

HOW TO TRAIN YOUR DRAGON (*How to Deal with Crises*)

2 Chronicles 20

Introduction

The title of my message this morning is *How To Train Your Dragon*. If you don't have small children or grandchildren, this title may not mean anything to you. But if you do have small children or grandchildren, you may be familiar with the animated film by the same name. I highly recommend it (I've probably seen it in part a dozen times or so!).

In this message let the crises we often face be our *dragons*. I'm preaching this message particularly because of a *dragon* W.C.A. is facing: inadequate financial resources to meet our immediate needs and the looming economic storm.

As I've been thinking about our dragon, King Jehoshaphat's prayer in 2 Chronicles 20:12 came to mind. I've modified it to reflect our particular crisis: ***O . . . God . . . we have no [resources] to face this [great need] that is [before] us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you.***"

I want to use our church's crisis to help us see how we can *train the dragons* in our own personal lives.

We begin by looking to God's Word, because it ***is a lamp to [our] feet and a light for [our] path.*** (Ps. 119:105) And the path before us is not clear, and it can be alarming.

The portion of God's Word I want us to look at is 2 Chronicles 20:1-2, a familiar incident that provides clear instructions for *training dragons*.

In verses 1-2, we read,

1 After this, the Moabites and Ammonites with some of the Meunites came to make war on Jehoshaphat. 2 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).

The **Moabites** were descendants of Lot, by an incestuous union of his son with his daughter. Later, the king of Moab hired Balaam to curse the Israelites. The Moabites dwelled east of the Dead Sea.

The **Ammonites** were also descendants of Lot, by his second son Ben-ammi. They joined with the Moabites in hiring Balaam to curse the Israelites. The Ammonites lived east and north of the Dead Sea.

The **Meunites** were descendants of Esau, inhabitants of Mount Seir in Edom, east and south of the Dead Sea.

These three tribes God prevented the Israelites from driving from the land (see Deut. 2:4-9,19), so they continued to live among the people of God.

King Jehoshaphat was the 4th king of the southern kingdom of Judah. He reigned for 24 years, around 850 years before Christ. Jehoshaphat was a good and godly king. We might imagine that this would insure God's protection against unexpected or unjust trouble. But unfortunately, both the rain and problems falls on the just and the unjust alike!

Let's follow this story and see how Jehoshaphat *trained* his *dragon*.

The first thing we see is that Jehoshaphat . . .

1. Resolved to seek God

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

One can readily sense Jehoshaphat's alarm and fear in this incident.

Fear and anxiety can evoke a whole range of reactions, from panic and paralysis to courage. And action There's nothing wrong with fear; in fact, it can be a good thing. Fear can prevent us from doing things that are foolish. Fear can cause us to reach down deep for courage and do things we couldn't ordinarily do.

But when fear paralyzes us, or *causes* us to do foolish things, it's bad.

The best thing fear can do is to drive us to pray. And in fact, sometimes it takes fear to make us pray with a faith and an intensity that nothing else will do; the greater the fear, the more intense and urgent the prayer.

Are you facing a dragon right now? Maybe it's a small dragon; maybe it's a huge dragon. If you're going to train him, the first thing you need to do is ***resolve to inquire of the Lord.***

Fasting is one way of praying with a particular intensity. It's not an arm-twisting strategy, meant to persuade God; but it's a means of denying the physical in order to give priority to the spiritual.

The second thing we see is Jehoshaphat . . .

2. Enlisting the help and or advice of others

2 Chronicles 20:4 ***The people of Judah came together to seek help from the LORD; indeed, they came from every town in Judah to seek him.***

And in particular, *help* in seeking the Lord.

We've talked before about the effectiveness of synergy—the power of community being greater than that of individuals.

Jesus refers to this in regards to prayer when He said, . . . ***I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven.*** (Mt. 18:19)

The elders and I need your help today. We need to seek the Lord together for guidance and provision.

