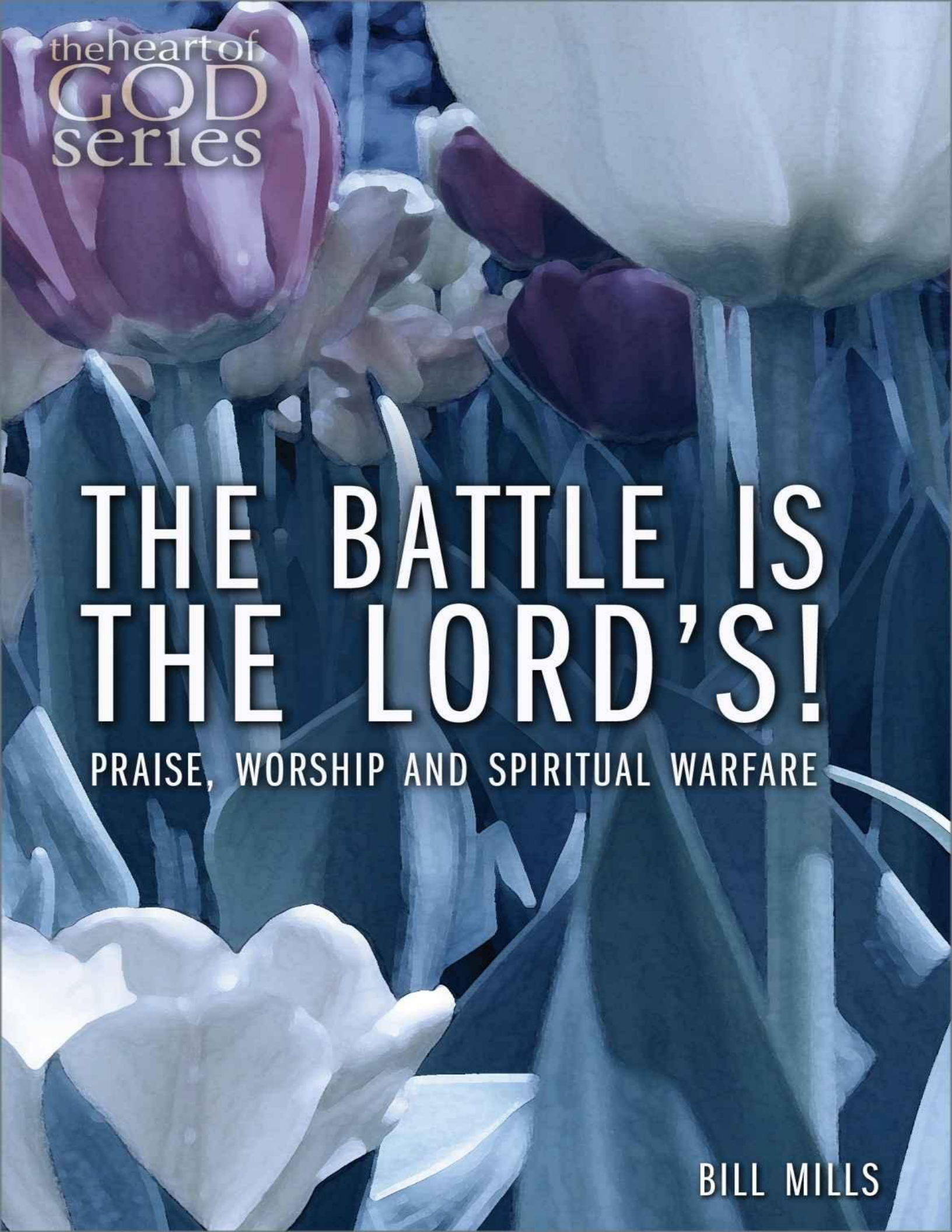


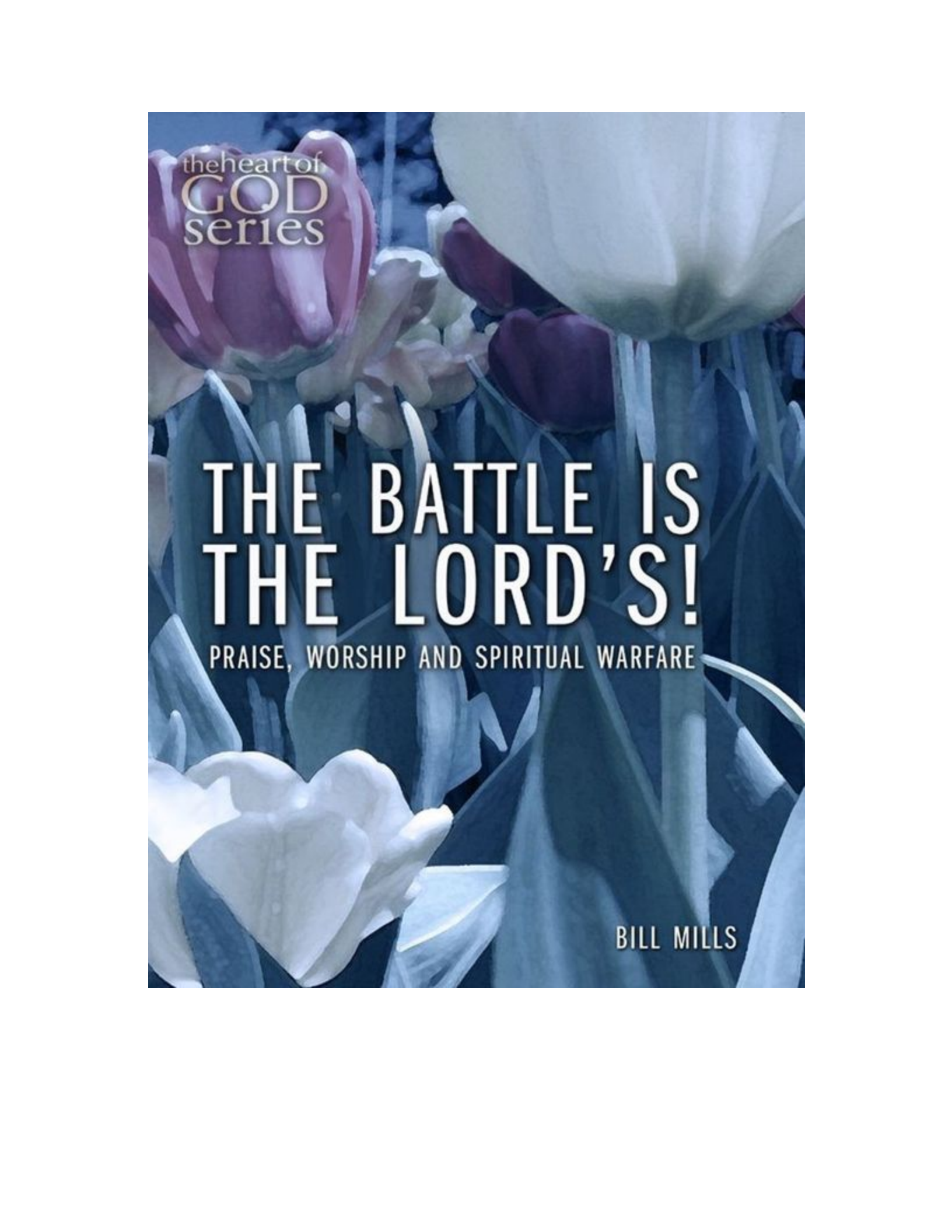


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THE BATTLE IS THE LORD'S!

PRAISE, WORSHIP AND SPIRITUAL WARFARE

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THE BATTLE IS THE LORD'S

*Praise, Worship
and Spiritual Warfare*

BILL MILLS

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THIS MINISTRY IS DEDICATED TO

The Glory of God
The Honor of His Word
The Building Up of the Body of Christ

The Heart of God series is also dedicated to our coworker Tom Hill, who for the past thirty years has brought the Father's heart of serving and encouragement to all of us on the staff of Leadership Resources International.

He said: “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.’”

2 Chronicles 20:15

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The Battle Is the Lord's!

Do you have a strategy for spiritual warfare? When Satan comes against you by a direct frontal attack, by blindsiding you in a way you never anticipated, or by nipping at your heels like a dog to wear you down, what is your strategy for doing battle with him? What about when you face temptation or fear or there are conflicts in your marriage, family, or church? When wave after wave of grief pours over your soul, are you prepared for your enemies? Do you have a battle plan for times of sickness, confusion, and pressures beyond what you can bear, or when despair and hopelessness threaten to overwhelm your heart?

In this booklet I want to share with you a strategy for spiritual warfare that God lays out for us in His Word. It's a strategy that King David practiced day after day, and one that the Lord has graciously taught me in the battles of my own life. It comes from Judah's great King Jehoshaphat when he