

# The Books of 1 and 2 Chronicles, Teacher's Guide

## Lesson 17: Jehoshaphat's Reign and Reforms

### 2 Chronicles 17:1-20:37

#### Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

Doctrinally, this lesson establishes that reformation among God's people is built on His word, not on human enthusiasm. Jehoshaphat's first reform was a teaching campaign, and his great deliverance came when the nation submitted to God's promise and acted on it. The teacher should hold up the authority of Scripture as the engine of renewal, the seriousness of unequal alliances with those who hate the LORD (a principle the New Testament carries forward in 2 Corinthians 6:14 without binding Old Covenant Israel's specific practices on us), and the providence of God who fights for His people. Be careful to keep "the battle is not yours but God's" from becoming an excuse for passivity, since Judah still marched, stood, and sang.

But this passage is not finally about ancient battles. It is about the anxious heart sitting in your class on Sunday morning. Every person there is carrying some coalition marching toward them, a diagnosis, a wayward child, a failing marriage, a fear they have told no one. The aim is to move them from frantic self-reliance to Jehoshaphat's prayer and Jehoshaphat's choir, to a faith that is fed and corrected by God's word and that can sing before the victory is in sight. Press them gently to name their own compromising alliances and their own crisis, so that trust in God becomes specific and lived rather than admired from a distance.

#### Question 1

##### Student Question:

*Jehoshaphat sent officials, Levites, and priests throughout Judah to teach from the Book of the Law (17:7-9), and the result was a strengthened nation. What does this reveal about the place of God's word in any genuine reformation among His people?*

#### Commentary and Teaching Notes

Chronicles introduces Jehoshaphat as a king who walked in the early ways of his father and sought the God of his father rather than the Baals (17:3-4). The Chronicler is writing to the returned exiles, and his great theme is that seeking the LORD brings strength while forsaking Him brings ruin. Jehoshaphat is presented as a model of seeking, and the immediate fruit is that the LORD established the kingdom in his hand and gave him riches and honor (17:5).

The decisive reform comes in 17:7-9. In the third year Jehoshaphat sends princes, Levites, and priests on a teaching circuit through the cities of Judah, and they teach having the Book of the Law of the LORD with them. This is remarkable. The renewal of the nation is grounded in the

systematic, public teaching of God's written word to ordinary people in their own towns. Strength followed teaching, not the other way around.

Notice the order of events. The teaching campaign (17:7-9) precedes the description of Jehoshaphat's military strength and the fear of the LORD that fell on surrounding nations (17:10-19). Chronicles is making a theological point about cause and effect: a people grounded in God's word becomes a people God blesses and protects. This is the principle the teacher should lift up for the class.

Apply this without anachronism. We do not bind the Book of the Law of Moses on Christians, but the underlying truth holds and is reaffirmed in the New Testament: spiritual life and reformation come through God's word (Romans 10:17; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Acts 20:32). A congregation grows strong the same way Judah did, by hearing and submitting to Scripture, not by programs, personalities, or enthusiasm alone.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- The authority and power of God's written word as the foundation of all genuine renewal.
- Seeking God versus forsaking Him as the great dividing line in Chronicles and in life.
- Teaching as the engine of reformation, not entertainment or human charisma.
- Strength and blessing follow faithfulness to God's word, not the reverse.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- If a stranger watched our congregation for a month, would they conclude that God's word is what makes us tick? Why or why not?
- What would a Jehoshaphat-style teaching campaign look like in our community today?
- How do we tell the difference between renewal built on God's word and excitement built on personality?

### **Question 2**

#### **Student Question:**

*Where in your own life is there a gap between what you know about God and what you have actually let His word teach and change in you?*

### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

Jehoshaphat shows that it is possible to do great public good while still leaving private corners unsundered. He sent the Book of the Law to others, yet later we will see him entangled with Ahab. The gap between knowing and being changed is a real and dangerous thing.

This question presses the student toward honesty. Many believers can quote Scripture they have never actually obeyed. James warns against being a hearer who is not a doer, deceiving

himself (James 1:22–25). The aim is to surface specific areas where knowledge has not become transformation.

Encourage the class to think concretely. It is one thing to affirm that we should forgive; it is another to forgive the person whose name still tightens our chest. The Book of the Law was meant to be lived in the streets of every town, not admired in the palace.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- The difference between hearing God's word and being formed by it.
- Self-deception in the believer who knows much but obeys little.
- Private surrender lagging behind public reputation.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- What is one biblical truth you have known for years but only recently begun to obey?
- Where is the widest gap in your life between your theology and your habits?
- How can a class like this help each other close the gap, not just admire the truth?

