

But Our Eyes Are Upon You (A Lesson in Family Unity)

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By Kim Butts

One major spiritual step every family must take is to obey Jesus' call for unity: *"May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that You sent Me and have loved them even as You have loved Me"* (John 17:23). In order to become one as a family, it is important to seek God's heart in the relationship of prayer. It is in praying with and for one another while listening to the voice of the Father that agreement and harmony is possible.

Jesus clearly taught that the Holy Spirit teaches, as the Lord directs: *"But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you"* (John 14:26). When your family learns to discern the voice of God together, He will bring wisdom, direction, confirmation, healing, forgiveness, power and purpose into your day-to-day relationships and ministry so that He will receive honor and glory through your unity of heart. There are many times when it is difficult to know what to do in certain situations, and how we are to respond in times of challenge or adversity. It is during such times that prayer must always be our first response as a family. An excellent and clear example of a leader who called families to unite together in prayer, can be

found in the book of 2 Chronicles.

Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, had set his heart on seeking God: *"His heart was devoted to the ways of the Lord..."* (2 Chronicles 17:6). Although he made some serious mistakes during his reign of twenty-five years, he was considered to be a good king. He personally went out among the people in the areas surrounding Jerusalem and *"...turned them back to the Lord, the God of their fathers"* (2 Chronicles 19:4). He appointed judges and admonished them to consider carefully what they did as they were judging for the Lord, who would be with them whenever they issued a verdict. Jehoshaphat also appointed Levites, priests and heads of Israelite families to administer the law of the Lord and settle disputes. He told them, *"You must serve faithfully and wholeheartedly in the fear of the Lord"* (2 Chronicles 19:9). Jehoshaphat's kingdom prospered, and he had great wealth. He was a very busy man, as you can tell; however, he loved the Lord his God with passion and devotion and did not neglect any opportunity to point his people toward true love, obedience and commitment to the King of kings.

There came a day, however, when the Moabites and Ammonites came to make war upon Jehoshaphat. When he heard the news that a "vast army" was coming against him from the other side of the Dead Sea, his first response was to seek the face of God: *"Alarmed, Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the LORD, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah. The people of Judah came together to seek help from the Lord; Indeed, they came from every town in Judah to seek him"* (2 Chronicles 20:3-4). Most powerful leaders would take charge and give orders to build up defenses and prepare for physical battle with the approaching enemy. Instead, this godly king went immediately to God in prayer and then called all of the people in his kingdom to come together to pray, from the youngest to the oldest. As *"all the men of Judah, with their wives and children and little ones stood there before the Lord"* (2

Chronicles 20:13), Jehoshaphat prayed a great prayer of faith ending with this powerful, yet humble statement, *"We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon You"* (2 Chronicles 20:12). Has your family ever faced a situation in which you didn't know what to do? Did you try to figure it out in your own strength, or did you seek the Lord's help?

There are several important lessons to learn from King Jehoshaphat which can be applied to the life of a family dealing with uncertain or overwhelming situations. Look and see what he did to bring about unity in his people as they sought the Lord together in prayer:

Prayer was Jehoshaphat's first response: *"Alarmed, Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the Lord and he proclaimed a fast for all of Judah"* (2 Chronicles 20:3). Note that prayer was his first reaction and not his last resort.

He called the family to join him in prayer: Jehoshaphat called all of Judah to come together to seek help from the Lord. He had an intergenerational prayer meeting as everyone stood before the Lord in unity. Jehoshaphat didn't excuse the youth or younger children to another meeting or to a back room to wait until the adults were done with the work of prayer. He knew that God's call to prayer is issued to everyone – from youngest to oldest: *"All the men of Judah, with their wives and children and little ones, stood there before the Lord"* (2 Chronicles 20:13).

He set an example: Jehoshaphat's leadership left no doubt that he would cry out to the Lord no matter what the circumstance, and have faith that He would hear and save them! *"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"* (2 Chronicles 20:9).

He had humility to know that it would be God's power and not

his own: Jehoshaphat and his people stood before the Lord in complete humility... *"For we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon You"* (2 Chronicles 20:12). He didn't try to pretend that he had the answer for the problem, or that he could fix it for them. He didn't want his people to depend upon his wisdom, but upon God's!

After Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah prayed, the Spirit of the Lord came upon a Levite in the assembly who 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'"* (2 Chronicles 20:15). As the people stood before God, they heard the Lord's answer through the lips of one in their midst. Is your family listening to hear the voice of God speak through His Word, through His Spirit, through His people, or however else He chooses? Your family should always be prepared to hear the voice of your Shepherd.

We should not be afraid or discouraged because of the vast armies (situations, etc. that happen in our lives). The battle is not ours – it's God's! What a reassurance! Our job is simply to give up control of the battle to God – not to be afraid or discouraged. Is there a battle you are facing? Are you afraid or discouraged? Give your circumstances to the One who can defeat the enemy on your behalf!

It takes humility to let go and not fight in our own strength. We need to recognize that God's strength is so much greater than our own. The Levite continued, saying, *"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 and face them tomorrow, and the Lord will be with you"* (2 Chronicles 20:17). Prepare your family to never be afraid or discouraged. We are to take up our positions (perhaps a

posture of prayer) and stand firm and then see the deliverance the Lord will give us.

The response to God's promised deliverance was praise, worship and thanksgiving: *"Jehoshaphat bowed with his face to the ground, and all the people of Judah and Jerusalem fell down in worship before the Lord"* (2 Chronicles 20:18).

