SEPTEMBER
OVERCOMING DEFEATS
THAT THREATEN DESTINY

Occasional defeats in spiritual battles are not failures. They are temporary setbacks. Consider the record of Bible characters such as...

-Sampson, who was a womanizer.
-David who had an illicit affair and orchestrated a murder.
-Elijah, who at one point seemed suicidal.
-Jonah, who ran from God.
-Peter, who denied Christ.
-The disciples who deserted Christ at the time of His greatest need.

...Yet each of these men and women were restored to faith and mightily used by God.

Along the journey to divine destiny, you may experience defeats. You may also suffer major setbacks that are perceived to be failures. In reality, you never truly fail until you stop trying, every setback can be turned into a comeback, and there is no defeat so great that you cannot return to God.

During this month we will examine a major defeat experienced by Israel during their conquest of the Promised Land. The story of this failure is recorded in Joshua chapter 7. The problem occurred because of the sin of a man named Achan, who disobeyed by taking the spoils of the battle of Jericho, an act which God had forbidden.

When Achan's sin was finally exposed and had been dealt with, Israel returned to battle at Ai once again. This time, they were victorious: *"For Joshua drew not his hand back, wherewith he stretched out the spear, until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai" (Joshua 8:26).* From the story of Ai, you will learn how to overcome defeat, rise up again, and return to the spiritual battlefield as a victorious Christian warrior.

This month we will also examine the record of the Old Testament King Jehoshaphat who faced impending defeat, but employed effective strategies to avoid it. It is not necessary that you experience failure if you learn how to deal with potential defeats before they occur.

Whether you are facing or have experienced failure, you will learn vital principals this month that will "defeat proof" your life and ministry.

SEPTEMBER

Date	Reading
1	The Accursed Thing
2	Perils Of Defeat
3	The Problem With Prayerlessness
4	Results Of Defeat
5	The Revelation
6	The Repentance
7	The Restoration
8	The Return
9	Past, Present, And Future
10	Facing Failure
11	Receiving A Bad Report
12	It Happened After This
13	At Your Wit's End
14	Facing A Multitude
15	An Enemy Alliance
16	Meeting The Multitude
17	Replacing Fear With Faith
18	Filling The Void
19	Steps To Faith
20	Standing In Faith
21	Called to Arise
22	Refocus Your Attention
23	Reject Reason For Revelation
24	The Turning Point
25	Positioned For Victory
26	Respond In Obedience
27	Curses And Strongholds
28	Reversing The Curse
29	Victory In The Valley
30	Six Steps To Victory

SEPTEMBER 1
THE ACCURSED THING

When you are defeated in spiritual battle there is always a reason. In the story of the battle of Ai recorded in the Bible, Israel was soundly defeated. There were four reasons for their failure which are common in the defeats we experience. The next few days of meditations center on these. Read Joshua chapters 7-8 before proceeding with these devotions.

Principles. Violating the principles of God--sin--results in defeat. God told Israel not to take any of the spoils from the battle at Jericho. They were to be dedicated to the Lord as they were the "first-fruits" of battle in Canaan:

> *And ye, in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed, when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it. But all the silver and gold and vessels of brass and iron are consecrated unto the Lord; they shall come into the treasury of the Lord. (Joshua 6:18-19)*

Normally, Israel was allowed to keep the spoils of war, but in this first battle at Jericho the spoils were to be dedicated to the Lord. Sometimes, what was okay previously or may be accepted as tradition is wrong. There is no need to seek counseling or prayer for guidance about something that God explicitly has forbidden. When God says it is wrong, it is wrong.

Joshua 7:1 records how, despite the warning by God, a man named Achan took the "accursed thing." Achan's temptation followed the same pattern as that of Eve in Genesis chapter 3. He "saw, desired, and took" what had been forbidden. When he finally admitted his sin he said:

> *When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent and the silver under it. (Joshua 7:21)*

Sin always begins in the mind. The attitude of sin precedes the act. Achan thought, "Who will see? Who will know?" He saw only the immediate pleasure these things would bring and not the terrible long-term effects of his actions. If Achan had looked with eyes of faith instead of eyes of lust, he would have seen these items as accursed. Instead, he viewed them with only his natural senses.

As you have learned in previous mediations, your spiritual enemies are the world, the flesh, and the devil. These work together to tempt you by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. If you look on temptation with eyes of faith instead of eyes of lust, you will see that which is forbidden as an accursed thing. Is there any accursed thing hidden in the tent of your life?

SEPTEMBER 2
PERILS OF DEFEAT

In the story of Ai, there were four reasons for defeat, all of which are common in the failures we experience. Yesterday we discussed the violation of God's **principles** as a major cause of defeat. Today we deal with two other causes: Pride and perception.

Pride: Achan is not the only one at fault in this story. When Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai to view the country, the men returned and told Joshua:

> *Let not all the people go up; but let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai; and make not all the people to labor thither; for they are but few. (Joshua 7:3)*

Ai was a small town in comparison to the city of Jericho which Israel had just conquered. Pridefully, these men thought, "Ai should be no problem. We have faced bigger challenges and been victorious. This is nothing to worry about." Israel was self-confident instead of being confident in God. There is no mention of "if it is the Lord's will", an attitude we are advised to have according to James 4:13-17.

Pride--how many have fallen victim to it. Lucifer, desiring to be God. Adam and Eve, desiring to be as gods. Pride involves self-confidence instead of God-confidence. In our own battles of life we often believe we can handle the lesser problems ourselves. But there is no encounter with the enemy so small that we do not need all of the resources God has provided to face it.

When you begin to move in self-confidence and proudly think "there is nothing to worry about," then you are getting into dangerous territory. There is no spiritual battle for which you do not need all available resources provided by God.

Perception: Perception is how you view things. The men sent to view Ai looked at things with their natural senses. They did not have the spiritual perception to look beyond surface appearances and recognize the power of the enemy.

People act based upon their perceptions. Following natural perception instead of spiritual insight led to inaccurate reporting. These men claimed that the warriors of Ai were just a few (Joshua 7:3), when in reality there were 12,000 of them (Joshua 8:25).

When you involve self-reliant men in God's work they will make decisions based on their own perceptions. This leads to carnal counsel which, when acted upon, always results in defeat. Surround yourself with those who are God-confident and who view things with a spiritual mind.

You cannot make decisions based upon your perception alone. You need the guidance and discernment provided by the Holy Spirit. Take time to pray before you act, and you will avoid many of the perils of defeat.

SEPTEMBER 3
THE PROBLEM WITH PRAYERLESSNESS

In the story of Ai, there were four major reasons for defeat, all of which are common in spiritual setbacks experienced by believers. We have discussed three of these: They are **violation of principles, pride, and perception.** Today we deal with another major reason for defeat: Prayerlessness.

Prayerlessness. Joshua listened to the self-reliant men who returned from viewing Ai, but according to the biblical record he did not pray about the report he received. He immediately organized only 3,000 warriors to go up to Ai to battle.

Had Joshua taken time to pray, undoubtedly God would have revealed that there was sin in Israel and would have warned him not to go to battle. Had Joshua taken time to pray, he would have also discovered that the pattern for attacking Ai was not to be the same as that used at Jericho.