### **Question 3**

#### **Student Question:**

*The prophet Jehu confronted Jehoshaphat with, "should you help the wicked and love those who hate the LORD?" (19:2). What does Scripture teach about the spiritual danger of binding ourselves to those who oppose God?*

#### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

After the great deliverance from Aram, Jehoshaphat returns home and the seer Jehu meets him with a stinging rebuke: should you help the wicked and love those who hate the LORD? Because of this, wrath has gone out against you from the LORD (19:2). The alliance with Ahab in chapter 18, sealed by a marriage and a shared battle, nearly cost Jehoshaphat his life.

The Chronicler is unsparing about the danger of binding oneself to the enemies of God. Ahab consulted four hundred prophets who told him what he wanted to hear, while Micaiah alone spoke God's truth and was imprisoned for it (18:4–27). Jehoshaphat went along, and only God's mercy spared him when the disguised Ahab was struck by a random arrow.

The New Testament carries this principle forward. Paul warns, do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers, asking what fellowship light has with darkness (2 Corinthians 6:14–16). Bad company corrupts good morals (1 Corinthians 15:33). The teacher should present this carefully: we are to love and seek the lost, but we must not bind ourselves in covenant partnerships that pull us toward compromise.

Be precise on the doctrine here. This is not a call to monastic isolation or to refuse all contact with unbelievers, which Paul explicitly rejects (1 Corinthians 5:9–10). It is a warning against entangling alliances, the marriage, the partnership, the deep loyalty, that gradually reshapes our allegiance away from the LORD.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- The spiritual peril of binding alliances with those who oppose God.
- Loving the lost while refusing entangling partnerships that compromise faith.
- The danger of surrounding ourselves with voices that tell us what we want to hear.
- God's mercy that warns and disciplines those He loves.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- What is the difference between evangelistic friendship with unbelievers and an entangling alliance?
- Whose voice in your life tends to tell you only what you want to hear?
- How does God use a rebuke like Jehu's as an act of mercy rather than rejection?

### **Question 4**

#### **Student Question:**

*Think of a relationship, partnership, or alliance in your life that quietly pulls you toward compromise. What is it costing you, and what would faithfulness require?*

#### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

This question moves the rebuke of Jehu from Jehoshaphat's life into the student's. Almost everyone has a relationship, partnership, or alliance that quietly tilts them toward compromise: a business arrangement, a romance with someone indifferent to Christ, a friendship that always seems to lower the bar.

The aim is not to make the class suspicious of all relationships but to help them name the specific tie that is costing them spiritually. Jehoshaphat's alliance cost him nearly his life and brought wrath from the LORD; our compromises rarely come without cost either.

Faithfulness may require hard conversations, renegotiated boundaries, or in some cases ending an entanglement. The teacher should let this land with honesty and grace, remembering that the goal is the student's wholehearted devotion to the Lord.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- Naming the specific relationships that pull us toward compromise.
- Counting the spiritual cost of entangling alliances.
- The courage faithfulness sometimes requires in our relationships.

### Discussion Prompts

- What relationship in your life most consistently pulls you away from your devotion to Christ?
- What would faithfulness practically require of you regarding that relationship?
- How can the church support someone trying to untangle from a compromising alliance?

### Question 5

#### Student Question:

*When Jehoshaphat appointed judges he charged them to judge not for man but for the LORD, who shows no partiality and takes no bribe (19:5–7). What does this teach us about the character of God and the standard for those who lead and decide among His people?*

#### Commentary and Teaching Notes

Jehoshaphat's reforms continued with the appointment of judges throughout the fortified cities of Judah (19:5–7). His charge to them is one of the great statements on godly leadership: consider what you do, for you judge not for man but for the LORD, who is with you in the judgment. Let the fear of the LORD be upon you.

He grounds judicial integrity in the character of God: there is no injustice with the LORD our God, no partiality, and no taking of bribes (19:7). Because God is just and impartial, those who judge in His name must be too. The standard for human leadership is the nature of God Himself.

Jehoshaphat also set up a higher court in Jerusalem of Levites, priests, and heads of families, with Amariah over religious matters and Zebadiah over royal matters (19:8–11). The Chronicler shows a kingdom ordered under God, with leaders charged to act faithfully and wholeheartedly in the fear of the LORD.

