes God as being able to see everything. Nothing escapes His attention and nothing is out of His concern.

When circumstances of life overwhelm, when we feel like we've been treated unfairly, we can be sure that we serve a "God who sees." He sees and knows our circumstances. He sees the beginning and the end and everything in between. He sees every detail.

Gospel songwriter, Oscar Ebason, in 1945 wrote these words: *Got any rivers you think are uncrossable; got any mountains you can't tunnel through? God specializes in things thought impossible; He does things other cannot do.*

God specializes in the impossible. Nothing is too difficult for Him! He truly is able!

"Ah, Sovereign Lord, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you....[He is] the Lord, the God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for [Him]?" Jeremiah 32:17, 27