The next morning, bolstered by the fresh, exciting word from the Lord, Jehoshaphat stood and said, *"Have faith in the Lord your God and you will be upheld; have faith in His prophets and you will be successful"* (2 Chronicles 20:20). He *"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!'"* (2 Chronicles 20:21). Obviously, Jehoshaphat had done some thinking in the night because he appointed a choir to praise God, and to walk out in front of the army which was simply going to take up its position but not have need to fight – FAITH! Can you rally the troops at your house in such a manner? Begin to consider how your family will respond if God does something that is outside what you expect. Will you be so in tune with His Spirit that you are able to discern His voice and know His plans?

As the army of Jehoshaphat began to obediently worship the Lord, God defeated their enemies: *"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"* (2 Chronicles 20:22). Are you a family of worshipers? Would you like to see God respond as you honor Him? *"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. And the kingdom of Jehoshaphat was at peace, for his God had given him rest on every side"* (2 Chronicles 20:29-30). Others who saw what the Lord had done for the people of Judah now had a healthy respect for their God! Do others know what the Lord has done for your family?

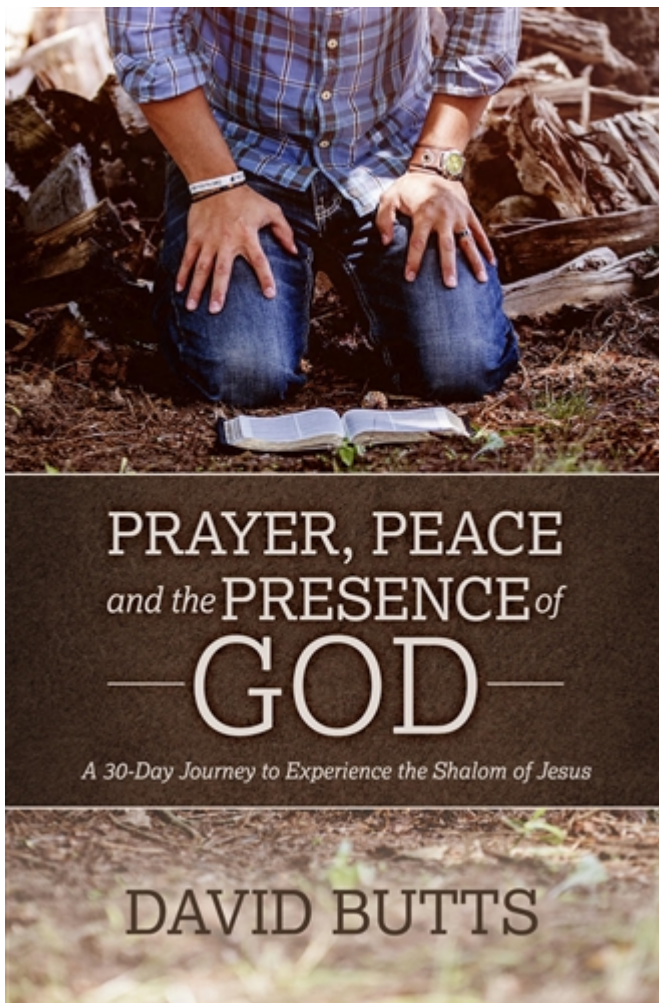
Does your family experience rest on every side because you have obediently done what is right in the eyes of the Lord?

In summary, King Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah have set an example of unity before us. He recognized the danger; he didn't try to figure out what to do in his own flesh; he sought the Lord in prayer because he knew the One who was faithful would take care of them; he called all of his people from youngest to oldest to come together to pray; he heard from the Lord because they humbled themselves before Him and were listening and waiting upon Him; he believed that the Lord would do what He said He would do; he obediently followed His instructions; he received the victory; he gave the Lord thanks with rejoicing and worship; he demonstrated the power of God to others through their great faith; he experienced rest on every side.

Parents – you are the spiritual directors of your homes. You do not have to have every answer. What you need to do is seek the face of the One who does! Jesus gave us two commandments: love God, and love others. Every other instruction He gives us in His Word falls into one of those two categories. If we love Him, we will seek His face in prayer – it is how we establish, grow and maintain an ongoing relationship with Him. As we begin to hear His voice and follow Him obediently, we can have faith in His ability to handle every circumstance in our lives and in the lives of our families. The power is not in us, it's in Him. If our eyes are upon ourselves, we will fail, but when our eyes are upon Him, He will fight for us, and we will have the victory that will honor Him the most.

We must give Him praise through worship and thanksgiving – even in advance of the answer to our prayer – even if we are unable to see His hand at work in this lifetime. Others will be drawn to the light of Jesus Christ because of what the Lord has done in our lives, advancing the kingdom! And, we will have peace and rest on every side – even in the midst of difficulty. Seek His face together as a family, united in the

bond of love in Jesus Christ, and watch Him work in and through your circumstances to bring glory to the Lord God Almighty!



PRAYER, PEACE, and the PRESENCE of GOD by David Butts

As believers, we are supposed to walk in the peace of Christ, yet we all have stressful issues and circumstances that rob us of this peace. Subtitled “A 30-Day Journey to Experience the Shalom of Jesus,” *Prayer, Peace and the Presence of God* powerfully encourages the reader on how to hold onto that peace in any circumstance.

The author, David Butts (1953-2022), started writing this book and 10 days into it he got word that he was in stage 4 with a rare form of lymphoma. God allowed him to live in a greater way for five additional years of full-strength ministry. Dave has challenged readers in *Prayer, Peace and the Presence of God* to seek after His best life, no matter what it holds.

His 30-day devotional will encourage, inspire and challenge you that you, too, can experience and walk in the peace of Jesus no matter what circumstances you are walking through.

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