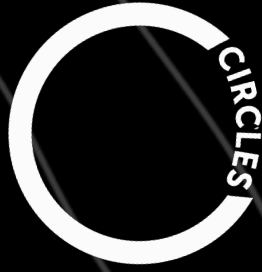


**LESSONS FROM
SUPPORTING CHARACTERS
IN SCRIPTURE**



CIRCLE 01/04: **HUR: THE SUPPORTING ROLE**

Every hero needs a sidekick. Batman would mentally snap without Robin. Frodo would not have made it to Mordor without Sam. Simba would not have become a leader without Timon and Pumbaa. We should give more love to the sidekicks!

In film and theater, sidekicks fall into a broader category called supporting roles. Simply put, they support the main character without stealing the spotlight. Whether they provide guidance, grant wishes, or offer comedic relief, supporting roles are pivotal to the plot as they quietly move the storyline forward. Their parts may be small, but their positions are significant.

Throughout my teenage years, theater was my extracurricular activity of choice. While I dreamed of being the star, I usually landed a supporting role instead. It didn't stop me from auditioning every single semester. Despite my best efforts, I never landed the lead. I never cringed through a grand finale kiss. I never was the last to bow. Devoted fans never threw flowers at my feet. I had a different part to play. I was the one who would get hurt for a laugh, cause drama, or backstab the main character. While it wasn't as glamorous, it was certainly fun. Without my part, the plays would have fallen flat as a pancake. It took a few years, but I learned to love my position as a supporting role.

There is an amazing story in the Bible about two supporting characters. They didn't just figuratively support the main character; they literally did it. Let's examine an Old Testament story where Moses needed support in order to succeed.

READ: Exodus 17:8-13

The Amalekites came and attacked the Israelites at Rephidim. Moses said to Joshua, "Choose some of our men and go out to fight the Amalekites. Tomorrow I will stand on top of the hill with the staff of God in my hands." So Joshua fought the Amalekites as Moses had ordered, and Moses, Aaron and Hur went to the top of the hill. As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning. When Moses' hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held his hands up—one on one side, one on the other—so that his hands remained steady till sunset. So Joshua overcame the Amalekite army with the sword.

The Amalekites had a long-standing grudge against the Israelites. They were descendants of Esau, the forsaken son of Isaac, who was murdered by one of his own nephews. The Amalekites didn't just want to defeat the Hebrews; they wanted vengeance. Moses, the prolific leader who delivered Israel from slavery, knew that their protection had to be in God's hands. The Israelite army wasn't prepared, emotions were boiling over, and too many lives were at stake. Israel needed to enter this battle with God as their Commander in Chief.

The troops gathered and leaned in to listen for Moses's marching orders. Was he going to talk strategy? Was there a new recruit? Was he going to give them grenades? The suspense was tense. Moses announced, "I will stand on top of the hill with the staff of God in my hands." His plan wasn't about force, rather it was about faith. He didn't take the position of a warrior, but of a worshipper. Perched atop a nearby hill, he held his arms up in worship with his staff in his hands.

Moses held up his hands in premature victory, but his forearms began to shake and his fingers became numb. When his arms slipped down, something scary happened. Their army started to lose the battle. When his arms were raised, they gained ground. How was he going to keep this up? Luckily, he was not alone. Two men, Aaron and Hur, held onto his extended arms. This is the very definition of a supporting role. They literally held him up in a time of weakness.

Your Success May Be Dependent on the Support of Others

Israel saw a victory with the help of God, Joshua, Moses, Aaron, and Hur. It was a team effort. Hur is only mentioned twice in the entire Bible. Regardless, his role is significant. Israel's success was a direct result of Hur's support. Moses was weak, so his friends took action to hold him up.

Success is almost impossible without support. You need mentors, friends, and family to cheer you on and hold you up. Trying to go through life without support is like trying to win a 5-1 basketball game. Sure, it may be possible, but it's not probable. You need people on your team. You need a mentor to coach you. You need someone to give you water. An African proverb reminds us, "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."