The "Ais" of life--the battles with the flesh--are not won the same way as the "Jerichos"--a city representative of the world. Neither can you live in past victories or the traditions of yesterday. God has new strategies for each battle you face. The strategy to take Ai was different from that used at Jericho.

In the book of Judges, a man named Gideon was told to reduce his army before going into battle (Judges 7). For the return to Ai, Joshua was told to take all the warriors to battle. You cannot limit God to a certain pattern. He is the God who has declared "I will do a new thing." You cannot act solely on the basis of tradition or precedent.

But Joshua did not take time to pray. Instead, he sent only a few of the troops to Ai. Sadly, some of the men were killed and the remainder fled before the enemy.

In summary, Israel's defeat at Ai was the result of violations in the areas of:

-Principles
-Pride
-Perception
-Prayerlessness

Remember that the "Ais" of life are not won the same way as the "Jerichos". In each new battle you face, you must lay aside your pride and carnal perception, pray to learn God's strategies, and follow His principles.

SEPTEMBER 4
RESULTS OF DEFEAT

When you violate the principles of God, act in pride without spiritual perception, and do not pray about your battles, there are always results--and they usually aren't good ones! In Israel's case, the warriors who went up against Ai the first time experienced a sound defeat. Some were killed and others retreated.

Just as there are always **reasons** for defeat, there are always **results** of defeat. Note the results of Israel's defeat:

Joshua 7:4-5: Fleeing before the enemy.
Joshua 7:5: Spiritual death.
Joshua 7:5: Fear and despondency of people.
Joshua 7:6: Despondency of the leadership.
Joshua 7:7: Looking back to the "good old days".
Joshua 7:8-9: Questioning.

What a sad picture! No longer is Israel a motivated and mobilized force for God. They are a discouraged people, disheartened, questioning, fearful, and fleeing before the enemy. The people were actually looking back to the days on the other side of Jordan!

Moses had warned Israel that if there was sin in their midst they could not defeat their enemies. If they were following the Lord, however, one soldier would chase 1,000 and two of them would put 10,000 men to flight. Three Israeli soldiers could have defeated the whole city of Ai, had not sin separated them from God!

Israel's defeat at Ai was the direct result of sin:

> *Therefore (because they have sinned) the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies because they were accursed; neither will I be with you anymore, except ye destroy the accursed from among you. (Joshua 7:12)*

Violation of God's principles, pride, carnal perception, and prayerlessness always render you immobile in the face of the enemy. But never view the final outcome of a war on the basis of temporary defeat. Just as there are **reasons** and **results** for defeat, there is always a **remedy** to correct failure. With God's help, you can turn your setback into a comeback.

SEPTEMBER 5
THE REVELATION

There is a remedy for every failure. If you are defeated and have been taken captive by the enemy, you can recover: *"And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil who are taken captive of him at his will" (2 Timothy 2:26).*

When you have experienced defeat, God will help you recover, but you must also take steps to recover yourself by following Biblical principles of recovery. Joshua 7:10-13 reveals four steps of recovery from defeat upon which we will focus for the next few days. Read this passage before starting this series of devotions.

Revelation. The first step of recovery is to have a revelation concerning the problem that caused your defeat. When Joshua went to prayer, God revealed to him that Israel had sinned: *"And the Lord said...Israel hath sinned..." (Portions of Joshua 7:10-11).*

It is important to note that individual sin affects the corporate body. God told Joshua that "they" (all of Israel) had sinned, not just Achan (Joshua 7:11). We are very quick to see problems in the church, but often we do not recognize the role that we, as individuals, have in these problems. Each believer is part of the corporate Body of Christ. A sin by one member affects the functioning of the entire Body.

Never underestimate the damage one person's sin can do. King David's disobedience resulted in the deaths of 70,000 people (2 Samuel 24). Why would God blame a whole nation for the disobedience of one man? Because Israel was considered one people by the Lord. As the Body of Christ, we are one in the Lord and sin in our midst affects us all.

When one members suffers or rejoices, the entire Body of Christ suffers and rejoices with them (1 Corinthians 12:26-27). The negative side of this supernatural relationship is that individual sin does corporate damage, as demonstrated by one man's sin coming upon all men:

> *Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned...But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many...For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. (Portions of Romans 5:12,15,17)*

Ask God to reveal any "accursed thing" that is standing between you and victory over the enemy. It may be a habit, a recurring sin, unforgiveness, anger, etc.

SEPTEMBER 6
THE REPENTANCE

Joshua 7:10-13 reveals four steps to recover from defeat. Yesterday we dealt with the importance of **revelation**. You must identify a problem in order to deal with it. Today we focus on repentance.

Repentance. The revelation of a problem is not enough to recover yourself from the snare of the enemy. You must deal with it on the basis of God's Word. There is a time to stop praying and act upon what God has revealed to you:

> *And the Lord said unto Joshua, Get thee up. wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face? (Joshua 7:10)*

God told Joshua to call the people together and deal with the sin in their midst. Joshua was quick to obey. The scripture says he "rose up early in the morning" to follow God's instructions:

> *So Joshua rose up early in the morning, and brought Israel by their tribes; and the tribe of Judah was taken. (Joshua 7:16)*

The tribes appeared before Joshua man-by-man. Finally it was revealed that a man named Achan was the guilty party. Joshua told him to confess and give glory to God. When you confess sin, you actually glorify God because you are agreeing with Him about your transgressions.

When God revealed that Achan was the transgressor, Joshua sent men running to the tent to retrieve the sinful items. We cannot be too quick to deal with sin. Delay is disobedience.

If you are to recover yourself from the snare of the enemy, you must confront the problem of sin:

> -The bad news is, *"If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us" (1 John 1:8).*
>
> -The good news is that the Word says *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).*

You cannot conceal your sin and prosper:

> *He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy. (Proverbs 28:13)*

SEPTEMBER 7
THE RESTORATION

Joshua 7:10-13 reveals four steps that will lead to recovery from defeat. We have dealt with **revelation** and **repentance**. Today we focus on **restoration.**

Restoration. In this case, restoration required that the accursed items be removed and Achan's entire family be punished. They were stoned to death in the Valley of Achor. By this judgment, the sin in Israel was eliminated.

You may question why the entire family was punished along with Achan. They most likely knew and agreed with Achan's sin, as the items were hidden in their tent. Deuteronomy 24:16 says that children are not accountable for the father's sins, so the family would not have been punished had they not been complicit in it. Also, these were the days governed by the law, not by the grace and forgiveness for sin which is now available through Jesus Christ.

This sad account serves as a classic example of how desperately men needed a Savior to die for sin once and for all so that they could be saved from death--the penalty of sin:

> *For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 6:23)*

Thank God, that through Jesus Christ, the penalty for sin was paid once and for all. You need not die for your sin. You need not die in your sin.

Be aware, however, that there is a point of sinning until there is no remedy. That is the extent to which Achan and his family had gone. They had crossed the line (Jeremiah 11:11; 14:11-12; 15:1-2).

Achan's story also reflects how what you do affects not only you personally, but also the Body of Christ at large, your family, and future generations.

So what does restoration mean in your life? It means that when God reveals the reason for your failure and you have repented, then you must remove the "accursed thing" from your life. You may need to forgive or ask forgiveness of others. You may also need to correct a sinful situation that your disobedience has created. Perhaps you must do a spiritual house cleaning, getting rid of sinful movies, music, video games, and literature.

