

# Thankfulness No Matter What: A Bible Lesson about Jehoshaphat


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Kristin Charles

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Try this lesson plan based on the story of Jehoshaphat in 2 Chronicles 20 to teach children about thankfulness. It would work in any children's ministry setting but is designed for Children's Church or Sunday School. **Objectives:** To identify Biblical strategies for dealing with problems in our lives, based on Jehoshaphat's response to an attacking army. To develop students who display hearts of gratitude. This lesson is geared towards a classroom of 1<sup>st</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> graders. **Materials:**

-  **PRINT** this lesson plan
- Bibles for each student (or every other one),
- a whiteboard, whiteboard marker, color coded seats (optional – see Bible lesson),
- chairs,
- CD player and praise CD,
- paper plates (2 for each student),
- beans or dried cereal (whatever you have on hand!),
- masking tape or a stapler,
- crayons or markers,
- an Avery label that reads, "Give thanks to the Lord, for his love endures forever." – 2 Chronicles 20:21 (or print out the verse yourself – one for each student.)

**Bible Basis:** "Give thanks to the Lord, for his love endures forever." – 2 Chronicles 20:21 **Anticipatory Set:** Ask the students the following questions: Have you ever had a problem that seemed bigger than you? Have you felt helpless, like you couldn't fix it, no matter how hard you tried? Sometimes life isn't always easy. Sometimes family members get sick, people we love go to war, bullies at school make fun of you, parents don't get along, and moms and dads lose their jobs. Today we're going to learn about a guy named Jehoshaphat who faced these kinds of big problems. In fact, an entire army was coming to destroy him and his people. It seemed like Jehoshaphat had nowhere to turn, but he chose to run to God. At one point, he cries to God, "We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you." (2 Chronicles 20:12) When we do not know what to do, let's learn how we can turn to God with our problems, like Jehoshaphat in our study today. **Bible Lesson:** 2 Chronicles 20

1. Have the students seated in such a manner that an older student is next to a younger one. This will help with the reading later in the lesson. You could color code the seats with construction paper circles or stickers so that the "red seats" are for grades 3-5 and the "blue seats" are for grades 1-2.
2. Ask the students to figure out who Jehoshaphat was. Tell them that you are going to read a passage of scripture, and you want them to listen for clues. Have a whiteboard and marker ready to jot down clues that they generate. Read 2 Chronicles 17:1-6. (Some answers may include: He was a King. Asa was his Dad. He followed God. He didn't follow other gods. He had great wealth and honor. He removed the high places or idols -though scripture is clear that he did not remove all of the idolatry in the land.)

3. Say: Sounds like a pretty good guy, right? Well, even good guys have big problems. One day, Jehoshaphat was probably eating a Big Mac, or high-fiving his friend, or playing his Wii when these guys came running to tell him that a HUGE army was coming against him. And not only that, but the army was kind of close. How would you feel if you were in his shoes? (Scared!) That's right! In the Bible, it says that Jehoshaphat was alarmed! Yet instead of freaking out and running away, let's figure out what he did.
4. Read 2 Chronicles 20:3-4. Does anyone know what a fast is? A fast is going without food for a period of time, in order to go to God about something. Instead of taking the time to make food and eat, the people of Judah spent time praying: asking for forgiveness, praising God, and thanking Him. Every time they felt hunger cramps, they would remember that God had provided for them in the past. They trusted that He would provide in the future.
5. Read 2 Chronicles 20:12 as a choral reading. Repeat the last part of the verse three times, "We do not know what to do (arms lifted up as if asking a question) but our eyes are on You (point upward)." Use motions as you say it together.
6. Take a moment to pray with the children. Ask for forgiveness of sin, praise God for being bigger than our problems, and thank Him for listening to the prayers of His children.
7. So how does God answer Jehoshaphat? Separate the students into pairs. Ask them to listen for what God told His people. Have the older child read 2 Chronicles 20:15-17 to the younger child. Once everyone is done reading and reflecting on God's words, invite some of the students to respond on behalf of their pair. (Answers should include: Don't be afraid or discouraged. You will not fight this battle, but God will. March against the people and then watch what God will do! God will be with you.)
8. Build up anticipation for the conclusion. Raise your hand if you think Jehoshaphat with God on his side will win? Raise your hand if you think the enemy will win? Take some guesses. How in the world is Jehoshaphat going to win without fighting? How is God going to fight for His people?
9. Tell the students that Jehoshaphat's people woke up early for the battle. In a loud voice (act this out grandly), Jehoshaphat 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." Then Jehoshaphat chose men to sing to God and praise Him ahead of the army. Choose 3-5 boys to stand up and sing, "Give thanks to the Lord, for His love endures forever." Have them repeat it a couple of times. Mention that this is quite a unique strategy for war – singing praises!
10. Continue to build up anticipation. (Show excitement in your voice and body language!) You will never believe what happened! Remember how God said that Jehoshaphat and his people wouldn't have to fight? They didn't! God tricked the enemy into turning on each other! At the end of the day, no one was left alive! Not one enemy escaped! Not one person from Jehoshaphat's side had to fight! And not one person got killed or even injured for that matter! And if all that wasn't great enough, Jehoshaphat's people spent three days finding equipment, clothing, and expensive stuff. They found so much stuff that they couldn't take it all with them!
11. Have the students give a loud round of applause for Jehoshaphat for trusting in God. And another round of applause for the singers who must have thought it weird to praise God when they were supposed to be getting ready for war! And of course, the loudest round of applause for the God who saved His people when they called to Him for help.