As you advance into whatever God has for you, move forward together. Do you want to succeed in education? Study in groups. Do you want to go far in athletics? Be a good team player. Do you want to turn your dream into reality? Ask for help along the way. Do you want to be healthy spiritually? Find a good small group. If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.

This leads us to two simple, practical steps as we move forward.

You Should Find Support for Yourself

Thriving is hard when you don't feel supported, isn't it? Focus on filling your life with people who support you. Like Moses, you need friends who will stand by your side. When things are rough, they'll hold you up.

You Should Support Others

While you need people like Aaron and Hur in your life, you also need to be like Aaron and Hur for others. Don't just seek support; strive to show support. God-honoring friendship should never be one sided. Imagine a seesaw. There is a healthy balance required if you want to have fun. If you're sitting alone, you stay put. If you refuse to push up, then you stay on the ground. If you abandon your partner, then they plummet onto the rocks. Mutual support requires shared responsibility.

When Jesus was preaching about community he said, "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:31). Treat others the way you want to be treated. That goes further than just being nice. Celebrate others the way you want to be celebrated. Encourage others the way you want to be encouraged. Pray for others the way you want to be prayed for. Bless others the way you want to be blessed. Support others the way you want to be supported.

TALK IT OUT

Go through these questions with your circle. Be honest. Be open. Talk through the tough stuff.

Ice Breaker: Introduce yourself and share this week's highs and lows (the best part of your week and the lowest part of your week).

Q1: What role did Hur play in the Israelite's victory over the Amalekites?

Q2: What does this story teach you about the importance of having a support system in your life/supporting others?

Q3: How can you support your friends well?

Q4: How can you ask your friends for support when you need help?

Q5: Think of one friend you'd like to help this week. How can you be there for them?

READING PLAN

READ THESE PASSAGES IN ORDER EVERY DAY

Obadiah 1:4

Obadiah 1:15

Joel 2:13

Joel 2:28

Jonah 2:2

Joel 31:6

Jonah 4:2

Do the following with each passage:

ASK– God to connect with you here. In prayer, start by slowing down and inviting God to be present. Begin with focus and openness to see what God has for you today.

READ– the selected section of Scripture slowly. Take note of the words and phrases that intrigue you, reading them a second time if necessary.

REFLECT– on what grabs you. How does this passage personally relate to your own life and experiences?

RESPOND– to the Scripture. Speak directly to God about what's on your mind and heart. Look for ways to live out what you've uncovered.

CIRCLE 02/04: JETHRO: THE WISE FRIEND

If you asked everyone in your church to make a list of the most famous Bible stories, I am sure that you would see some common themes. Most lists would include the plagues of Egypt, the Passover, the parting of the red sea, and the Ten Commandments. What do all of these have in common? Moses.

Moses, the central figure in the Torah, carried celebrity status far before celebrities even existed. If People Magazine was around back then, you better believe Moses would have been on the cover. He led the nation of Israel out of slavery and towards the Promised Land. He served his people with a complex mixture of humility and authority, making him the perfect figurehead of the Jewish faith. He was a spiritual superstar who, by God's power, experienced success at almost everything he set out to do. That makes it sound like Moses could do it all, but that wasn't the case.

READ: Exodus 18:5

Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, together with Moses' sons and wife, came to him in the wilderness, where he was camped near the mountain of God.

In Exodus 18, Moses was reflecting on a long string of successes. While you would think he'd be on cloud nine, the Bible implies that he was burned out. I imagine the guy could hardly catch his breath. The nation needed leading, their sheep needed grooming, fruits needed harvesting, and his army needed commanding.

Not to mention, people were nagging him about this whole Promised Land thing since they still hadn't seen it. The prophet's promise of a "land of milk and honey" was looking a lot more like a "land of desert and snakes." Moses just couldn't catch a break. Exhausted, I imagine he collapsed onto a sleeping bag in his tent. He was just about to drift off for a power nap when a messenger announced that his father-in-law and family were coming to visit him (Exodus 18:5).