was confronted by a coalition of his enemies. When his nation was threatened, Jehoshaphat did not shrink back in fear or place his confidence in the resources of his armies. He humbled himself, trusted in God, exalted His name, and worshiped. But before we go any further, let's take a look at the historical setting that laid the foundation for what Jehoshaphat did.

A Kingdom at Peace

The historical event is recorded in 2 Chronicles, chapter 20. Things are going well for King Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah. By God's great sovereignty, wicked King Ahab of Israel has just been killed in battle

(chapter 18), and Jehoshaphat, whose life has been preserved, has returned safely to Jerusalem as chapter 19 opens.

Now Jehoshaphat begins to set his kingdom in order: “In Jerusalem also, Jehoshaphat appointed some of the Levites, priests and heads of Israelite families to administer the law of the LORD and to settle disputes” (2 Chronicles 19:8).

Sometimes when we think that the major battles of our lives are behind us and that our marriages, families, careers, and ministries are all in a good place, our enemies are already on their way. When we feel at peace and have a sense that everything in our lives is under control, Satan is already poised to strike. That is exactly what happened to Jehoshaphat: “After this, the Moabites and Ammonites with some of the Meunites came to make war on Jehoshaphat” (2 Chronicles 20:1).

A coalition of Judah’s enemies come together and threaten the people of God. These nations have been set against the people of God for centuries and are continually looking for opportunities to destroy Israel and Judah. Together, their armies may number many hundreds of thousands, so the armies of Judah are far outnumbered.

The Enemy’s on Its Way!

