

2

DEPEND ON GOD



What's the most dependable thing you've owned?

QUESTION #1

x

God is greater than any challenge we face.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

It's great to have the right tools when you need them—those things you can always rely on to get the job done. But what if the “job” is just to get through life? What can you rely on when you face a challenging decision or everything seems to be going against you?

- ▶ Some people rely on a horoscope or fortune-teller to guide them in dealing with the daily struggles of life.
- ▶ Some people rely on alcohol or other drugs as a way to cope with challenges.
- ▶ Some people just look in the mirror and say, “I can handle this myself.”
- ▶ Some people let chance make their decisions. They gamble by flipping a coin while ignoring the words on that coin: In God we trust.

Instead, King Asa gave us the right model to follow. He knew and understood what it meant to fully depend on God and turn to Him first when facing an incredibly overwhelming challenge.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

2 Chronicles 14:9-11

⁹ Zerah the Ethiopian came out against them with an army of a million men and 300 chariots, and came as far as Mareshah. ¹⁰ And Asa went out to meet him, and they drew up their lines of battle in the Valley of Zephathah at Mareshah. ¹¹ And Asa cried to the LORD his God, “O LORD, there is none like you to help, between the mighty and the weak. Help us, O LORD our God, for we rely on you, and in your name we have come against this multitude. O LORD, you are our God; let not man prevail against you.”

King Asa had experienced a time of peace and his people had accomplished much good work, but the winds of change were coming. No one ever wants to go into war, but this battle especially looked like one Asa and his army would want to avoid.

Asa didn't back away from the overwhelming odds in front of him. He and his army of 580,000 men (2 Chron. 14:8) lined up and headed into battle. We know little about his opponent, “Zerah the Ethiopian.” Cush is usually identified with Ethiopia, and Zerah's army may well have been made up of mercenaries fighting on behalf of Egypt. With “an army of a million men and 300 chariots,” (v. 9) we can easily assume Zerah and his men would not have been afraid of attacking an army around half their size.

Anyone looking only at the odds knew Asa was seriously outnumbered and would probably face defeat. But Asa didn't let the large army deter him from the task at hand. He marched forward into unfamiliar territory to take on an army nearly twice his army's size. Why? Asa had God on his side.

Asa had learned much from watching his father's success against Jeroboam, king of the Northern Kingdom. Asa's father, Abijah, had faced Israel's army when it was twice the size of Judah's (13:3).

What do you most appreciate about Asa's prayer?

QUESTION #2

Asa had learned from his father that God is available to help no matter how big or small the challenge ahead may be. Asa knew the outcome of their battle was not going to be determined by man alone. So he cried out to God in prayer. He praised God for who He was and His consistent availability to help both those in positions of power and those who have no strength in themselves. Because Asa knew nothing was impossible for God, he asked God specifically to help them by providing the might and strength they needed.

“**LORD**, you are our God.” Asa declared his allegiance to God as his father had done. In declaring this, he committed himself and his armies to God. He declared that the battle and its outcome belonged to the Lord, the one against whom no one could stand.

We’re not going into a battle like Asa was facing, but we face challenging struggles every day of our lives. Many of those challenges confront us with odds that are not in our favor. Many of those battles and challenges look like impossibilities for us to overcome. Many of us would rather just stay within our own walls and pretend like the battles are not even there.

In those moments, we need to follow Asa’s example and cry out to a God who specializes in the impossible. God is there to help us, just as He was there to help Asa. It doesn’t matter to God what size the battle is. His desire is for us to cry out to Him who is our all-powerful advocate.

The first step in any battle is to come to grips with the battle that is before us and acknowledge that we can’t do it alone. When was the last time you cried out to God about any crisis or challenging situation you were facing? Take some time to be alone with God, and in those moments of quietness, cry out to Him. Talk to Him. Share with Him about your struggles, your challenges, and the battles that threaten to consume you. Trust Him to help you just as He helped Asa.