Moses stumbled out of his tent and embraced Jethro, his father-in-law, with a bear hug and a kiss. (Exodus 18:7). Of all the miracles of Moses, many people joke that his relationship with his in-laws is near the top. Moses took Jethro on a little tour of their camp and city. Every turn revealed responsibility after responsibility. While Moses's success was overwhelming, so was the problem of his overworking. This was particularly evident the following day when Jethro watched Moses serve as the sole judge from sunrise until sunset (Exodus 18:13). Jethro shared his concerns.

READ: Exodus 18:14; 19-22

When his father-in-law saw all that Moses was doing for the people, he said, "What is this you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit as judge, while all these people stand around you from morning till evening?" I will give you some advice. [...] Select capable men from all the people—men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain—and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. Have them serve as judges for the people at all times, but have them bring every

difficult case to you; the simple cases they can decide themselves. That will make your load lighter.

Jethro challenged the most powerful man in the ancient world. He didn't beat around the bush. He didn't send a passive-aggressive email. He just told it like it was, "Moses, you are working yourself to death. Get some help." Simple as that. While Jethro is merely a supporting role, his input led to a more significant impact. Ultimately, Israel's leadership flourished, Moses was able to focus on what really mattered, and the people received improved support from their government. The catalyst for all this change was a little advice from an old man. This short story gives us three life lessons from Jethro.

Don't Do Life Alone

Jethro said, "What you are doing is not good. The work is too heavy for you, you cannot handle it alone" (Exodus 18:17-18). Moses was trying to do everything for everyone, but his efforts to help were actually causing harm. He was running out of steam. The people were receiving inadequate service. Moses didn't have the bandwidth to focus on big picture leadership.

Jethro's advice for Moses serves as advice for us too. It's not good to do life alone. God doesn't want you to be all things to all people at all times. Rather, He wants you to share the load. Yes, you have responsibilities to others, but you also have a responsibility to take care of yourself. If you are feeling burned out, reach out for help. If you feel like demands are stacking up too high, then ask people to carry it with you. Not only will your life get better, but you will also build stronger friendships, families, and co-working relationships. It's a win-win across the board.

Amazingly, in the next chapter of Exodus, Moses took a vision retreat in the wilderness to hear from God and give his mind a rest. Once he delegated, his spiritual life accelerated. When you focus on sharing the load of life with people around you, it will give you time to focus on what really matters. So what are you waiting for? Ask for help. Find a mentor. Build a team. Share the load of life. You aren't designed to do life alone.

Give People Permission to Correct You

This may seem simple, but it's quite significant. Moses fostered a relationship with Jethro that allowed his Father-In-Law to give him tough advice in the first place. Jethro felt safe and secure to call out a flaw in Moses's life. They built a community of accountability, and it paid off.

First, surround yourself with people who have permission to correct you. Secondly, surround yourself with people who give good advice. Do you have friends who can comfortably call you out? If not, invite someone you trust to do that. If it's been a while since someone offered you advice, then you need to evaluate your relationships. It's probably not that your life was perfect. It's just that no one perceived their permission to correct you. Be sure to build a community of accountability.

Meet Advice With Gratitude, Not an Attitude

Verse 24 says that "Moses listened to his father-in-law and did everything he said." There was no argument. There was no dismissive explanation. Moses simply took the advice. Simple as that. He could have easily ignored his father-in-law's input. After all, things seemed to be going great. Also, what did Jethro know about leading a nomadic nation? There were dozens of reasons to dismiss, devalue, or disagree. However, Moses greeted feedback with open ears and a grateful spirit.

It's easy to meet constructive criticism with clenched fists and a stubborn spirit. "Well, you don't know the half of it," you may scoff. "I am doing the best I can," you may snap. "Who are you to tell me what to do?" you may protest. We can learn a lot from Moses here. He saw wise advice as a gift, not an attack. Fight the urge to become irritated when someone offers you advice. God puts wise people in your life for a reason. Listen to them. Learn from them. You will attain wisdom as you accept advice.

