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REMEMBER GOD'S FAITHFULNESS



When have you needed a guide to help you find your way?

QUESTION #1

THE POINT

The God who guided you in the past will guide you now and in the future.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

For years I had the privilege of taking students on a weeklong backpacking trip into the high mountains of the Sierra Nevada range in California. The terrain was incredibly rugged, but the views were incredible. Each year we highlighted the importance of watching your surroundings and being aware of where you were at all times. We stressed this because, in case someone got lost, he could find his way back to the starting place.

Without fail every year, a few students failed to listen to their guide and got lost. After a search, someone would personally guide them back to camp. When asked what happened, they told the same story: they couldn't remember the right way to go.

Too often we do the same thing. We rely on God to do something in our lives only to forget the next time what it was He did for us. King Asa was no exception to this. Asa had been an exceptional ruler through most of his reign, but he hit a period in his life when he "forgot to remember."

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

2 Chronicles 16:1-6

¹ In the thirty-sixth year of the reign of Asa, Baasha king of Israel went up against Judah and built Ramah, that he might permit no one to go out or come in to Asa king of Judah. ² Then Asa took silver and gold from the treasures of the house of the LORD and the king's house and sent them to Ben-hadad king of Syria, who lived in Damascus, saying, ³ "There is a covenant between me and you, as there was between my father and your father. Behold, I am sending to you silver and gold. Go, break your covenant with Baasha king of Israel, that he may withdraw from me." ⁴ And Ben-hadad listened to King Asa and sent the commanders of his armies against the cities of Israel, and they conquered Ijon, Dan, Abel-maim, and all the store cities of Naphtali. ⁵ And when Baasha heard of it, he stopped building Ramah and let his work cease. ⁶ Then King Asa took all Judah, and they carried away the stones of Ramah and its timber, with which Baasha had been building, and with them he built Geba and Mizpah.

King Asa's peaceful reign finally came to an end. For thirty-six years, the once united nation of Israel had been divided into the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Since the Lord had blessed King Asa and the Southern Kingdom, many Jews from the Northern Kingdom were migrating south (2 Chron. 15:9).

King Baasha, who ruled the Northern Kingdom, didn't like that so many of his people were migrating to Judah. So Baasha built a fortress in Ramah five to six miles north of Jerusalem to stop his people from going south to King Asa in Judah. Ramah was on the border between the two kingdoms, but because it was actually in Judah, it wasn't Baasha's land to build on. However, Baasha was ambitious and built a military compound anyway.

When have you seen fear or worry lead to an unwise decision?

QUESTION #2

King Asa must have felt intimidated when he saw the threat of his neighboring king and the encroachment upon his land. We might wonder if Asa panicked, since he devised his own plan: a bribe for outside help. Instead of depending on God, Asa looked to “Ben-hadad king of Syria, who lived in Damascus” (v. 2) to the north of Israel. Both Israel and Judah had treaties with Ben-hadad, but Asa bribed him to break the treaty with Israel with the gold and silver from the temple’s treasury. From a human standpoint, Asa’s strategy was successful. It may have worked, but it came at a cost.

- ▶ The temple treasuries were dedicated to God, yet Asa gave away those things as a payment to another king.
- ▶ Asa failed to trust God.
- ▶ Asa’s lack of trust set a bad example for those who lived under his rule. The king had discredited trust in God, and his subjects would follow his lead.

Asa was about to learn the hard way that he would never be in any situation where it would not be necessary to depend on God—and the same is true for us.

2 Chronicles 16:7-9

⁷ At that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah and said to him, “Because you relied on the king of Syria, and did not rely on the LORD your God, the army of the king of Syria has escaped you. ⁸ Were not the Ethiopians and the Libyans a huge army with very many chariots and horsemen? Yet because you relied on the LORD, he gave them into your hand. ⁹ For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him. You have done foolishly in this, for from now on you will have wars.”



What has God done for you in the past that helps you trust Him in the present?

QUESTION #3

REMEMBERING GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

List several examples of things God has done for you or ways God has led you in the past. Then answer the questions.

Examples of God's faithfulness:

Now, consider a difficult situation you are facing right now. Write it down and list some examples of things that God could do for you in this situation.

Write a prayer of thanks, expressing your trust in God's faithfulness:

"The beautiful thing about this adventure called faith is that we can count on him never to lead us astray."

—CHUCK SWINDOLL

A price tag is attached to every decision we make, and King Asa was about to learn that hard lesson. Asa had thought it was a good decision to enlist Ben-hadad, but it carried a heavy price tag. Judah's king appeared to be victorious, but from God's viewpoint, he was utterly defeated.