Revelation leads to repentance, repentance leads to restoration, and restoration often requires restitution for wrongs you have done.

SEPTEMBER 8
THE RETURN

Joshua 7:10-13 reveals four steps to recover from defeat. We have dealt with **revelation, repentance, and restoration**. Today we focus on return**.**

Return. When fellowship with God is broken by sin, recovery comes by returning to the point of failure. You must return to the battlefield and deal with your defeat.

When you have failed, the enemy will speak words of defeat to you:

-"You might as well give up."
-"Everyone has lost confidence in you."
-"You are weak and good for nothing."
-"You will just fail if you try again."

But you must return to the battlefield. You must face the enemy and emerge victorious! There can be no truce and no neutrality with the enemy. You can never move on to other battles until you win at "Ai," the point of your spiritual defeat.

After the revelation of sin, repentance, and restoration, God's instructions to Israel were "Go up to Ai." Read Joshua chapter 8 which tells the story of Israel's return and subsequent victory at Ai. Be sure to note that this time Joshua took all the warriors of Israel. They were not defeated, and this time they did not flee. They turned defeat into victory, changing their setback into a comeback.

Joshua chapter 7 opens with dark picture of Lord's anger kindled against His people in a place called "the valley of Achor", meaning "the valley of trouble." In chapter 8, however, we find Israel again marching forward in victory. When you follow God's remedy for recovery, He takes your valley of Achor (trouble) and turns it into a door of hope*: "I will give...the valley of Achor for a door of hope..." (Hosea 2:15).* God can turn your Valley of Achor into a pathway of hope that leads to your divine destiny.

Here is the remedy for recovery from defeat upon which we have meditated the past few days:

-Revelation
-Repentance
-Restoration
-Return

Take time to review these and to make application in your own life.

SEPTEMBER 9
PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

God did not promise that you would never know pain and sickness, never face persecution or suffer hardships. On the contrary, we know that *"…all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12).* Jesus said, *"In the world ye shall have tribulation…" (John 16:33).* We know that our faith will be tested, but God has promised victory in every circumstance. Paul told the Corinthians*: "We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed" (2 Corinthians 4:8-9, NAS).*

The Apostle Paul faced circumstances that were beyond his strength to endure in the natural, even to the point of despairing for his own life. He told the believers at Corinth:

> *We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us. (2 Corinthians 1:8-10, NIV)*

Paul did not moan, groan, and complain about the hardships he suffered. He did not question why these things happened to him because he knew God was in control of his circumstances. Paul was not fearful of what might happen to him next. He never said, "Satan just about got me that time. I barely escaped. I am afraid of what is next!"

He did not say these things because deep within his spirit, he knew that God had provided victory for him in the past: *"He has delivered us."* He had victory in the present: *"He will deliver us."* He also knew that regardless of what he might face, God had already provided victory for him in the future. He declared, *"...on Him we have set our hope that He will continue to deliver us."*

It was knowing that God had provided victory in the past, present, and future that enabled Paul to face death victoriously without fear. Paul said, *"For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand" (2 Timothy 4:6).* He wasn't afraid of the circumstances he would face in death. He boldly declared, "I am ready."

You do not have to experience defeat as Israel did at Ai. You can face impending defeat in the power of the Lord. God has provided victory for you in the past, He gives you victory in the present, and He will provide victory in the future.

SEPTEMBER 10
FACING FAILURE

Rather than experiencing setbacks and having to take steps to recover, it is better to learn how to face impending failure victoriously and not lose the battle in the first place. To learn how to do this, we will spend the remainder of this month focused on the story of a man named Jehoshaphat, an Old Testament King who was victorious over the enemy, despite the fact that in the natural world every circumstances dictated impending failure. Before proceeding, take time to read 2 Chronicles 20:1-30 to learn about this man and the tremendous battle he faced. Here is how the story begins:

> *It happened after this that the people of Moab with the people of Ammon, and others with them besides the Ammonites, came to battle against Jehoshaphat. Then some came and told Jehoshaphat, saying, "A great multitude is coming against you from beyond the seas, from Syria; and they are in Hazazon Tamar" (which is EnGedi). (2 Chronicles 20:1-2)*

There are always "some" with a bad report. The Biblical record is filled with their gloomy proclamations:

-Moses received a bad report concerning the dangerous depths of the Red Sea which blocked Israel's exodus from Egypt.

-Naomi, a woman whose story is recorded in the book of Ruth, received a series of bad reports: Her husband and both sons died.

-King David looked out over the plains and saw a messenger running with bad news from the battlefield. It was a devastating report that his son, Absalom, was dead.

-A righteous man named Job seemed to have a propensity for bad news. He received word that his children were dead and his servants and herds captured by the enemy. He also had a wife who seemed to delight in emphasizing these negative reports (as if Job needed someone to tell him how bad things were). Her advice was to "curse God and die."

-As Jarius hurried towards home bringing Jesus to his ailing daughter's side, his servant met him with the tragic news that the child was already dead.

There is always someone with a bad report because we live in a negatively oriented world. If you don't believe this, watch what happens when you share an innovative idea. The common response is for others to immediately point out why your plan won't work. This negative mind-set is tremendously evident in the news media where practically every report concerns crime, political wrangling, and societal crisis.

Who are the "some" coming to you with a bad report? What will be your response?

SEPTEMBER 11
RECEIVING A BAD REPORT

Have you received a bad report? Did the doctor say your illness is terminal? Are you being sued for divorce or battling for custody of your children? Are you facing financial ruin? Did the pediatrician tell you that your precious little baby will never be normal? Perhaps you grew up in a negative environment where you constantly heard bad reports from parents who declared, "I'm sorry you were ever born!" or "You are so stupid that you will never amount to anything!"

Your bad report may be a written document similar to the threatening letter received by King Hezekiah in Old Testament times (2 Kings 19:14). You may have received a writ of divorce or been named in a lawsuit. Perhaps your bad report is in human form, someone who is doggedly pursuing you as Queen Jezebel did the prophet Elijah.

Whatever the form of your bad report, whoever the source, and regardless of its message, you do not have to give in to defeat. You will learn how to respond to negative reports as we examine biblical guidelines drawn from the story of King Jehoshaphat's battle. You will learn what to do when you don't know what to do.

Jehoshaphat was the son of King Asa and a woman named Azubah. He was just a young man when he became king over Judah:

> *Jehoshaphat the son of Asa had become king over Judah in the fourth year of Ahab king of Israel. Jehoshaphat was thirty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Azubah the daughter of Shilhi. And he walked in all the ways of his father Asa. He did not turn aside from them, doing what was right in the eyes of the Lord. Nevertheless the high places were not taken away, for the people offered sacrifices and burned incense on the high places. Also Jehoshaphat made peace with the king of Israel. (1 Kings 22:41-44)*

Details of Jehoshaphat's administration of the kingdom of Judah are recorded in 2 Chronicles chapters 17-19. Jehoshaphat immediately strengthened Judah's military forces, sent priests and Levites throughout the kingdom to teach God's law, and established a righteous judgment system. The Chronicles declare concerning him: "*Now the Lord was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the former ways of his father David; he did not seek the Baals, but sought the God of his father, and walked in His commandments and not according to the acts of Israel. Therefore the Lord established the kingdom in his hand; and all Judah gave presents to Jehoshaphat, and he had riches and honor in abundance. And his heart took delight in the ways of the Lord; moreover he removed the high places and wooden images from Judah" (2 Chronicles 17:3-6)*

Did you note the key to Jehoshaphat's success? "The Lord was with him..." You may receive a bad report, but that does not mean eminent defeat. There is no possibility for failure when the Lord is with you!