Jethro's story is unlike most of the narrative of Moses. There is no massive miracle. Moses didn't hear a booming voice from heaven. Rather, he heard a soft voice from a wise man. It's not as much of a spectacle, but it's still special. This is an experience you can relate to far more than a thunderous sermon from a burning bush. Intentionally listen for wisdom in your life. Put yourself in a position to receive guidance. From teachers to pastors to friends, give people permission to correct you and meet their advice with gratitude.

If you want to advance in life, you need to take wise advice.

TALK IT OUT

Go through these questions with your circle. Be honest. Be open. Talk through the tough stuff.

Ice Breaker: Introduce yourself and share this week's highs and lows (the best part of your week and the lowest part of your week).

Q1: What role did Jethro play in Moses' success?

Q2: Why is it so important to have people in your life who can give you godly advice?

Q3: How do you typically respond to advice or constructive criticism?

Q4: Who have you given permission to correct you? Why do you respect their advice?

Q5: Do you need more godly guidance in your life? If so, who could you ask to be looking out for you?

READING PLAN

READ THESE PASSAGES IN ORDER EVERY DAY

Amos 3:13-15

Amos 5:14

Amos 5:21-24

Hosea 1:2

Hosea 4:3

Hosea 4:7-10

Hosea 14:1-9

Do the following with each passage:

ASK– God to connect with you here. In prayer, start by slowing down and inviting God to be present. Begin with focus and openness to see what God has for you today.

READ– the selected section of Scripture slowly. Take note of the words and phrases that intrigue you, reading them a second time if necessary.

REFLECT– on what grabs you. How does this passage personally relate to your own life and experiences?

RESPOND– to the Scripture. Speak directly to God about what's on your mind and heart. Look for ways to live out what you've uncovered.

CIRCLE 03/04: **JABEZ: THE LABEL SHREDDER**

Did you know that there are over 300 people named ABCDE in the United States? And that's only one example of crazy baby names. There are thousands of bizarre names that have graced the birth certificates of history. In France, a mother was legally required to change her daughter's name by the court, because they thought the name went against the best interest of the child. What was her name? Nutella. This woman literally hired a lawyer to defend her daughter's right to be named after a hazelnut spread. It gets crazier. New Zealand courts vetoed the names 4Real, Juztice, and Mafia No Fear. However, they allowed a baby boy to carry the name Number 16 Bus Shelter. (I am assuming this is where the little guy was born, but I can not confirm that.)

This thought reminds me of a story. In 1958, Robert Lane named his firstborn son "Winner Lane." A few years later, his second son was born. He looked at the crying baby and thought, "this little infant doesn't really impress me." This prompted him to name him "Loser Lane." The two brothers grew up and went completely opposite directions, but it's probably not what you'd think. Loser went to college, got remarkable grades, and worked his way up the ranks of the NYPD. Loser is a hero. On the flip side, Winner went on to live a life of crime. In and out of jail, he's been charged with larceny, burglary, and resisting arrest. Winner and Loser prove that your label doesn't determine your future.

Names are a fascinating thing. Your assigned name resembles a prophecy, as it carries your parents' hopes, dreams, and aspirations for your life. Whether your name was highlighted from a baby name book or borrowed from your great grandmother, your name is the first building block of your identity. So what happens when your name feels more like a warning label? That's what happened to Jabez, a person who shows up in an often-overlooked section of the Old Testament.

READ: 1 Chronicles 4:9

"Now Jabez was more honorable than his brothers, and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, "Because I bore him in pain."

Jabez's birth name straight-up means pain. Can you imagine carrying that kind of label your entire life? Every time his mother called out for Jabez, she remembered the pain she faced. I imagine the reminder loomed over their home like a storm cloud.

Has that ever happened to you? Has a label been stamped onto your heart? Or a name attached to your identity? Maybe a coach called you a failure. Maybe someone you loved used a hateful name that made your heart shatter. Maybe a giggling group of girls called you ugly. Maybe someone verbally slapped a warning label on your identity due to past mistakes, misfortunes, or missteps. It hurts, doesn't it? We can find hope in the story of Jabez, because his mention prompts a discussion about the power of God.