The king became aware of that defeat through a reminder by the seer Hanani, who was God's prophet to speak God's truth to the people. A seer was a prophet who was used as the mouthpiece of God to deliver truth to the people—and Asa was about to get an earful of truth!

Hanani reminded the king what God had done for him in the past. While the king had some great and valiant warriors, Hanani reminded Asa that it had not been those warriors who were victorious over the vast army of Ethiopians and Libyans; it was because he had "relied on the LORD" (v. 8). What a reality check that must have been for the king!

The outcome for King Asa wasn't what he thought he would get. Hanani informed Asa if he had simply relied on God to deliver them from Israel, he would not only have gained the victory over Israel, he would've been victorious over Aram as well. Trust in God would have given Asa the victory he sought—and then some.

Remember the price tag? For Asa, the price was peace. Judah had experienced peace for much of King Asa's reign, but that would no longer be the case. Hanani told Asa that God looks continually for those who remain faithful to Him. To those "whose heart is blameless toward him," (v. 9) God shows Himself to be strong and throws His full support behind them! Because Asa had failed in his commitment to God, he would "from now . . . have wars" (v. 9).

We can avoid Asa's tragic mistake as we keep God's faithfulness on our radar. He has taken care of us in the past, and He will do so now. Let's be people "whose heart is blameless toward him." When we are, it doesn't matter how big the army is that stands in front of us, we can trust Him to deliver us far beyond what we might accomplish on our own. God "is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20).

2 Chronicles 16:10-13

¹⁰ Then Asa was angry with the seer and put him in the stocks in prison, for he was in a rage with him because of this. And Asa inflicted cruelties upon some of the people at the same time.¹¹ The acts of Asa, from first to last, are written in the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel. ¹² In the thirty-ninth year of his reign Asa was diseased in his feet, and his disease became severe. Yet even in his disease he did not seek the LORD, but sought help from physicians. ¹³ And Asa slept with his fathers, dying in the forty-first year of his reign.

The truth hurts. It's hard for most of us to hear the truth about ourselves. We know, of course, that the right course of action is to accept the truth and respond accordingly. Unfortunately, our pride often gets in the way, and we react with anger and outrage. Or we look for someone else to blame. Everyone around us suffers because we don't want to deal with the truth, especially when it has consequences we don't want to hear.

That's where we find Asa. It didn't matter that Hanani was a prophet used by God to bring truth to him; Asa didn't want to hear it, so he put God's prophet in prison. Furthermore, in his rage, Asa even "inflicted cruelties upon some of the people" (v. 10). Everyone was going to suffer—including God's prophet.

So how should we receive truth and act on it in a proper and fitting way?

- ▶ Accept the truth and be thankful that someone was willing and courageous enough to tell it to you; trust that they delivered it out of love.
- ▶ Claim ownership of the truth that the person pointed out to you. Take time to evaluate it, digest it, and then develop a plan to act on it.
- ▶ Learn from your mistakes and move forward from them. Don't waste time wallowing in guilt over them once you have sought forgiveness for them.
- ▶ Trust God to guide you as you move forward.

Asa's sin was not in seeking medical help, but in not seeking the Lord. Asa should have looked to the Lord even as he looked to the physicians. The God who intervened to lead Asa's army to victory is the same God who could bring healing. Instead, Asa let his pride and ego get in the way of turning to God.

In place of pride or self-centeredness, let's walk in humility as we focus on Christ and experience the benefits of our obedience.

What makes pride so self-destructive?

QUESTION #4

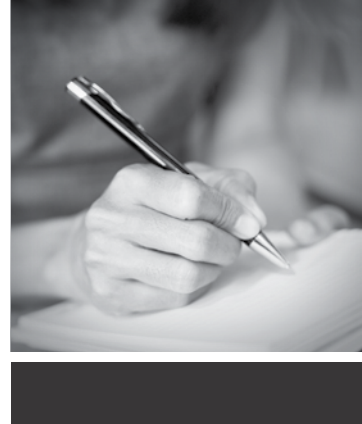
How can our group encourage one another in godly problem-solving?

QUESTION #5

LIVE IT OUT

God will certainly guide those who look to Him. Choose one of the following applications:

- ▶ **Write.** Make a list of truths from God's Word you have learned recently. Evaluate how you responded to each one and, if necessary, what you could have done differently.
- ▶ **Memorize.** As a reminder of why you can always trust God, memorize 2 Chronicles 16:9a: "For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him."
- ▶ **Speak.** If you know someone who needs a course correction, ask God for direction in how to speak the truth in love to him or her. Consider carefully your words and pray for the person's openness to hear the truth from God's Word.



Just as one can get lost in the wilderness, we can get lost in life if we "forget to remember." The God who guided us in the past, will lead us into the future.

My thoughts