SEPTEMBER 12
IT HAPPENED AFTER THIS

When a man chooses God's way, it will not be long until his commitment is challenged. This is exactly what happened in the account recorded in 2 Chronicles 20 which opens with the phrase *"It happened after this..."* After what?

-After Jehoshaphat made a commitment to walk God's way.
-After he established righteous judgment and provided instruction in God's law.
-In the midst of delighting himself in the ways of the Lord...
(2 Chronicles 17:3-6).

...That is when Jehoshaphat received the bad report:

> *It happened after this that the people of Moab with the people of Ammon, and others with them besides the Ammonites, came to battle against Jehoshaphat. Then some came and told Jehoshaphat, saying, "A great multitude is coming against you from beyond the sea, from Syria; and they are in Hazazon Tamar" (which is En Gedi). (2 Chronicles 20:1-2)*

When Jehoshaphat heard that the enemy surrounded him, he cried out to God saying, *"We have no power against this great multitude that is coming against us, nor do we know what to do" (2 Chronicles 20:12).*

This is not the way most of us talk today. We boast of our great abilities to face adversity, but then at the first hint of disaster, we retreat in fear and dismay. We really don't know what to do in the face of crisis, but we act like we know it all. Jehoshaphat, however, humbly admitted his total dependence on God.

When you are doing your best to live for God, ordering your life and ministry by His Word, establishing yourself in holiness, and traveling full-speed ahead toward your destiny--that is when Satan and his demonic forces launch their fiercest attacks.

-When you have committed to walk God's way.
-When you are living according to God's Word.
-While you are delighting yourself in the ways of the Lord.

As Jehoshaphat, you may be doing everything right, yet you are facing a formidable enemy. You seem to be headed for total defeat. Instead of boasting of your great spiritual power, it is time to humbly declare your dependence on the Lord.

SEPTEMBER 13
AT YOUR WIT'S END

Facing such a massive army that could so easily defeat his meager forces, Jehoshaphat was at his wit's end, which means he came to the end of his own mental and emotional resources. Have you ever been at your wit's end? Are you there right now?

Do you know where the expression "wit's end" originated? You may be surprised to learn that it comes from the Bible:

> *For He commands and raises the stormy wind, which lifts up the waves of the sea. They mount up to the heavens, they go down again to the depths; their soul melts because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end. (Psalm 107:25-27)*

Psalm 107 details what it is like to be at your wit's end. It is compared to the uncontrolled environment of a raging storm: "*For He commands and raises the stormy wind, which lifts up the waves of the sea" (Psalm 107:15).* Your "wit's end" is a place of instability marked by spiritual, emotional, and mental ups and downs: "*They mount up to the heavens, they go down again to the depths; their soul melts because of trouble" (Psalm 107:26).* At your wit's end your soul--your inner man--is "melted" and you are spiritually famished: "*Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them...They mount up to the heavens, they go down again to the depths; their soul melts because of trouble" (Psalm 107:5 and 26).*

Your "wit's end" is a condition of spiritual exhaustion paralleling that of physical weakness in the natural body: *"...They fell down, and there was none to help...They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end" (Psalm 107:12,27).*

Your "wit's end" is compared by the Psalmist to hard labor (Psalm 107:12). It is a lonely place, a solitary way where there is no one to help: *"They wandered in the wilderness in a desolate way; they found no city to dwell in...there was none to help" (Psalm 107:4,12).*

When the difficulties of life bring you to your wit's end, as they did Jehoshaphat, circumstances appear to be out of control. Psalm 107:25 indicates, however, that the stormy winds and waves are actually under God's control. You may question, "Why would He allow a devastating storm in my life? Why would God permit an enemy alliance to come against me? Why would He allow me to come to my wit's end?"

Because it is at your wit's end--when you feel deserted, powerless, and fearful--that you learn what to do when you don't know what to do. Once you master these biblical strategies you can apply them to every difficulty of life you encounter. While others are running around wringing their hands in despair you will know exactly what to do. When you can't go back, you are forced to go forward.

SEPTEMBER 14
FACING A MULTITUDE

Then some came and told Jehoshaphat, saying, "A great multitude is coming against you from beyond the seas, from Syria; and they are in Hazazon Tamar"...(2 Chronicles 20:2)

The multitude that came against Jehoshaphat was a formidable alliance consisting of the Moabites, Ammonites, and others with them. To understand who these people were, we need to look at a bit of their history.

The Moabites were descendants of Moab, the grandson of Lot who was conceived by incest with his eldest daughter (Genesis 19:30-38). Their territory was situated along the eastern border of the Dead Sea, on the plateau between the Dead Sea and the Arabian desert. To the south and west of Moab was the nation of Edom and to the north was Ammon. It was a fertile area for crops and herds and a major trade route ran from Syria to the Gulf of Aqabah, bringing wealth and culture to the Moabites.

When Israel camped in Moab just prior to crossing the Jordan River, the women of Moab enticed the Israelites into ritual sexual immorality which resulted in God's judgment against Israel (Numbers 25:1-9).

The tribes of Reuben and Gad settled in northern Moab (Numbers 32:1-37). When the nation of Israel became morally corrupt during the period of the judges, Eglon, a king of Moab, oppressed them and captured territory east of the Jordan River as far as Jericho. Ehud, the judge, eventually delivered Israel from Eglon's control (Judges 3:12-30).

The Moabites also threatened Israel when Saul was king (1 Samuel 14:47). David eventually conquered Moab and the nation remained subject to Israel until after Solomon's death (2 Samuel 8:2). Omri, king of Israel from 885-874 B. C., kept Moab under his control, as did his son Ahab (874-853 B. C.) until he became preoccupied with wars against Syria and Assyria and Moab was liberated. King Jehoram of Israel, the King of Edom, and King Jehoshaphat joined forces to attack Moab about 849 B. C., but they failed in their attempt (2 Kings 3:1-27).

Given this brief historical background, you can readily see why Jehoshaphat feared the Moabites. When you face your own "great multitude" of problems, do not look back to previous conflicts. No matter what happened in the past--even if you suffered defeat--you are facing this great multitude with a new mind-set. You know that God has no defeats planned for you and that He wants to turn every setback into a comeback!

SEPTEMBER 15
AN ENEMY ALLIANCE

The great multitude Jehoshaphat faced was not only composed of Moabites. Joining them were the Ammonites, a nomadic race descended from Lot's son, Ammon. During the days of the Exodus, the Israelites were instructed by God not to associate with the Ammonites (Deuteronomy. 23:3). No reason is given for the hostility between the two nations, but the rift continued for several centuries.

In the days of the judges, Eglon, king of Moab, enlisted the aid of the Ammonites in taking Jericho from Israel (Judges 3:13). In King Saul's time, Nahash, the Ammonite king, planned an attack against the Israelites living in Jabesh Gilead, threatening to put out the right eyes of all the men and disable them for warfare. King Saul responded to their call for help and saved them from this fate (1 Samuel 11:1-11). The chief god of the Ammonites was "Molech" to whom they offered human sacrifices (1 Kings 11:7).