Jabez's name only appears once in the entire Bible. It's not in one of the exciting parts either; it's in a genealogy. He shows up in one of those exhaustive lists of names you

can't pronounce. Most people would rather read the ingredients list on a shampoo bottle than an ancient genealogy, but here we are studying one.

Jabez plays a quintessential supporting role. You know those names that show up at the end of the movie? That's him! His appearance is short, but it's far from insignificant. Jabez clearly didn't live up to his label of causing others pain, because the mere mention of his name caused the author to pause the lineage passage to teach us a lesson about prayer and a lifestyle of faith.

READ: 1 Chronicles 4:10

"Jabez cried out to the God of Israel, 'Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me, and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain.' And God granted his request."

When the historian who wrote Chronicles scribbled "Jabez," they stopped their train of thought. His name may have meant pain, but his reputation was praise. His example, one that we should all strive to emulate, is one of bold prayer and a blessed life. So, let's examine the Prayer of Jabez line by line. His life gives us a blueprint for a blessing.

"That you would bless me..."

Jabez understood something that we often miss. His blessings were from above. They were not based on luck, genius, personality, or even hard work. If he wanted to be blessed, he needed to go to the source. Yes, every blessing comes from God. Remember that time you laughed so hard your sides hurt? God set that up. Remember that time the autumn leaves looked like a postcard? God did that. Remember that time you had a bad day and your dog cuddled onto your lap to soothe you? God created dogs knowing their capacity for comfort. Every good thing comes from God.

Don't get stuck thinking about material things here. God's blessings are often spiritual. He gives us mercy, a clear mind, a calm spirit, good health, solid relationships, and a secure seat in heaven. Those are some serious blessings. This passage teaches us that it's not bad to ask God for a blessing or breakthrough. God wants you to be filled and fulfilled. Don't be afraid to ask him for a blessing.

"And enlarge my territory..."

This part of this prayer is often hijacked by people preaching prosperity. While there is nothing wrong with a nice car or a big estate, the context suggests that this line is not just about land. It's about legacy. Jabez is praying for God to increase his impact in the world. He didn't want a bigger house; he wanted a bigger heart.

You should pray for the same. Ask for God to put people in your life that you can bless. Pray for God to enlarge your footprint in the world. You will be blown away by the blessings God sets into motion.

“Let your hand be with me...”

Life was full of twists and turns, so Jabez asked for God to be his guide. This part of the prayer shows us the importance of asking God for help. His presence is our source of strength when we struggle or stumble. God's guidance is not just limited to spiritual direction either. Who is the best candidate to help you through friendship drama? The person who created humans. Who is the best person to teach you about compassion and kindness? The Lord of mercy. Where is the best place to find peace? The Comforter.

Every single day, let God lead the way. Whenever you pray, ask for God's guidance.

“Keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain.”

At first glance, this seems like a simple prayer of protection. While that's part of it, there is something more beautiful at play here. Remember what we said about the name of Jabez? It means, "one who causes pain." Look at what Jabez does in this prayer. He asks for God to set him free from the label. This isn't just a prayer for safety; it's a prayer for identity. He asks God to renew his identity to prevent him from living out a label.

What does this look like in your life? You simply acknowledge your label and ask for a new one. With a smile across his face, Jesus will scribble it out and reaffirm the person He created you to be. The prayer is different for everyone, but it could sound like this. "God, I feel stuck. Please help me to break the cycle of sin." "God, I feel like a failure, but please help me discover and redefine success." "Jesus, I am feeling unlovable, please help me grasp the greatness of your love." "God, I feel abandoned, help me experience the warmth of your presence."

When you pray in faith, God doesn't just change your circumstances. He also changes your identity. You will begin to see the labels of life ripped to shreds right before your eyes. Look at the supporting role of Jabez. We can learn a lot from him. Don't be afraid to pray for God to bless you, enlarge your impact, and guide you every step of the way.

When you pray, things change. And when you pray, you change in the process.