Some men came and told Jehoshaphat, “A vast army is coming against you from Edom, from the other side of the Sea. It is already in Hazazon Tamar” (that is, En Gedi). (2 Chronicles 20:2)

The first warning Jehoshaphat hears of the impending crisis comes from his intelligence officers, who tell him of the armies that are advancing from Edom, where the Meunites have settled in and allied themselves with the Edomites. By the time the king gets the report, the armies are already on the western side of the Dead Sea, in En Gedi. This is *not* good news. The enemy is not only vast and powerful; they are also close. Fear grips the heart of King Jehoshaphat when he hears of the great threat to his nation. But rather than retreat in his fears, Jehoshaphat begins to seek the Lord, and now he begins to model for us how to confront our enemies: “Alarmed,

Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the LORD, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah” (2 Chronicles 20:3).

He calls a fast for his people and invites them to follow his own example. He calls them to seek the Lord with him: “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 20:4).

The people of Judah leave their towns and villages and travel to Jerusalem, the city where God dwells in His temple. Jehoshaphat and his entire nation know that they have only one hope in this great battle, and that hope is the Lord. If God does not meet them there and deliver them, the forces of darkness surrounding them will destroy His people.

No Political Speeches

When the people of God have gathered together in Jerusalem, King Jehoshaphat stands before them in the courtyard of the temple that bears the name of God and addresses his nation. This is one of the most amazing scenes in history. The king does not give his people a political speech; nor does he seek to rally them by means of any resource they possess. Instead, King Jehoshaphat leads his nation in prayer: “Jehoshaphat stood up in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem at the temple of the LORD in the front of the new courtyard and said: ‘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 hand, and no one can withstand you’” (2 Chronicles 20:5-6).

What a reminder this is to the people of God. Enemies are seeking their destruction, but God is in His heaven, and He is ruling! He holds every nation and every kingdom in the power of His hand. Every king is subject to the Lord, no matter how powerful he may appear in his own eyes.

All power belongs to the Lord. No army can stand against Him, and no political system is able to withhold the advance of His might. No weapons of warfare are able to defend against our God. No demon from hell, or even Satan himself, can stand before Him.

Laying Out Strategies

When Jehoshaphat prays, he talks to the Lord about His purpose as well as the purposes of His people. God has given this land to Abraham and the children of Israel. The land of Judah is part of an unending covenant God made with His people. He has driven out the nations that previously possessed the lands and has given them to the ones He chose: “O our God,” Jehoshaphat prays, “did you not drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel and give it forever to the descendants of Abraham your friend?” (2 Chronicles 20:7).

Jehoshaphat reminds God of Judah’s stewardship of the land. They have built there not only a temple for their worship but also a “sanctuary for the name of God.” They have done this for the purpose of exalting the Lord and for their own protection: “They have lived in it and have built in it a sanctuary for your Name” (2 Chronicles 20:8). Then the king describes the nature of the protection Judah knows they need in the presence of their enemies. Destruction might come from many directions and in many ways. Calamity might actually be from the hand of God as a judgment against His people. It might be in the form of plague or famine. It might be war with hateful armies that threaten to overpower the people of God: “If calamity comes upon us, whether the sword of judgment, or plague or famine, we will stand in your presence before this temple that bears your Name and will cry out to you in our distress, and you will hear us and save us” (2 Chronicles 20:9).

Just as the people of Judah laid out their battle strategies long before their enemies attacked, we need to plan ahead of time how we will respond when we face the enemies who seek our destruction. Judah purposed to gather together at God’s temple, stand in His presence and cry out to Him when their enemies threatened them.

We need, also, to prepare for the battles to come. As the people of God, we who lead families and churches are wise to lay out plans for confronting our enemies. Just as the children of Abraham purposed in their hearts long ago to seek God in the midst of their calamities, we will do well to remind ourselves to “cry out to God” when confronted with destruction. Our great God will hear us and save us.

We Are Powerless

As King Jehoshaphat, the leader of God's people, comes to the close of his prayer, he makes an amazing confession of weakness: "O 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 upon you" (2 Chronicles 20:12).

How does King Jehoshaphat come before his people in the midst of this impending crisis? If he had been like almost every king in history, his response would have been: "Do not be afraid. Do not worry! We have prepared for days like this. We have powerful armies, we have great weapons, and we have clear battle strategies. Go home and be at rest. Your leaders will protect you."

But that is not how the king responds. With great humility he confesses his weakness and confusion to God and to his people. Jehoshaphat admits to his nation that they are not powerful enough to confront an army like the one they are facing. He confesses that he, as the leader of his people, does not know what to do in this present crisis. They have only one hope, and that is to look to God.

What humility, brokenness, and honest confession of weakness came from the heart of King Jehoshaphat that day! How many kings and presidents throughout history have humbled themselves before their people like this in the face of their enemies?

Apart from Me You Can Do Nothing

As leaders of churches and families, let's think about how we have responded in the face of great battles. When we were confronted with terrible sickness or financial crisis or pain and brokenness in our relationships, what did we do? Did we say to our wives or husbands, to our children or our people, "Don't worry, I'll handle this. Don't be afraid. We'll get through this. I'll figure out a way."

Did we run to every resource of wisdom and strength that was ours and trust in our own abilities to work out the situation? Did we figure out a solution, or did we decide to just "gut it out?" Perhaps we withdrew into depression and fear and found ourselves immobilized in the face of our enemies.