The Ammonites and Moabites created a powerful alliance--but we aren't finished yet ! The "others" with the Moabites and the Ammonites were the Edomites. These people were descendants of Edom (Esau) who made his home in Mt. Seir and disposed the original inhabitants (Deuteronomy 2:12). After the years of wilderness wandering when Moses wanted to lead Israel northward to Canaan across Edom, the king of Edom refused them passage forcing them to take a more lengthy and difficult route through the desert to the east (Numbers 20:14-21; Judges 11:17,18). During the reign of King Saul, Israel fought against Edom (1 Samuel 14:47), and later King David conquered Edom, along with a number of other adjacent countries (2 Samuel 8:13-14). During the time of the divided kingdom, a number of hostile encounters occurred between God's people and Edom. The evil Edomites were the only neighbor of Israel not promised mercy from God (Isaiah 34:5-6: 63:1).

These three nations--the Moabites, Ammonites, and Edomites--were fierce by nature, hostile towards God's people, cruel, and idolatrous. This was the composition of the "great multitude" that Jehoshaphat faced. Talk about facing impending defeat!

What is the composition of the "great multitude" you are facing? You may think your "multitude" is someone who is making your life miserable--your spouse, a coworker, your children, or a carnal church board. If you identified any of these as your enemy, are wrong. Your real foes are only disguised in flesh and blood Behind every "great multitude" and every "bad report" there are spiritual causes. The Apostle Paul explains that "*...we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12).* Your foes are Satan and his demonic hosts. They are the spiritual powers behind the attacks that are coming against you.

SEPTEMBER 16
MEETING THE MULTITUDE

"Your enemy is coming," the messengers warned Jehoshaphat. "They have already forded the waters and are encamped nearby." What do you think will happen to Jehoshaphat as he faces this great multitude of enemy forces? Will he retreat in fear?

The Bible says Jehoshaphat feared--but then he set himself to seek the Lord. A good response in the face of fear! If Jehoshaphat is to prevail against the enemy, then he must look beyond the clouds of dust kicked up by their horses and the glimmer of their armor in the late afternoon sun. He must look beyond the immediate crisis in the natural world and see into the spirit world to view his battle with spiritual perception. He must look to God for an answer:

> *...for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee. (2 Chronicles 20:12)*

What about your great multitude? Your enemy is also encamped nearby. You can hear the intimidating sound of advancing footsteps. The footsteps of persecution and false accusation. The footsteps of financial lack. The pounding hooves of impending death. Like Jehoshaphat, you may not know what to do--so what will you do?

Jehoshaphat's response at this time of national danger reveals six major steps to take when you are facing a crisis. These steps will work every time in every situation because they are based on the unchanging truths of God's Word:

Step One:	Replace fear with faith.
Step Two:	Rise up to confront the enemy and seize your destiny.
Step Three:	Refocus your attention.
Step Four:	Reject reason for revelation.
Step Five:	Respond in obedience.
Step Six:	Reverse the curse.

During the remainder of this month, we will meditate on these steps in detail. As you read these meditations, refuse to focus on the threatening circumstances around you. You are not going down in defeat!

Make this declaration: *"Lord, it is nothing for You to help, whether with many or with those who have no power; help us, O Lord our God, for we rest on You, and in Your name we go against this multitude. O Lord, You are our God; do not let man prevail against You!" (2 Chronicles 14:11).*

SEPTEMBER 17
REPLACING FEAR WITH FAITH

And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. (2 Chronicles 20:3)

Jehoshaphat received a bad report concerning a multitude of enemy forces and his first response was fear. This is understandable, because the coalition of enemy forces aligned against him were quite formidable.

Centuries later, our immediate response to difficult circumstances has not changed. When we receive a bad report or face a multitude of problems--when we don't know what to do about our circumstances--we usually respond with fear. Impossible situations are never resolved by fear, however, so the first thing you must do when you don't know what to do is **replace fear with faith.**

When you face a problem and you are not sure what to do, there is one thing you know *not* to do and that is to fear! If you have allowed fear to engulf you, then stop right now and confess fear for what it is--a sin: *"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7)*. If God has not given a spirit of fear, then can you guess who it is from?

The opposite of fear is faith, and fear and faith cannot operate simultaneously. Matthew 8 provides a narrative about the disciples of Jesus on the Sea of Galilee in a great storm that threatened to capsize their boat. They were fearful as they struggled against the raging torrents. Jesus asked them: "*Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?" Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm" (Matthew 8:26).* The correlation is apparent: If you are filled with fear, then there is little room for faith to operate.

Both fear and faith have creative powers. Faith generates positive results and fear generates negative consequences. Every area of your life is either governed by faith or fear. In the face of impossible situations for which you have no answer you will either be mobilized by faith or immobilzed by fear. Fear renders you ineffective to deal with the difficulties of life. Fear paralyzes, but faith energizes.

Jehoshaphat feared initially but he did not continue to operate in fear. If you peek ahead in the text of 2 Chronicles 20 you will discover that Jehoshaphat eventually executed a mighty victory against the enemy.

The question is, how did he make the transition from fear to faith? And--more pertinent to your present situation--how can *you* be set free from fear and begin to operate in faith?

SEPTEMBER 18
FILLING THE VOID

The Bible says "Jehoshaphat feared" (2 Chronicles 20:3). But the narrative does not stop there. Although he was apprehensive about the forces advancing against him and had no creative solutions to avert the threat, Jehoshaphat knew what to do when he didn't know what to do. His first step was to replace fear with faith. He feared, but he demonstrated faith when he called on God despite his fears. He rejected fear and filled the void with faith.

A key principle in God's Word is that any void in your spiritual life must be filled. When the Apostle Paul admonishes us to "put off" certain negative behaviors, he immediately instructs us to "put on" other positive qualities. Jesus taught that when evil spirits depart, the spiritual void they leave must be occupied by the Holy Spirit or else they will return (Luke 11:24-26). So when fear departs, the void must be replaced by faith.

Jehoshaphat demonstrated faith in God by calling together all the people of Judah to seek the Lord:

> *And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. So Judah gathered together to ask help from the Lord; and from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the Lord. Then Jehoshaphat stood in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the Lord, before the new court...Now all Judah, with their little ones, their wives, and their children, stood before the Lord. (2 Chronicles 20:3-5,13)*

What a tremendous declaration of faith! The king, the leaders, and every family--even the little children--stood expectantly before the Lord. By their actions they were declaring, "We are positioning ourselves in faith and remaining here until we know what to do!"

As commentator Matthew Henry notes: *"Those that would seek the Lord so as to find him, and to find favor with Him, must set themselves to seek Him, must do it with themselves to fixedness of though, with sincerity of intention, and with the utmost vigor and resolution to continue seeking Him."*

The Amplified Version says Jehoshaphat *"set himself (determinedly, as his vital need)."* Literally it means he "*set his face to seek the Lord (yearning for Him with all his desire)."* Set yourself determinedly to seek the Lord and ask for His help. Fill the void left by fear with faith.