TALK IT OUT

Go through these questions with your circle. Be honest. Be open. Talk through the tough stuff.

Ice Breaker: Introduce yourself and share this week's highs and lows (the best part of your week and the lowest part of your week).

Q1: What minor role does Jabez play in the Bible?

Q2: Have you ever been labeled something hurtful?

Q3: How can God help us overcome stereotypes or labels?

Q4: How might God call us to play a bigger role in His plans than we realize?

Q5: What's one thing you can do this week to embrace the labels that God gives you instead of the labels others give you?

READING PLAN

READ THESE PASSAGES IN ORDER EVERY DAY

Micah 2:2

Micah 4:1-5

Micah 6:6-7

Nahum 1:1-12

Habakkuk 2:1

Habakkuk 2:6-7

Habakkuk 2:18-19

Do the following with each passage:

ASK– God to connect with you here. In prayer, start by slowing down and inviting God to be present. Begin with focus and openness to see what God has for you today.

READ– the selected section of Scripture slowly. Take note of the words and phrases that intrigue you, reading them a second time if necessary.

REFLECT– on what grabs you. How does this passage personally relate to your own life and experiences?

RESPOND– to the Scripture. Speak directly to God about what's on your mind and heart. Look for ways to live out what you've uncovered.

CIRCLE 04/04: **JEHOSHAPHAT: THE OVERCOMER**

Some of the most popular names in the world come from the Bible. I am sure you know a David, Daniel, Noah, Mary, or Sarah. You might even know someone named Jesus. When a parent assigns these names to their child, it's a reminder of what God can do through their newborn bundle of joy. That is why Bible names are so common. Their titles are attached to God's power, plan, and purpose for His people.

David was a man after God's own heart.

Mary was granted God's favor.

Daniel was bold in the face of conflict.

Noah brought deliverance to God's people.

When the happy parents writes that name on a birth certificate, they're declaring something over the life of their child.

Do you know anyone named Jehoshaphat? Probably not. That's a shame because this lesser-known ruler did powerful work for God, and serves as an amazing role model for us. He played a supporting role by leading his nation through turmoil and turning all attention toward God. He was a king, but he wanted his people to serve the True King.

King Jehoshaphat was only thirty-five when he sat on Israel's throne. We can infer from the text that he was compassionate and wise beyond his years. Shortly after being crowned, he was ready to get to work. I imagine he went into his first briefing with a big smile on his face and grand plans for helping Israel. Maybe he would build a highway, push for healthcare reform, institute a three-day weekend, or propose an all-inclusive resort by the Dead Sea.

He was optimistic, but the tone at his throne was tense. His general cleared his throat before saying, "A vast army is coming against you from Edom" (2 Chronicles 20:2).

You've got to be kidding me! This guy sat on the throne just in time to hear his nation was going to war with a massive army. There goes his infrastructure plan. Jehoshaphat had to ensure his country wouldn't crumble into a million pieces first.

READ: 2 Chronicles 20:15

"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.'"

I don't know about you, but I would not have taken this news well. Leadership is already scary enough. Imagine leading a nation through a full-fledged war. No thanks. Visions of calamity sent chills down Jehoshaphat's back, but he remained steadfast. He could have snapped. He could have panicked. He could have run for the hills. Jehoshaphat didn't do any of that, though. Cool as a cucumber, he encouraged his nation to turn to God in prayer and fasting. God's voice came to him to say that "the battle is not yours, but God's."

"The battle is not yours, but God's." Write that down. Make it your lock screen. Paint it on your walls. This is a reminder we all need. Whatever battles you are facing, from warfare to worry, the battle belongs to God. Jehoshaphat's leadership gives us a checklist for facing conflict. Here are two steps to ensure you're battle-ready.

Step One: Seek God

Jehoshaphat concluded, "We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on You" (2 Chronicles 20:12). We often assume the best leaders provide quick and firm decisions, especially in times of pressure. That is not the route King Jehoshaphat took. First, he flat out admitted that he had no clue what to do. Second, he called his nation to seek God in prayer and fasting. They didn't know the answers, but they knew where to find them. If they wanted to win, they had to seek wisdom.