For the church, the principle endures. Those entrusted with decisions, elders, teachers, parents, employers, are to remember they serve and answer to God, not merely to people. Impartiality, integrity, and the fear of the LORD are the marks of leadership patterned after God's own character (Acts 10:34–35; Romans 2:11; 1 Peter 1:17).

#### Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's impartiality and justice as the standard for all who lead and decide.
- Leadership as service rendered ultimately to God, not to men.
- The fear of the LORD as the foundation of integrity.
- Ordered, accountable leadership among God's people.

### Discussion Prompts

- How does remembering that we serve God change the way we make decisions over others?

- Where is partiality most subtly tempting in positions of responsibility?
- What does the fear of the LORD look like in everyday leadership at home or work?

## Question 6

### Student Question:

*In the responsibilities God has given you, whether at work, at home, or in the church, where are you most tempted toward partiality or self-interest rather than the fear of the LORD?*

### Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question turns the charge to the judges toward the student's own sphere of responsibility. Everyone judges and decides somewhere: parents over children, supervisors over employees, teachers over classes, friends over one another's reputations.

Partiality and self-interest creep in quietly. We favor those who can help us, overlook the faults of those we like, and lean toward the decision that costs us least. Jehoshaphat's words confront all of that: judge for the LORD, with His impartiality.

Help the class identify the specific place where they are most tempted to decide for themselves rather than in the fear of the LORD, and to imagine what impartial, God-fearing faithfulness would look like there this week.

### Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Recognizing the everyday arenas where we hold authority over others.
- Subtle partiality and self-interest in our decisions.
- Bringing the fear of the LORD into ordinary responsibility.

### Discussion Prompts

- Over whom do you hold some kind of authority or influence right now?
- Where are you most tempted toward partiality or self-protection in those roles?
- What would it look like to decide one pending matter purely in the fear of the LORD?

## Question 7

### Student Question:

*Facing a vast army, Jehoshaphat fasted, gathered the nation, and prayed, "we are powerless, but our eyes are on you" (20:12). What does this scene teach about how God's people are meant to meet overwhelming trouble?*

### Commentary and Teaching Notes

Chapter 20 opens with a crisis: a vast multitude of Moabites, Ammonites, and others is coming against Judah. Jehoshaphat is afraid, and Chronicles does not hide it. But watch what fear drives him to do: he sets himself to seek the LORD and proclaims a fast throughout all Judah (20:3).

The whole nation gathers at the house of God, men, women, and little ones, and Jehoshaphat prays one of the most honest prayers in Scripture (20:5–12). He rehearses God's promises, acknowledges his own helplessness, and ends, we are powerless against this great multitude, nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are upon you.

This is the posture God's people are meant to take in overwhelming trouble: not denial, not frantic self-reliance, but corporate, humble, word-saturated dependence. Jehoshaphat prays Scripture back to God, recalling the promises to Abraham and the temple Solomon built as a place where the people could cry out in distress.

The teacher should highlight that the nation came together. This was not a private spirituality but the gathered people of God seeking Him as one. It points toward the church gathering to pray, to be taught, and to lean on God together in trial (Acts 4:23–31; Hebrews 10:24–25).

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- Honest fear that drives us toward God rather than away from Him.
- Corporate, gathered dependence on God in crisis.
- Praying God's own promises and word back to Him.
- Admitting helplessness as the doorway to faith.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- What does it tell you that Chronicles admits Jehoshaphat was afraid before he prayed?
- When trouble comes, do you instinctively gather with God's people or isolate yourself?
- How can praying Scripture back to God reshape the way you handle a crisis?

### **Question 8**

#### **Student Question:**

*What does your calendar and your bank account reveal about whether you actually believe the battles you face are ultimately God's and not your own?*

### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

This question asks the student to audit where their trust actually lies. Jesus taught that where our treasure is, there our heart will be also (Matthew 6:21). Our calendars and bank accounts are honest witnesses to what we believe is ultimately in our hands.

If we truly believe the battle is God's, it will show in how we spend, how we worry, how we rest, and how much of our striving is really an attempt to control outcomes God has promised to carry.