SEPTEMBER 19
STEPS TO FAITH

Here are three steps to take to replace fear with faith:

Hear God's Word. "*So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17).* This is evident in saving faith, because you must hear the Word of God in order to repent of your sin and receive Jesus as your Savior. After you are saved, Biblical teaching and personal Bible study will continue to increase your faith. The more you hear the Word of God, the more your faith increases. The more faith increases, the easier it is to defend against spiritual attacks of the enemy.

Keep your mind on God. Despite negative circumstances, you will remain peaceful when your mind is fixed on God: "*You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You"... (Isaiah 26:3).* The word "stayed" in this verse is translated from a Hebrew word which means "to lean upon or take hold, to be established and steadfast." To keep your mind fixed on God means trusting Him at all times and in all circumstances, believing that when you face the enemy and do not know what to do, God has the answer.

Act on your faith. Faith is a fact, but it is also an act. Hebrews 11 is called the "faith chapter" because of its numerous references to the faith of the great men and women listed there. In each example, faith is combined with works:

-By faith Abel offered a sacrifice.
-By faith Enoch walked with God.
-By faith Noah prepared an ark.
-By faith Abraham moved to an unknown land.
-By faith Sarah birthed a child when she was past childbearing age.
-By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were compassed for seven days.

...And so the chronicle continues. Attitude is combined with action and faith is illustrated both as a fact and an act.

Faith is what you believe and works are what you do. The Bible teaches faith is a gift of God that is increased by hearing and responding to His Word*: "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17).*

But this does not mean works are not important. James declared: "*Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works" (James 2:17-18).*

Your works--the way you live and how you react to the circumstances of life around you--are a test of the reality of your faith.

SEPTEMBER 20
STANDING IN FAITH

Replacing fear with faith is the first step when you are facing impending defeat. The second step is to **rise up to confront the enemy and seize your destiny**:

> *Then Jehoshaphat stood in the congregation of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the Lord, before the new court. (2 Chronicles 20:5)*

Jehoshaphat arose...
...right in the midst of a fearful people
...in the path of an advancing enemy army
...despite the fact that he really didn't know what to do...
Jehoshaphat stood up!

Standing up--it seems so simple, doesn't it? Simple, yet pregnant with tremendous significance because it wasn't a mere physical act, but rather a spiritual declaration:

> -God told Abraham to arise, walk the length and width of the land promised to him, and claim it (Genesis 13:17).
>
> -Moses was commanded to *"rise up early in the morning"* to stand before Pharaoh to plead Israel's deliverance (Exodus 8:20).
>
> -*"Moses my servant is dead,"* God told Joshua. *"Now therefore, arise, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them" (Joshua 1:2).*
>
> -At the border of their promised land, the nation of Israel was challenged, *"Arise...go up against them. For we have seen the land, and indeed it is very good. Would you do nothing? Do not hesitate to go, and enter to possess the land" (Joshua 18:9).*

These mighty men of faith didn't just passively wait on God, nor did they rush forward in aggressive confrontation or devise schemes to manipulate themselves out of their crisis. At god's command, they rose up in faith to seize their God-given destinies. In so doing, they witnessed miracles, conquered enemy armies, and saved entire nations.

This "rising up" is more than a physical act. It is standing up spiritually and declaring that despite the fact you don't know what to do about your problem, you are preparing--by faith--to act! If you are ever to fulfill your destiny, then you must take a strong spiritual stand and literally wrest your victory from the hands of the enemy.

Each person in the Bible who stood strong in faith received divine revelation of what to do about their circumstances. Each plan of action was different because no two situations were identical, but each man or woman who rose up and declared their confidence in God received an answer and fulfilled their destiny. The same will be true for you.

SEPTEMBER 21
CALLED TO ARISE

Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus continually called men and women to rise up in faith despite their circumstances...

-He said "Arise" to the man at the pool of Bethesda, and his crippled limbs were healed (John 5:8).

-Jesus took a dead child by the hand and commanded her to arise (Matthew 9:25).

-He passed a funeral procession and told the deceased man, "I say to you, arise!" The mourning turned to a celebration of life! (Luke 7:14).

-At Christ's command, Matthew arose from the tax collector's table to fulfill his destiny (Matthew 9:9).

-The blind men by the side of the road were told, "Rise...He is calling you," and as they stood they laid aside their beggar's garments. They wouldn't be needing them anymore (Mark 10:49).

-To all of those blinded and crippled by negative circumstances, to those who sit in bondage by the side of life's road, to those who feel dead spiritually, mentally, and emotionally--Jesus commands, "Arise!"

When you don't know what to do, do not succumb to passive waiting. Do not attempt aggressive manipulation. Take your stand for God! Rise up spiritually and begin to do what you know to do. It may be a prayer. It may be a simple act of faith. For each person who reads these pages, the response will be different because no two circumstances are identical--but take your stand and begin to act by faith!

If you arise spiritually and declare your faith in the face of adversity, the light of God will dispel the darkness:

Arise, shine; for your light has come! And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; but the Lord will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you. (Isaiah 60:1-2)

Jehoshaphat stood up, the Levites followed his example, and then the entire congregation of Israel stood--fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, and little children. By the simple act of standing they declared, "We don't know what to do, but we won't just sit here and do nothing. So here we are, God, trusting You to move in our behalf."

Are you ready to join them?

SEPTEMBER 22
REFOCUS YOUR ATTENTION

When Jehoshaphat stood up in the place where God commanded, there was no divine light from heaven. There were no angels, no audible voice from God. Nothing supernatural happened--but Jehoshaphat was strategically positioned to receive an answer from God. He took the third step and **focused his attention on God.**

Since he didn't know what to do about his problem, Jehoshaphat did the only thing he knew to do. He began to pray:

> *"O Lord God of our fathers, are You not God in heaven, and do You not rule over all the kingdoms of the nations, and in Your hand is there not power and might, so that no one is able to withstand You? Are You not our God, who drove out the inhabitants of this land before Your people Israel, and gave it to the descendants of Abraham Your friend forever? And they dwell in it, and have built You a sanctuary in it for Your name, saying, `If disaster comes upon us--sword, judgment, pestilence, or famine--we will stand before this temple and in Your presence (for Your name is in this temple), and cry out to You in our affliction, and You will hear and save.' And now, here are the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir--whom You would not let Israel invade when they came out of the land of Egypt, but they turned from them and did not destroy them--here they are, rewarding us by coming to throw us out of Your possession which You have given us to inherit. O our God, will You not judge them? For we have no power against this great multitude that is coming against us; nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are upon You." (2 Chronicles 20:6-12)*

Jehoshaphat prayed a powerful prayer:

> -He focused on Who God is, proclaiming His divine attributes.
> -He confessed God's authority over every circumstance of life.
> -He focused on God's past record of faithfulness.
> -He appealed for help on the basis of his relationship with God and God's righteousness.
> -He confessed God's promises and reminded Him of His promise to deliver His people.

Finally, Jehoshaphat declared absolute reliance on God: *"For we have no power against this great multitude that is coming against us; nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are upon You."*

Where do you place your confidence in times of crisis? Is your trust in other people? Do you rely on your own natural abilities to solve problems? Do you trust in your finances, position, and education--or do you, like Jehoshaphat, turn to God in prayer and declare your absolute reliance on Him?