When we are in circumstances like these, we confront the lies of Satan and our own culture. God calls us to humble ourselves and confess our weaknesses and fears, but our enemies quickly ask us, “Who is going to follow your leadership if you admit you are afraid? Who will respect you if you confess your weakness? You need to at least project an image of being strong and in control.”

In contrast, just before Jesus went to the cross, He said to His disciples, “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).

What did Jesus mean by the last part of this statement? Did He mean that apart from Him we cannot achieve the righteousness that God demands in our lives? Or that we can’t live godly lives in this world apart from Him? Or that we can’t love our wives, husbands, children, or parents as we ought to apart from Him? Or even that we can’t go to work or school and fulfill the responsibilities that are ours each day or even perform our normal household chores apart from Him?

How far does Jesus’ statement go? Where is the dividing line between those things that we can handle pretty well on our own and those things we cannot do on our own? The answer is, *there is no dividing line!* Every breath we take—even a person who curses God each day—is only a result of His grace. Apart from Him we can do absolutely nothing.

Hoping in God

Jesus is taking an ax to our pride when He tells us the truth about our emptiness apart from Him. Living as we do in a world where we spend our lives developing our resources, it is humbling to hear that we are without hope if we trust in those resources. When was the last time you humbled yourself as Jesus calls us to do and as King Jehoshaphat did that day before God and his nation?

If we buy into our culture’s lies about manhood and leadership, we will never place our trust in God alone. Our cultural understanding of manhood demands that we present an image of strength, sufficiency, and control. Our cultural images of leadership do not have a place for confessing weakness, confusion, or helplessness. But Jehoshaphat teaches us that the place of

humility, brokenness, and confession of weakness is the starting point for victory: “All the men of Judah, with their wives and children and little ones, stood there before the LORD” (2 Chronicles 20:13).

As their king humbled himself, the people of Judah gathered before the temple. Every member of every family unit stood before the Lord. As I visualize this scene, it reminds me of the prophet Isaiah’s promise: “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; but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint” (Isaiah 40:29-31).

The entire nation of Judah was standing before the Lord, confessing their need, and hoping in Him alone. God met His people there and increased their strength, enabling them to soar on eagle’s wings.

The Battle Is His

As God’s people wait upon Him, His Spirit comes upon a young man named Jahaziel, and he begins to prophesy before the king and the nation of Judah: “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’” (2 Chronicles 20:14-15).

The words of this prophecy are a wonderful reminder of what happens when God’s people hope in Him alone. He meets us in our fears and despair. He fills our hearts with encouragement by reminding us that He is our great warrior and that the battles of our lives belong to Him.

Jehaziel’s words remind me of the time the armies of Israel were facing the armies of the Philistines. The Philistines had a great champion named Goliath, who stood more than nine feet tall. Day after day Goliath came out to confront the army of Israel: “Goliath stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, ‘Why do you come out and line up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not the servants of Saul? Choose a man and have him come down to me. If he is able to fight and kill me, we will become your subjects;

but if I overcome him and kill him, you will become our subjects and serve us” (1 Samuel 17:8-9).

Now King Saul “stood head and shoulders above every man in Israel,” and yet he trembled before Goliath. All of Saul’s great warriors were filled with fear in the presence of their enemy. The Israelites knew they were in trouble. Then one day the father of a young shepherd boy named David sent him to take provisions to his brothers, who were stationed with the army of Israel. When David arrived, Goliath was issuing his usual challenge, so “David asked the men standing near him, ‘What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and removes this disgrace from Israel? Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?’” (1 Samuel 17:26).

The Lord Will Deliver Me

Of course, David’s older brothers ridiculed him and told him to return to the sheep where he belonged. King Saul reminded David that he was just a boy and this giant had been a fighting man from his youth. But David responded by telling how he had killed both a lion and a bear as he protected his sheep and of his confidence in God: “‘The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.’ Saul said to David, ‘Go, and the LORD be with you’” (1 Samuel 17:37).

Saul tried to give David his armor, but it didn’t fit the young shepherd boy. And in spite of his brothers’ ridicule and his fear of the king, David went down to the brook and picked up five smooth stones for his sling. As he ran to meet Goliath, David said:

You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the LORD will hand you over to me, and I’ll strike you down and cut off your head. Today I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. (1 Samuel 17:45-46)

David was able to defeat the enemy of his people because his confidence was in God, not in himself. He came before the giant in the name of the Lord. David's hope was in the God who would deliver him, and he was motivated by the pursuit of God's glory in the battle before him: "All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD's, and he will give all of you into our hands" (1 Samuel 17:47).

Now we see how David differed from King Saul and the great warriors of Israel. They thought this was their battle! They looked at their enemy and thought, *This fellow is so big, there's no way we can win this battle*. David looked at God and thought, *Our God is so great, there is no way we can lose this battle*: "So David triumphed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone; without a sword in his hand he struck down the Philistine and killed him" (1 Samuel 17:50).

Just as God went before David and the armies of Israel that day and gave them a glorious victory, He goes before us in the battles of our lives. The battles that are taking place this very day in our hearts, our marriages, our families, and our ministries are not *our* battles to fight. The battles belong to our God. He is our great warrior.

You Will Not Have to Fight

As we return to the story of King Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah, Jahaziel's prophecy continues. He encourages the armies of Judah to confront the armies of their enemies: "Tomorrow march down against them. They will be climbing up by the Pass of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the gorge in the Desert of Jeruel" (2 Chronicles 20:16).