If you're facing a crisis, don't be afraid to ask others to pray with you.

And thirdly, note *how* Jehoshaphat prayed; first he . . .

3. Acknowledged that God is in control

2 Chronicles 20:5 ***Then Jehoshaphat stood up in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem at the temple of the LORD in the front of the new courtyard 6 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.***

These weren't mere *words* in Jehoshaphat's mouth; it was *truth*! And it was a *reality* in his mind and heart!

God didn't need to be informed or reminded of this fact; but Jehoshaphat and the people needed to remind themselves that God was in control, and He ruled over all the kingdom and nations—including the ones coming against Judah!

And we need to remind ourselves that God is in control of all things, including providing for our needs and guiding and directing us in all things.

Included in this acknowledgement that God was in control, fourthly was the . . .

4. Acknowledgement that God hears prayer

2 Chronicles 20:9 ***'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.'***

God is *the God who is in heaven*. But He can hear us here on earth.

Psalms 94:9 *Does he who implanted the ear not hear? Does he who formed the eye not see?*

Indeed, *the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their cry* (Ps. 34:15).

God hears our prayers because He is with us, and because He knows our circumstances, and He knows our hearts.

However, it's one thing to pray, and even to believe God hears. But it's another thing to fifthly . . .

5. Expect God to respond

2 Chronicles 20:13 *All the men of Judah, with their wives and children and little ones, stood there before the LORD.*

I wonder if there was a period of silence as they stood and waited? It's so hard for us to wait; silence is so awkward; so uncomfortable.

But Psalms 37:7 says, *Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him . . .*

And God says, *"Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."* (Psalms 46:10)

It's in the waiting that we demonstrate our expectation that God will answer.

And when *all the men of Judah, with their wives and children and little ones, stood there before the LORD*, we read in 2 Chronicles 20:14-17

14 Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jahaziel son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite and descendant of Asaph, as he stood in the assembly. 15 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. 16 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. 17 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.'"

Notice in God's instructions that He told them what He would do, and what they were to do. Even though the battle was God's, they were to march down against the enemy, take up their positions and stand firm.

In other words, in *training our dragons* or dealing with our crises, we're to sixthly. . .

6. Do what we can do

I know the Bible doesn't say in so many words, "The Lord helps those who help themselves," but I believe we can find that principle in it. But behind everything we can and should do must be faith in the Lord.

We read in 2 Chronicles 20:20 ***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."***

Faith in the Lord results in courage and success.

The last thing we see in *training our dragons* is . . .

7. Praising and thanking God for the outcome

In 2 Chronicles 20:21, we read, ***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."***

I never ceased to be amazed at this last instruction!

Imagine if our president—our Commander in Chief—had told our special forces sent to kill Osama Bin Laden, "I'm sending a special contingent of choir members with you, and I want them to lead the mission!"

Can you imagine what his military chiefs of staff would have said!?

But such a strategy as Jehoshaphat's was a demonstration of his trust in the Lord. And what was the outcome?

2 Chronicles 20:22 ***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. 23 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. 24 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. 25 So Jehoshaphat and his men went to carry off their plunder, and they found among them a great amount of equipment and clothing and also articles of value--more than they could take away. There was so much plunder that it took three days to collect it.

Conclusion

So how do we *train our dragon*, or deal with our crises?

1. We resolve to seek God.
2. We enlist the help and advice of others.
3. We acknowledge that God is in control, and that
4. He hears our prayers. So we
5. Expect God to respond. But we also
6. Do what we can do. And then we
7. Praise and thank God for the outcome.

When we *train our dragons* like this, we can expect that God will do even more than we ask—or imagine!

And God will help us in our crises because He loves us and as a witness to others of His love and power.

We read in 2 Chronicles 20:29-30 that 29 ***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.*** 30 ***And the kingdom of Jehoshaphat was at peace, for his God had given him rest on every side.***