Do the same whenever you confront conflict. Don't race to a decision. Don't shoot off a text. Fight your instant urges because they're seldom in your best interest. Wisdom is like a crockpot; it takes time for everything to come together. Whenever you are facing a battle, seek God first. Pray. Meditate. Listen to wise counsel. Write out your thoughts in a journal. Yes, this takes some extra time, but don't all the best things in life?

Step Two: Surrender

Yes, it's counterintuitive. What's your final step to winning a war? Surrender! At face value, this appears to be complete nonsense. You don't win by waving the white flag. You win by fighting, right? Not in God's Kingdom. You don't surrender to your oppressor, but you must surrender to God. You are weak; He is strong. You are small; He is big. You are stuck in one place at one time; He is omnipresent. Trust me, God's a far better battle-fighter than you. Surrender to Him and let him fight the battle for you.

This is easy to say, but difficult to do. Surrender is hard work. That's why so many people exclusively think of the term in a bad light. The criminal surrendered to the cops. The army surrendered to their enemies. Someone surrendered their car to be repossessed.

Surrender is hard — especially in a battle. Why? Because conflict makes control freaks out of all of us. Surrender requires us to relinquish our journey into the unknown. It's so hard that it makes many Christians lie in church. We sing songs about surrender while secretly controlling every aspect of our lives and trying to win every battle on our own.

Surrender is scary, which is why it's important to remind ourselves that victory is on the other side of surrender. It's not just a one-and-done commitment either. We must surrender every single day. What does it look like? Daily, we pray for God to fight our battles, give us peace over uncertainty, and deliver wisdom as we make our decisions. We can be secure in our surrender because we are surrendering to a sovereign God.

When we surrender, God fights for us by proxy. The anonymous author of Hebrews echoes this concept by saying, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?" (Hebrews 13:6)

God loves fighting battles for his people. When you reach out in surrender, Jesus rolls up his sleeves, steps in front of you, and starts swinging. No one can hurt you in the security of authentic surrender to God.

In that passage in Hebrews, the Greek word for helper is "*boētheia*." *Boē* literally means "to shout," and "*theō*" means to run. What does this mean? When you call out for help, God comes running with a shout. He's sprinting and screaming, "I got you, just stay behind me. This is my battle now!" When we surrender, God fights our battles for us. He won't give up, get tired, or get sidetracked. When He's fighting, He's focused.

What are you battling right now? Is it discouragement? Is it loneliness? Is it an addiction? Is it apathy? Is it destructive tendencies? Let's learn a valuable lesson from Jehoshaphat, the supporting character and king. Seek God, then surrender to God. Your *boētheia* will run into the battle for you. Victory is on the other side of surrender.

TALK IT OUT

Go through these questions with your circle. Be honest. Be open. Talk through the tough stuff.

Ice Breaker: Introduce yourself and share this week's highs and lows (the best part of your week and the lowest part of your week).

Q1: What should Jehoshaphat be known for?

Q2: What makes someone a good leader in God's eyes?

Q3: What does it mean to surrender to God?

Q4: What prevents people from surrendering to God?

Q5: What can you do this week to begin giving God more control over your life?

READING PLAN

READ THESE PASSAGES IN ORDER EVERY DAY

Zephaniah 2:1-3

Haggai 1:2-4

Haggai 1:9

Haggai 1:10-15

Haggai 2:7-8

Zechariah 1:17

Zechariah 7:9-14

Do the following with each passage:

ASK– God to connect with you here. In prayer, start by slowing down and inviting God to be present. Begin with focus and openness to see what God has for you today.

READ– the selected section of Scripture slowly. Take note of the words and phrases that intrigue you, reading them a second time if necessary.

REFLECT– on what grabs you. How does this passage personally relate to your own life and experiences?

RESPOND– to the Scripture. Speak directly to God about what's on your mind and heart. Look for ways to live out what you've uncovered.