Then Jahaziel says something that must have filled the people of Judah with great hope: "You will not have to fight 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" (2 Chronicles 20:17).

Unless Jahaziel is saying this by the Spirit of the Lord, God's people will not be able to believe it. Here they are, outnumbered, filled with fear, unable to defend themselves, and God says through Jahaziel: "You will not

have to fight this battle.” Can you imagine any more encouraging words for the people of God that day?

Imagine a cancer patient sitting in the doctor’s office. There has been sickness and weakness for several weeks, and now the x-rays and tests results are in. The doctor walks into her office and says: “I’m so sorry. The cancer is inoperable and untreatable. I’m afraid it’s terminal.” Can you imagine more encouraging words for that patient to hear than the words that God speaks: *You will not have to fight this battle.*

Now imagine a marriage in which there has been emotional coldness for months. As one partner stands in the bedroom, the spouse comes in and says: “I don’t mean to hurt you, but I’m in love with someone else, and I’m leaving you.”

Think of parents who desire more than anything else that their children live for the glory of God. But the materialism of the culture is stealing the hearts of their children away day by day. Perhaps a middle-aged father whose children are about to begin university studies hears from his superior that the company no longer needs him and he’s losing his job. Not many businesses are willing to take risks with a man his age. The weight of his financial concerns is more than he can bear, and fear fills his heart as he looks at the future.

Can you imagine any more encouraging words for these people to hear than these: “You will not have to fight this battle.” The words of the prophet to the people of Judah that day are the words of the Lord for you and me today. When we look at the great battles before us, God still says to His people: “You will not have to fight this battle.”

Stand Firm and See His Deliverance

Jehaziel told the people of Judah, “Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the Lord will give you.” What positions are we to take up in warfare? The apostle Paul talks to us more specifically about the battles of our lives in his letter to the church at Ephesus: “Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power” (Ephesians 6:10).

Our enemy spends his time scheming about how he might destroy the children of God and detract from His glory. Satan lives to bring down both

the people and the purposes of God. Paul begins with a strong word of hope: Dressed in God's full armor, we can stand in the face of the devil's schemes. Why do we need to put on God's armor? Because, Paul says, "our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 6:12).

Our battle is not against "flesh and blood." Satan would love to convince us that our battles are against one another. Our wills are in conflict; we see things differently; our desires run in different directions. Then our enemy tells us that the solution to the conflict lies in convincing our spouse that we are right or in moving our children in the direction we want them to go. But our struggles *are not against each other*. In fact, they are not even taking place in the realms of time and space. The real battles of our lives are taking place in the heavenlies.

What resources can we bring to these battles? We have no strength or wisdom to bring, no resources that will make any difference against the forces of evil in the realms of heaven: Therefore, Paul says, "put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand" (Ephesians 6:13).

Since we have nothing in ourselves to bring to the real battles of life, Paul tells us to put on God's full armor and stand. Then He goes on to describe the pieces of armor we need: the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the gospel that brings peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of righteousness, the sword of the Spirit, and prayers for one another (Ephesians 6:14-20).

Four times in this context Paul calls us to stand and to stand firm. This is a wonderful promise for the people of God in a world where everything around them is shaking, and evil seems to come from every direction. When parents are fearful for their children and worry about the temptations that would steal their hearts away, they can stand firm!

The people of Judah purposed in their hearts that if calamity came against them, whether plague or famine, "we will stand in your presence before this temple that bears your Name" (2 Chronicles 20:9). When we face the enemies that threaten to destroy us, Satan calls to us, "Say something. Do something. Figure it out. Work it out, or gut it out. It all

depends on you.” But God says, “Stand. Stand firm in who I am!” That is the position we are to take up in spiritual warfare: standing firm in the presence of God.

Worshippers before Warriors

After Jehaziel’s prophecy, King Jehoshaphat again humbles himself in prayer, and the people of Judah break forth in worship: “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 Levites from the Kohathites and Korahites stood up and praised the LORD, the God of Israel, with very loud voice” (2 Chronicles 20:18-19).

When the armies of Judah went out to face their enemies, they received further encouragement: “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’” (2 Chronicles 20:20).

Now an amazing thing happens. The king appoints worshipers to lead the soldiers into battle. The army will march into battle led by worshipers exalting God and praising His glorious name: “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’” (2 Chronicles 20:21).

The song of the worshipers leading the armies of Judah that day echoes the song of the angels around the throne of God. The prophet Isaiah revealed that song to us in his call to the ministry:

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.” (Isaiah 6:1-3)

The holiness of God is the epitome of His person, and His glory is His own greatest treasure. The angels around God's throne see it, and the worshipers who are leading the warriors proclaim it along with the heavenly hosts. This must be our song in the battles of our lives!

Not only do the worshipers exalt God in His holiness and glory, they also pour out thanksgiving before Him. Remember, the battle hasn't been won yet—it hasn't even been fought. The people of Judah are still facing an enemy who outnumbers them. Apart from God, they have every reason to fear, but in God, they know they will have the victory, and so they offer thanksgiving.