***What does
dependence upon
God look like in the
life of a believer?***

QUESTION #3

FACING OUR CHALLENGES

Choose one of the following images of challenges that people face. Then write what you would say to God to profess your dependence upon Him in that situation.



"Humility, the place of entire dependence on God, is the first duty and the highest virtue of the creature, and the root of every virtue!"

—ANDREW MURRAY

2 Chronicles 14:12-15

¹² So the LORD defeated the Ethiopians before Asa and before Judah, and the Ethiopians fled.

¹³ Asa and the people who were with him pursued them as far as Gerar, and the Ethiopians fell until none remained alive, for they were broken before the LORD and his army. The men of Judah carried away very much spoil. ¹⁴ And they attacked all the cities around Gerar, for the fear of the LORD was upon them. They plundered all the cities, for there was much plunder in them. ¹⁵ And they struck down the tents of those who had livestock and carried away sheep in abundance and camels. Then they returned to Jerusalem.

Asa and his army left the protection of their fortified cities to face an army twice their size. They had declared their commitment to God and had cried out to Him for help. They acknowledged they could not fight this battle in their own strength but were depending on Him. What did God do in response? Instead of preventing the battle, God brought the opposing army to Asa and his army!

Why didn't God enable Asa and his army to just avoid the battle altogether? Couldn't God have simply won the battle for them without them having to march off to face their enemy? God absolutely could have, but He chose to put them in a position where they would have to act on their faith. By marching out to face the Cushites in battle, Asa and his warriors had to trust completely in God to go before them. Their trust in God went beyond words; they had to demonstrate that trust on the battlefield. That trust was seen in fighting an army twice their size. But God was with them, and He wanted them to totally depend on Him as they faced this bigger-than-life challenge.

Their trust was in God, but they still had their part to play. They had to go to battle in order to secure the victory. This step of trust and simple obedience led to a glowing defeat of their enemy. This victory was not just over the enemy right in front of them; they also attacked and defeated all those associated with the enemy in "cities" and seized "much plunder." Asa and his army not only won

*When has God
greatly blessed you
through a crisis?*

QUESTION #4

every battle they faced, but their rewards from those battles were enormous. When Asa and his army marched into battle, they trusted God even though they didn't know what the outcome would be.

The Judean army under Asa may have pictured something totally different from what the Lord had planned—but isn't that how God often works? We trust in Him for victory from our challenges and battles, but we assume He will follow the plan we've laid out. However, God's victories often come in unexpected ways. When we give the Lord our battles, challenges, and impossible situations, they become His, and He will give us the victories according to His plans.

Only after God had finished giving them full victory were they allowed to return to Jerusalem and the safety of their homes. When we face challenges and impossible situations, our greatest desire is to stay at home in the safety of our familiar surroundings. But God wants us to face those battles head on. It's only when we face those challenges and battles head on that we can see just how mighty and strong our God is. When He gives us the victory, then and only then can we return home to share the victories God did in our midst.

While God gives the victory, He still expects you to march into the battles with Him by your side. Depend on God's strength and might as you face each challenge. And when God brings the victories, let others know about it. Share your victories. With your words and by your example, be an encouragement to others as they face their own challenges and battles.



How has God used our group to help you during challenging times?

QUESTION #5

LIVE IT OUT

How will you depend on God to be greater than any challenge you face? Choose one of the following applications:

- ▶ **Share.** Talk with your group about a challenge you are facing that, from your perspective, is an impossible challenge. Ask them to pray with you regarding that situation.
- ▶ **Invite.** Ask someone else to walk alongside you in a difficulty you're facing. Invite this person to "check in" with you regularly and encourage your continued trust in God.
- ▶ **Retreat.** Take some dedicated time this week to have a personal prayer retreat. Get away from any distractions. Leave your cell phone in your car. Spend a few hours—or a full day—in dedicated prayer about the challenges you are facing.



We all face multiple challenges in a given week. If we're not careful, we'll try to carry the burden of those challenges all on our own shoulders. But it's good to be reminded that we have a God who will be there for us to see us through.

My thoughts