**Application:** Preface these questions by telling the students to not answer these questions out loud, but to just think about them quietly. What kind of problems do you have in your life right now? Are they problems with people at school or your last report card? Are they problems at home with your parents or brothers or sisters? Maybe you're not sure how God will take care of your family and you're worried about it. Maybe someone you love has passed away and it keeps making you really sad. You know, life can be full of hard times. But God doesn't want us to go through those times alone. Do you know Jesus as your Savior? If you do, He can help you through those hard times like God did with Jehoshaphat. He can help you fight problems that seem bigger than you. Why? Because

God is even bigger than that problem you see! If you do not know Jesus as your Savior, please consider talking to me today so that you can invite Him to live in your heart. What did Jehoshaphat do when a HUGE army was coming to destroy him? He prayed and he praised! Even though he saw the problem, he trusted that God was going to take care of him. He had joy, no matter what! He and his people sang thanks to God. Now that is something that we can get excited about! Whenever you have a problem of any sort, please pray about it. Maybe talk to a grown up that you trust. But also, remember to have a heart of thanks. Thank God for as many things as you can think of!

**Musical Chairs Game:** Materials: chairs lined up back to back in two rows (one chair for each child), CD player (or someone singing who is not facing the children), a Praise CD

1. Have each student start out sitting in a chair. Start with a trial run. Play the music and have the students move around the chairs. Shut the music off and have the students grab a seat. Everyone gets one the first time. Now remove one seat to play.
2. Play the music again. When the music stops, everyone grabs a chair. The player without a chair is out. Take out one chair each round.
3. Repeat until you have 2 players and 1 chair. The one to sit down first on the last chair is the winner.

**Praise Shakers Art Project** Materials: paper plates (2 for each student), beans or dried cereal (whatever you have on hand!), tape or a stapler, crayons or markers, an Avery label that reads, "Give thanks to the Lord, for his love endures forever." – 2 Chronicles 20:21 (or print out the verse yourself on the bottom side of one plate.)

1. On the bottom side of one plate, have the students affix the memory verse and start writing things that they can be thankful for.
2. On the bottom side of the other plate, have the students brainstorm additional items of thanksgiving.
3. Once they are done decorating their plates, either staple or tape the plates together so that they are almost closed. Have the child place a handful of beans or cereal in the remaining opening. Then close that as well so that the plates are sealed together.
4. As you are working on sealing plates together, students can either brainstorm additional items of praise or work on memorizing 2 Chronicles 20:21.
5. Once all plates have been completed, teach the students a song of thanksgiving and sing it together with their "Praise Shakers." You can choose "Give Thanks with a Grateful Heart" or "I Will Enter His Gates with Thanksgiving in my Heart" or your personal favorite.

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