In the battles of our lives, Satan would steal away from us an understanding of God's goodness. Our enemy knows well the power of a thankful heart, so he will remind us of all of the pressure related to our finances and of every source of pain in our relationships. He will tell us again and again that if God really loved us, we would not be hurting as we are. We would not be sick or alone; we would not be afraid; we would not live with circumstances continually set against us.

In the darkest days of our lives, when our circumstances seem hopeless and our enemies are closing in, *God does not change*. His character remains the same yesterday, today, and forever. His commitments to His children have not wavered one bit. God is good, and He is worthy of our praise.

Worship Destroys Our Enemies

What happens when we worship in the face of our enemies? Let's return to the children of Judah as the worshipers lead their soldiers into battle: "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" (2 Chronicles 20:22).

While the armies of God are worshiping and praising His name, God Himself enters the battle and defeats Judah's enemies. In fact, the armies of this great coalition set against the people of God turn and destroy one another: "The men of Ammon and Moab rose up against the men from Mount Seir to destroy and annihilate them. After they finished slaughtering

the men from Seir, they helped to destroy one another” (2 Chronicles 20:23).

I encourage you to make this your own strategy for spiritual warfare. When the enemies of your soul, your family, and your ministry are set against you and are seeking your destruction, be quick to humble yourself as King Jehoshaphat did. Confess your weakness, your brokenness, and your hopelessness to the Lord and to one another. Listen to the Word of God, in which He promises His protection and His provision for you. Then worship! Lift God high in His holiness, proclaim His glory, pour out thanksgiving before His throne of grace, and watch your enemies flee: “When the men of Judah came to the place that overlooks the desert and looked toward the vast army, they saw only dead bodies lying on the ground; no one had escaped” (2 Chronicles 20:24).

When the people of Judah exulted in God, He gave them such a great victory that it took them three days to carry off the plunder. The God we worship is the God of Jehoshaphat and Judah, and He will give us victories over our enemies that will enable us to rejoice in the abundance of His provisions.

Worshiping in His Presence

God taught me the power of worship in the face of my enemies when I was struggling with sickness, depression, and exhaustion. Again and again in the midst of circumstances that would otherwise have overwhelmed me, God’s presence lifted me to worship and brought me to victory. Let me share with you how God met me one difficult morning through His Word and through one of my “heroes of the faith,” Jim Elliot.

On a trip to the Philippines I was confronted with my need for the reality of God’s presence in my life. I left my Chicago home early in the morning. After a twenty-four-hour trip, during which I crossed the international date line and slept little, I arrived in Manila. I was depressed about the need to leave my wife and family and all the comforts of home, but I had a day to rest and visit with my hosts.

Then the ministry began in earnest. The next day, from nine in the morning until four in the afternoon, I taught a complete seminar. Then I

traveled to a church a few hours outside of Manila and taught another all-day seminar. The heat and relentless mosquitoes were complicating my situation, and I was waking up between three and four each morning because my time zones were almost completely reversed. The next day I returned to Manila and spoke to a group of pastors during a luncheon meeting and then began another seminar in a local church that evening.

During the next two days I was scheduled to teach in yet another church, but my heart lifted when I heard that I would be staying in a hotel for those nights. At last I could have some quietness and air conditioning and hot showers! I could catch up on my rest and get a boost for the heavy schedule to follow in the next couple of weeks. Afterward, I was scheduled to fly to Bacolod, where I would spend the weekend with a group of people whom I loved dearly and minister at their church. Just as I was beginning to enjoy the cool restfulness of the hotel, my friend Ernie called from Bacolod and said that I would have to change my flight because the one I was booked on was not operating because of an airline dispute. When I proceeded to change my flight with Philippine Airlines, the agent assured me that there was no need for the change since the flight was still operating.

I was thankful for a good night's sleep, but the next day, still unsure about the flight situation, I went to another Philippine Airlines office to confirm the flight. There I was told, "They wouldn't have sold you a ticket if the flight was not operating," so somewhat more assured, I prepared for that evening's seminar. At about ten o'clock, just as we were preparing to leave the church building, I received another call from Ernie, who said, "They lied to you, Bill. That flight hasn't been operating all week!"

By that time all of the other direct flights to Bacolod were filled, and the only way I could get there the next day was take a 3:00 A.M. flight to a neighboring island and then take a 7:00 A.M. ferry. All I could do was get an hour's sleep, pack, and leave for the airport at 1:30 A.M. After the flight I took a taxi to the ferry and was able to get on early. I sat in my seat, exhausted, frustrated, and angry, and tried to rest, but sleep would not come.

Transformed in His Presence

The ferry left the dock at seven. Still unable to sleep, I decided to leave the air-conditioned area with the large comfortable seats and sit on one of the deck chairs outside. The sun was just coming up over the beautiful islands of the Philippines. I took my Bible and began to read several psalms in which David speaks of God as his fortress, his refuge, and his deliverer. As I did, God began to speak to my heart, soften my anger, and strengthen me in my weariness. He began to give me an awareness of His presence and surrounded me with a sense of His love and care. That reality of His presence was so great that it was as if God had come and physically sat in the chair next to me! Before long, I was not grumbling—I was singing! Instead of complaining, I was thanking God for His goodness to me, and God’s presence filled my heart with His peace.