SEPTEMBER 23
REJECT REASON FOR REVELATION

His name was Jahaziel. He appears on the pages of Scripture but once--and that briefly--yet his message impacts the destiny of an entire nation. His words were pregnant with the potential for a turning point in Israel's circumstances:

> *Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, in the midst of the congregation; And he said, "Listen, all you of Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem, and you, King Jehoshaphat! Thus says the Lord to you: "Do not be afraid nor dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's. Tomorrow go down against them. They will surely come up by the ascent of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the brook before the Wilderness of Jeruel. You will not need to fight in this battle. Position yourselves, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, who is with you, O Judah and Jerusalem! Do not fear or be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them, for the Lord is with you." And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem bowed before the Lord, worshiping the Lord. (2 Chronicles 20:14-18)*

In every circumstance you face for which you have no answer there comes a turning point, a moment in time when all of a sudden, in response to your perplexities and prayers, God reveals His plan. The details vary according to each situation because no two sets of circumstances are identical, but there are common elements evident in every divine revelation.

Here are the main points of Jahaziel's prophetic Word:

-Do not be afraid.
-Do not be dismayed.
-Recognize that the battle is God's battle.
-Move in God's timing--in this case it was to be "tomorrow".
-Position yourself for victory.

Charles Spurgeon observes: *"Despair tempts us to give up. Cowardice calls us to retreat. Presumption says 'Step out, advance into enemy territory and fight for your rights and expect a miracle.' Precipitancy says Don't just stand there ...do something.' But faith listens neither to presumption, nor despair, not to cowardice, nor to precipitancy, but it hears God says, 'Stand still, keep the position of an upright man ready for action, expecting further orders, cheerfully and patiently awaiting direction...'"*

The Lord said that Israel would not need to fight. They were to simply position themselves and stand still. It does not sound reasonable, but they took the next step and **rejected reason for revelation**--as so should we.

SEPTEMBER 24
THE TURNING POINT

The turning point in Jehoshaphat's dilemma came when God's people acted upon the divine revelation they were given. Faith is a fact that always involves an act. Faith is not just passive believing or wishful hoping. Faith is acting on the fact of God's Word. Jehoshaphat was instructed by God:

> *Do not be afraid nor dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's. Tomorrow go down against them. They will surely come up by the Ascent of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the brook before the Wilderness of Jeruel. You will not need to fight in this battle. Position yourselves, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, who is with you, O Judah and Jerusalem! Do not fear or be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them, for the Lord is with you. (2 Chronicles 20:15-17)*

Then God told Jehoshaphat to send the singers into battle first, and....

> *...when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushes against the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah; and they were defeated. For the people of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of Mount Seir to utterly kill and destroy them. And when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, they helped to destroy one another. So when Judah came to a place overlooking the wilderness, they looked toward the multitude; and there were their dead bodies, fallen on the earth. No one had escaped. (2 Chronicles 20:22-24)*

The turning point is always the result of an act of faith:

> -Noah acted upon a word received from God concerning a forthcoming flood and he built an ark to preserve life on the earth.
>
> -Moses received a commission to deliver Israel and acted upon it by returning to Egypt to petition Pharaoh in their behalf.
>
> -Blind men saw, the lame walked, and the deaf heard as they acted in response to the words of Jesus.
>
> -You received the word of faith for salvation, you acted upon it by responding, and you were saved.

Jehoshaphat had a Word from God and acted on it in faith. The next day he positioned himself for victory and watched God work in his behalf. What act do you need to take today in order to position yourself for victory?

SEPTEMBER 25
POSITIONED FOR VICTORY

What does it mean to "position" yourself for victory? The answer is given in this passage: *"...he appointed those who should sing to the Lord, and who should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army and were saying: Praise the Lord, for His mercy endures forever." Now when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushes against the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah; and they were defeated" (2 Chronicles 20:21-22).* When you position yourself spiritually in praise and worship, God will move in your behalf. Israel began to sing and praise God and ambushes were set by the Lord against the advancing enemy. God moved in their behalf when they *began* to sing and praise--not when they finished.

The enemy was ambushed by God and when Israel arrived on the battlefield, instead of finding living men to contend with they found only the carcasses of the enemy. There they were--in full battle array, armed with shields and spears--but there was no life in them. Their deadly potential was eliminated when God's people began to praise and worship.

Repeatedly in Old Testament conflicts, God directed Israel to send the tribe of Judah into battle first. The name Judah means "praise," so whenever you see the name "Judah" used, substitute the word "praise." Praise is the purpose for which we are ordained: "*This people 1 have formed for Myself; they shall declare My praise" (Isaiah 43:21).*

Part of our divine destiny as believers is praise and worship: "*You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5).*

We praise God by acknowledging our gratitude for His works. We praise him by blessing Him, celebrating, and boasting of what He has done. Actually the word "praise" has eight different meanings, two of which are quite interesting. They are to "release before the Lord" and to be "clamorously foolish." Don't be reserved. Don't hold back. Release your praise before the Lord with clamorously foolish emotion. That is what King David did when he danced before the Ark with all of his might. Don't worry about the critics. David's wife criticized him and was struck barren for it. People who criticize true worship are barren people.

The Bible indicates that we are to worship God daily (2 Chronicles 30:21); continually (Psalms 34:1; 35:27; Hebrews 13:15; Luke 24:53); after a special manifestation of the Lord (Exodus 34; Genesis 12); when granted favor by man (Genesis 24:52); upon receipt of promises from God (Genesis 13:14-18); and in times of crisis (Psalms 27:5).

The Bible directs us to praise God corporately in the church (Psalms 22:22; 35:18 149:1); in our homes (Psalms 149:5); in the presence of unbelievers (Psalms 40:3; 96:2-3); and before the nations of the world (Psalms 96:1-3; 108:3).

In the face of adversity and impending defeat, worship is one of your greatest spiritual resources.

SEPTEMBER 26
RESPOND IN OBEDIENCE

It is not enough to just receive a Word from the Lord, you must obey it if you are to be victorious in the face of defeat. When you take God's Word literally for what it says and apply it to your circumstances, then its supernatural power is released to work in your life:

> *For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.*
> *(1 Thessalonians 2:13)*

James cautions:

> *But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.*
> *(James 1:22-25)*

Obedience is not impossible or infeasible. God enables you to obey through His power:

> *I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. (Ezekiel 36:27)*

You can break the power of disobedience in your life by determining, like Jesus, that you will do God's will:

> *I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me. (John 5:30)*

Jehoshaphat **responded in obedience** to the Word of the Lord. In the natural, the plan did not make sense. First, God said to stand still and wait. Then He said to send the singers into battle first, praising and worshipping Him. Because Jehoshaphat responded to these instructions in obedience, the coalition that he thought would conquer him was defeated by God.

The best way to handle defeat is to never experience it in the first place. If you continually walk in obedience to God's Word, you won't ever have to recover from failure.

SEPTEMBER 27
CURSES AND STRONGHOLDS

The powerful enemy that Jehoshaphat faced was not only defeated by God's people, but they were spoiled by a complete conquest. The Bible declares: "*No man can enter into a strong man's house and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house" (Mark 3:27).*

The Greek word for "spoil" in this passage is *"diarpazo"* which means to plunder, seize, or snatch away. The Greek word "house" is *"oikos"* meaning "dwelling place". If you seek total victory in the circumstances you face, then binding the enemy is not enough. You must learn how to "spoil his house."