Be pastoral here. The point is not to shame the anxious but to invite them to bring their real fears, finances, and schedules under the lordship of the God who fights for His people. Trust is not the absence of action but action that flows from rested confidence in God.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- Calendar and finances as honest evidence of where we trust.
- The difference between God-confident action and anxious control.
- Bringing our real fears under the lordship of God.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- What does your calendar reveal about what you believe you must carry alone?
- Where does anxiety most often masquerade as responsibility in your life?
- What is one worry you could consciously hand to God as His battle this week?

### **Question 9**

#### **Student Question:**

*God answered, "the battle is not yours but God's," and Judah went to the field with singers praising before the army, and the LORD set ambushes against the enemy (20:15–22). How do we hold together the truth that the victory is God's with the reality that Judah still had to march out, stand, and sing in faith, and what does this teach us about trusting God in crisis while His word renews us?*

### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

Here is the heaviest doctrinal weight of the lesson. God answers through Jahaziel the Levite: do not be afraid or dismayed at this great multitude, for the battle is not yours but God's (20:15). Yet the very next instructions tell Judah to go down against them, to take their positions, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD (20:16–17). The victory is wholly God's, and Judah must still march out and stand.

This is the great biblical tension between God's sovereign work and human faith-filled action, and Chronicles holds them together perfectly. God will fight, but Judah must show up, take their stand, and trust. Faith is not passive; it is active reliance. The people did not win the battle by their swords, but they did have to march to the field, hold their ground, and believe the promise.

Then comes the astonishing detail: Jehoshaphat appointed singers to go out before the army, praising the LORD and saying, give thanks to the LORD, for His mercy endures forever (20:21).

They sang before there was anything to celebrate. They praised on the strength of God's word alone, and as they began to sing, the LORD set ambushes and the enemy destroyed itself (20:22–24). Worship marched ahead of the victory.

Tie this back to the renewing power of God's word, the lesson's central thread. Judah could stand and sing because they had a promise from God to stand on. The nation that had been taught the Book of the Law (17:7–9) was now a nation that could trust the word of the LORD in the face of an army. Reformation by the word produced people who could rest in the word in crisis.

Guard the doctrine carefully. This text is not a formula guaranteeing earthly victory whenever we pray and sing; it is a revelation of God's character and faithfulness to His covenant people. For the Christian, the ultimate battle is already won in Christ, who triumphed over sin and death (Colossians 2:15; 1 Corinthians 15:57). We march, we stand, we sing in faith, not because we control the outcome but because the One who does has proven faithful, and His word renews and sustains us.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- The battle belongs to God, yet His people must still march, stand, and trust.
- Faith as active reliance, not passive waiting.
- Worship that praises God on the strength of His word before the victory is seen.
- God's word as the ground of trust in overwhelming crisis.
- Avoiding a health-and-victory formula; this reveals God's faithful character, not a guarantee.
- The ultimate victory already won for the Christian in Christ over sin and death.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- How do you hold together the truth that the battle is God's with the fact that Judah still had to march and stand?
- What does it mean to praise God before you see the outcome, as Judah's singers did?
- How does being grounded in God's word make it possible to trust Him in a crisis?

### **Question 10**

#### **Student Question:**

*Looking back across Jehoshaphat's whole reign, his reforms, his failures, and his great deliverance, name one specific way the Lord is using this passage to form trust and wholehearted worship in you right now.*

### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

This capstone asks the student to look back across the whole sweep of Jehoshaphat's reign: the teaching campaign, the strength that followed, the compromising alliance and its rebuke, the

appointment of just judges, the terrifying crisis, the honest prayer, and the singing army. It is a portrait of a real man, flawed and faithful, learning to trust.

The chapter ends with a sober reminder that even after such deliverance, Jehoshaphat again allied himself with wicked Ahaziah in a shipping venture that God wrecked (20:35–37). The cycles of reform and compromise continue to the end. This realism is meant to encourage, not discourage: God works through imperfect people who keep returning to Him.

Invite each student to name one specific way the Lord is using this passage to grow their trust and their wholehearted worship, whether through His word, through a relationship that needs untangling, or through a crisis that needs to be handed back to God as His battle.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- The realistic cycles of reform and compromise in a faithful but flawed life.
- God's patient work through imperfect people who keep returning to Him.
- Moving from admiring trust to practicing it in one concrete area.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- Which moment in Jehoshaphat's reign most mirrors where you are right now?
- What is the one specific area of trust the Lord is pressing on through this lesson?
- How will you let God's word renew that area in the coming week?