One of the books I took with me on that trip was *Shadow of the Almighty* by Elisabeth Elliot. Through letters and diary excerpts, she tells the story of her husband, Jim, who was martyred by the Auca Indians in Ecuador. About this time on the trip, I had just read the following excerpts from the year 1951 in Jim’s diary. He was twenty-three years old and working as a salesman while preparing to go to Ecuador. He was also developing radio programs to communicate God’s heart for missions. On January 15, 1951, he wrote the following:

There is that restlessness, that itching, urging discontent in me this morning. The milk of the Word curdles before me or seems to sour within. Hatefulness and rebellion against all restraint is not far from the surface; and it is good that I am not alone here. “Lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from evil.”¹

One of the things I greatly appreciate about Jim Elliot’s diary is his humanness and his willingness to be honest about himself. He was not afraid to be vulnerable, to let others know him. On the next day, January 16, 1951, he wrote:

Feel that I must write something tonight in praise of the God of delights. The day passed slowly with little affairs; two conferences for Hytool sales, contract signing for a radio program, some poor script writing, all with a sense of waiting on God for His time, His

H-Hour. All day the sun dropped hints of spring, and at dusk, returning from the shop I exulted in the distinct wall of purple—the Ozark foothills—close-guarded by the unblinking Venus. The night spread black and blossomed brilliantly with stars. I walked out to the hill just now. It is exalting, delicious. To stand embraced by the shadows of a friendly tree with the wind tugging at your coattails and the heavens hailing your heart—to gaze and glory and to give oneself again to God, what more could a man ask? Oh the fullness, pleasure, sheer excitement of knowing God on earth. I care not if I ever raise my voice again for Him, if only I may love Him, please Him. Mayhap in mercy He shall give me a host of children that I may lead through the vast star fields, to explore His delicacies, whose finger-ends set them to burning. But if not, if only I may see Him, touch His garments, and smile into my Lover’s eyes—ah, then, not stars, nor children shall matter—only Himself.”²

How I hunger to live with a sense of God’s presence like that! “Oh the fullness, pleasure, sheer excitement of knowing God on earth!” We, like Jim Elliot, are transformed when we sense God’s presence.

Peace and Rest on Every Side

The army of Judah has returned to Jerusalem victorious. The presence of God in the midst of their great battle has set their hearts free to worship Him and to rejoice over their enemies: “Then, led by Jehoshaphat, all the men of Judah and Jerusalem returned joyfully to Jerusalem, for the LORD had given them cause to rejoice over their enemies” (2 Chronicles 20:27).

We can visualize the coalition of the armies of the Moabites, Ammonites and Meunites as they descend upon Judah. Confident in themselves and in the power of their weapons, they assume this will be a brief battle followed by the spoils of victory. But God has given His people cause to rejoice because of His presence with them and the great power He has displayed on their behalf: “They entered Jerusalem and went to the temple of the LORD with harps and lutes and trumpets” (2 Chronicles 20:28).

The people of Judah worshiped before the battle, they worshiped during the battle, and they worshiped when the battle was won. Calling on God was not the “politically correct” thing to do in the midst of their circumstances; it was the reality of their lives: “The fear of God came upon all the kingdoms of the countries when they heard how the LORD had fought against the enemies of Israel” (2 Chronicles 20:29).

How we walk through the battles in our lives determines who receives the glory. If we actually do have every resource we need for the battles we face, we are exalted in the eyes of others. But when we are quick to confess our weakness and helplessness apart from God, He puts His glory on display in the midst of our brokenness: “The kingdom of Jehoshaphat was at peace, for his God had given him rest on every side” (2 Chronicles 20:30).

On an almost daily basis God’s people are fighting every kind of battle we have touched on in this brief study. Some of us are struggling with temptations that are bigger than we are, and we are not doing well in the battle. Some are facing sickness, loneliness, pain-filled relationships, or grief that washes in endless waves over our souls. Still others are enduring terrible financial losses or threatened careers. Despair and depression may be overwhelming our hearts. *But God’s presence with us changes everything.* When humility, prayer, praise, and worship become our strategies for spiritual warfare, God gives us peace in every area of our lives, and He gives us rest on every side.

A few years ago, I was in Jordan for a staff conference with one of our wonderful partner missions, Pioneers International. We have shared a strong ministry together in West Africa and were exploring the possibilities of new partnerships in North Africa and the Middle East.

My friend, John Fletcher, President of Pioneers, spoke to the conference on Joshua and the battle of Jericho, the very first battle for the people of God as they came into the Promised Land. As my brother opened the scriptures we could see vividly the scene. God had made clear that He had given the city into their hands. Now, the entire nation of Israel was instructed to march around the walled city once a day for six days. On the seventh day, they were to march around the walls seven times, and then the priests would sound the trumpets.

God was making very clear to His chosen people that the One who had delivered them from Egypt and carried them through the wilderness would give them this first victory in their inheritance. They must trust in Him and walk in obedience. When the priests blew the trumpets, and the ram's horn sounded, the people shouted and the walls fell down! The city was theirs, and their inheritance secure.

Then John reminded us of this amazing reality: the people of Israel were walking toward a great victory that their God had prepared for them. He was teaching them to trust in Him alone for the victory He had prepared. That is the way it was with King Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah in this battle with the coalition of their enemies. When the King appointed the worship team to lead the soldiers into the battle, he was confessing that God alone was their hope against their terrible enemies.