Satan thinks your house--your mate, your children, your finances--belong to him. Just as the enemy threatened Jehoshaphat, Satan also threatens to steal, kill, and destroy what is yours. Simply binding the work of the enemy does not bring total victory because if you let your guard down, he might get loose again. You must totally spoil his house.

A stronghold is any area where Satan has seized control in your life. These strongholds are passed on through what are called "generational curses." Satan seizes control in one generation, and the curse is passed on to succeeding generations.

The Bible reveals that the forces that determine events in this world fall into two divisions: Visible and invisible. Blessings and curses are invisible forces of spiritual power which are transmitted by words because *"Death and life are in the power of the tongue " (Proverbs 18:21).* You speak either a blessing or a curse and what you speak produces either positive or harmful results.

Most people readily accept the concept of "blessing" as valid and Biblical, but are skeptical about the subject of curses. They think the word conjures up images of the dark ages, witches, and voodoo dolls. But just as the opposite of good is evil, the opposite of blessings are curses.

The Bible indicates that *"the curse causeless shall not come" (Proverbs 26:2 KJV),* meaning that behind every curse there is a spiritual cause. Deuteronomy 27:15-26 lists moral and ethical sins that create spiritual breaches that open you up to strongholds of Satan.

Some curses are imposed on you by authority figures in your life, for example a parent who said you were stupid and you believed it. It is also possible to receive a curse of having a propensity towards certain physical or spiritual conditions or a curse brought on by witchcraft.

Whatever the cause, the evil can be conquered because Jesus has redeemed you from the curse (Galatians3:13). Examine your life today for evidence of curses. If you think you are living under a curse or a stronghold of Satan is operating in your life, don't miss tomorrow's meditation.

SEPTEMBER 28
REVERSING THE CURSE

Curses are perpetuated through negative, hateful, bitter words that have the power to cause emotional, spiritual, and intellectual damage--and even physical death. There are curses instilled by authority figures through their words spoken over you. Other curses operate because of a personal violation of God's Word (sin). Curses also operate through strongholds established by Satan in the lives of your ancestors which are passed down through generations.

You may ask, "When I accepted Jesus as Savior, weren't all of these curses broken over my life?" When you are born again, you are forgiven of your past sins and yes--the shed blood of Jesus has the power to break every curse. As in the story of Jehoshaphat, however, Satan will return through "bad reports" and "great multitudes" to try to bring curses back on you.

Like Israel, when you begin to praise God the strongholds are broken and the curse is reversed upon the enemy because the positive force of praise conquers the negative force of curses:

> *I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live. (Deuteronomy 30:19)*

You choose blessing when you praise God and your worship literally spoils the enemy's house:

> *For the people of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of Mount Seir to utterly kill and destroy them. And when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, they helped to destroy one another ...So when Judah came to a place overlooking the wilderness, they looked toward the multitude; and there were their dead bodies, fallen on the earth. No one had escaped. (2 Chronicles 20:23-24)*

Do you want to disarm the enemy forces arrayed against you? Would you like to reverse every diabolical curse and stronghold that threatens and controls your life? Then begin to praise God! Don't wait until you see the hand of God moving and your victory is assured. Begin to praise Him right now, even while you hear the sound of advancing troops echoing across the desert plains of your life. Begin to sing in the face of adversity when--like Jehoshaphat--you don't know what you are going to do about your circumstances.

Like Jehoshaphat, you **can reverse the curse** through praise and worship...And don't be surprised when you get to the battlefield if all you can find is the disintegrating carcass of your problem.

SEPTEMBER 29
VICTORY IN THE VALLEY

Dead bodies littered the plains as the sun rose over the wilderness that morning. The curse of the enemy was reversed! Their military forces actually turned against one another and self-destructed.

What a victory for Jehoshaphat, a man who at one time confessed he didn't know what to do. And what a tremendous victory you will experience when you apply the same steps he took to confront your own difficult challenges.

In the closing verses of 2 Chronicles 20 there are four results of reversing the curse of the enemy, benefits which you will also experience when you learn to triumph in impossible situations:

Reaping. God not only delivered His people from their foes, He enriched them with the spoils of the enemy. It took three days to gather all the valuables (2 Chronicles 20:25). Satan was defeated at the cross of Calvary and it took Jesus three days to carry away the spoils of the enemy! Begin to reap the spoils of spiritual victory by...

...snatching your unsaved mate from Satan's evil clutches.
...exercising your rightful authority over your children.
...taking control of your finances.
...taking authority in every area where the enemy has established a stronghold.

Releasing. The Valley of Berachah was located between Bethlehem (where David was anointed as king of Israel) and Hebron (where he fortified a refuge against his enemy, Saul). "Berachach" means "blessing," so the place of blessing is situated spiritually between the "anointing" and the "refuge". Immediately after his victory over the enemy, Jehoshaphat gathered God's people together to reverse the curse of the bad report and release the blessings of God upon the people.

Rejoicing. The people assembled in the house of the Lord before going out to battle and returned there after their victory with tremendous joy, praise, and music (2 Chronicles 20:27-28). If we would venture out in faith to confront our enemies instead of hiding and cowering in fear, perhaps we, too, would assemble with more joy when we come to the house of the Lord.

Resting. Enemy forces were still encamped just over the hill and across the streams, but they were not a threat to Jehoshaphat because God gave him rest (2 Chronicles 20:29-30).

You will be surrounded by enemy forces as long as you are in this world, but you do not have to be troubled by them. Never again will you wring your hands and lament, "I just don't know what to do!" You will be too busy reaping the spoils from your enemy, reversing the curse by releasing the blessing, rejoicing over the victory, and resting in God.

SEPTEMBER 30
SIX STEPS TO VICTORY

Right now, take a pen in hand, think of your battles, your burdens, your problems, your sickness, any need you may have--and write them all down on a piece of paper.

Remember what you have learned--faith is not only a fact, but it is also an act. Take the deliberate action of writing your needs out before the Lord, then proceed to take the following steps which are drawn from the meditations of the past few weeks (September 10-29).

Step One: Replace fear with faith.

Step Two: Rise up to confront the enemy and seize your destiny.

Step Three: Refocus your attention.

Step Four: Reject reason for revelation.

Step Five: Respond in obedience.

Step Six: Reverse the curse.

These steps are applicable to every problem of life, whether it be physical, material, or spiritual. Apply these strategies each time you confront a crisis or face a potential defeat. They cannot fail because they are based upon God's Word.

As you face difficult circumstances, don't deny them. Jehoshaphat did not deny the devastating potential of his problem. Some people claim that acknowledging a problem is a negative confession that aborts faith. When Christ's disciples thought Lazarus was sleeping, however, Jesus pointedly corrected them. "Lazarus is dead," He declared. Talk about a negative confession! But in the next breath Jesus said, "But I go to raise Him!"

If you do not acknowledge a problem, how can you deal with it? When deliverance comes, how can God receive glory if you refuse to admit there was a problem in the first place?

Acknowledge your problem, but at the same time proclaim your confidence in God's promises to deliver. Then use the strategies you have learned in this month's meditations.

You must take action in order to be victorious because information brings revelation, but revelation must result in application in order to bring transformation. Every force that threatens your destiny can be turned into victory through proper application of the principles of God's Word.