But my friend John reminded us that day that we are not a people walking toward victory; we are walking from victory! All of the victories of our lives have already been won in the cross of Calvary. There are no more battles for us to win. Christ has defeated our great enemy at the cross, and we walk from that victory as our God leads us in triumph in His Son. We can rest in His greatness, His power and the work of the Cross, and worship!

Questions for Interaction and Application

We encourage you to use this booklet as a four-week personal devotional tool or as material for a class or small group. These questions and reflections will help you in that process.

Week One

1. Do you live with the awareness each day that you are surrounded by enemies that are seeking your destruction? Why or why not?
2. At the beginning of this booklet we mentioned some of the enemies that confront us. Do you relate to these, or are there others in your life bigger than these?
3. The enemies that King Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah faced in these Scriptures were well entrenched in their hatred for Judah and their centuries-old desire to destroy God's people. Have some of your greatest enemies been deeply entrenched for a long time in your own attitudes, desires and relationships?
4. Jehoshaphat was fearful when he heard about his enemies seeking Judah's destruction. What was his response? What is the relationship between fear and trust, and how can both be present at the same time? Think of an experience when both were true in your life.

Reflections

Ask God to make you aware of the enemies that seek to destroy your heart, your family and your church. Think about some of them and name them before the Lord. Tell Him where you are afraid and pray that He will teach you again and again that you can be fearful and still remain confident in Him. Remind yourself again that God is your only hope when your enemies are set against you.

Week Two

1. Do you really believe that you are powerless apart from the resources of Christ within you? What keeps you from living in the fullness of that reality from day to day?
2. Have you ever seen a leader, whether in a church or a political situation, humble himself as King Jehoshaphat does in this battle with his enemies? How did you respond when you experienced that?
3. What are the three most common reasons that we fail to humble ourselves before God and before our people?
4. How do the images of “leadership” in our culture differ from the call to leadership in the Scriptures? Do we see that difference clearly within our churches? Why or why not?

Reflections

Spend some moments thinking about the times you placed your confidence in yourself and your abilities, and what happened as a result. Ask God to remind you again and again that “apart from Him you can do nothing at all,” but that in Christ you can “do all things through Him who gives you strength” (Philippians 4:13). Pray that God will give you the grace to humble yourself before Him and those He has entrusted to you in your family and ministry.

Week Three

1. When you think of the most difficult battles of your life, whether they might have been with your health, your finances or your relationships, is it reality or a naïve attitude to think, “The battles are the Lord’s?” Why or why not?
2. Do you think stories like “David and Goliath” are given as models for us to follow, or just a means of encouragement to our hearts?

3. In this study we contrasted the view of God owned by David and the view of God possessed by Saul and his warriors. Why is our view of God so critical as we face the enemies that would destroy us?
4. When you think of Jehaziel's prophecy before the people of Judah, when he said, "you will not have to fight this battle," did a battle come to mind that you are facing right now? What does the Word of the Lord mean to you right now in your circumstances, especially in light of Paul's teaching in Ephesians 6?

Reflections

Pray that God would so exalt Himself in your heart and mind that His greatness would diminish every place of fear in your heart. Thank Him that He is the same yesterday, today and forever, and that He is just as involved in your life circumstances as He was in those of the children of Judah so long ago. Think of the greatest battle of your life right now and ask God to teach you to find rest and hope in Him. Tell yourself once again that your place in the battle is to stand firm in the greatness of your God!

Week Four

1. Why did King Jehoshaphat order worshipers to lead the soldiers into battle? Was this an expression of their last resort in the battle before them, or their best offense in the face of their enemies?
2. How could Judah give thanks to God when they were surrounded by some of their fiercest enemies who threatened to destroy them? How does this compare to your responses before your enemies?
3. Why are the angels around God's throne captivated by His holiness and His glory, and why do those particular attributes become their message? Why would the song of the worshipers before the army echo the song of the angels before the throne?

4. After concluding this study of the people of Judah in the midst of their battle, are you convinced that worship defeats your enemies and causes them to flee? What happens, then, if we harbor resentment before the Lord when we feel that He is not caring for us as He should, or when we fail to celebrate His goodness with thanksgiving?

Reflections

In Psalm 103, King David “remembered God’s benefits” (vs. 2). Think back on the times when you struggled with fear, depression, sickness, financial pressure or pain in your relationships. Remember how God brought you through those times and lifted your heart to worship Him again. Consider, then, how the power of worship might enable you to experience the freedom, hope and joy of victory even in the face of your greatest enemies. Ask God to give you a heart of worship and thanksgiving even while the battles are going on. Pray that the radiance of His holiness would be your song even in the night, and that His hope would be yours in the presence of your enemies.

¹ Elisabeth Elliot, *Shadow of the Almighty: The Life and Testament of Jim Elliot* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1956), 141-2.

² Elliot, *Shadow of the Almighty*, 142.

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the heart of GOD series

Moses prayed: "Teach me your ways so that I may know you" after he experienced his greatest intimacy with God. When he hungered to see His face, God allowed Moses to see the beauty of His heart. What does the heart of God look like?

In this series we look closely at the heart of God, and how He gives Himself to us. We explore what we look like when our Father builds His heart into us and gives us His passions, attitudes and priorities. We will ask God how we can give His heart to one another so that our relationships reflect the beauty of our Lord.

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