

What To Do When You Don't Know What To Do

2 Chronicles 20:12

The context of the verse is Jehoshaphat's prayer, as a sense of desperation sets in with enemies coming to surround, and then attempt to destroy, God's people. Jehoshaphat reminds God of His many deliverances of His people in the past, and rejuvenates the faith of God's people by publicly calling on God to protect them. Even so, even though God is listening, Jehoshaphat admits that he does not know what to do.

We have had so many troubles with our house since we bought it 10 years ago. If I recounted the whole history, it would be an entire sermon: asbestos, sinking basement floor, dead and fallen trees, plumbing, electrical. Recently, in a moment of frustration, I said "I wish our house would float away, and we could start over."

Hannah heard me, and asked, "What would you save, if the house floated away?"

I said "Of course, you, your mother, your siblings, Jenny our cat."

She asked, "What about your guitars? What if you had to choose: Jenny, or your guitars?"

I answered, "Jenny, of course!"

But I must be honest: for a second, I wondered which I would choose. I love our cat, but she is old, and only has one eye. My guitars are like long-time friends, who get better with age. Any musician feels his instruments are like friends.

Some dilemmas are not solvable by Googling for an answer. Sometimes, we just do not know what to do.

What should we do, when we do not know what to do?

Let's look at 2 Chronicles 20:12, and see. This text is short, but profound. Some messages can be summarized briefly. We call this truth in a nutshell. Think of MLK, "I have a dream."

1. “We do not know what to do.”

Why? Why did Jehoshaphat say this, and why do we so often also not know what to do?

a. We are limited in *wisdom*.

In our technological times, when every question can be Googled, everybody seems to be an expert.

Before a patient shows up at the Doctor's office, he has usually Googled for self-diagnosis, and feels he is already a lay expert. He is ready to tell the Doctor a thing or two, or three.

But, this is an illusion. This supposed expertise is often merely too much false information masquerading as truth and knowledge.

GPS can tell you exactly how to get to and from any place in the world. GPS can also tell you the distance to and from your destination. This is knowledge and information. But GPS cannot tell you the essence of the place: the look, the smell, the culture and the feel. Only a wise person can tell you that.

Even those who know a lot of information frequently lack true wisdom.

Wisdom is rare, and is only acquired through time, effort, maturity. Yet all of us, even the wisest, are often unwise too.

b. We are limited in *goodness*

Man looks at the outward appearance, but God sees the heart. Motives are usually hidden. None of us is perfectly good. All of us are sinful.

Did you know that Medical technology now enables you to get a full body scan. Such a scan can reveal any diseases, like cancer, arthritis, that you might have. So, why do Doctors not routinely administer full body scans to their patients? There is a very important reason: false positive diagnoses. All of us are flawed physically, and if we had full body scans it would send us down never ending paths of exploratory surgeries, blood tests, x rays, more scans.

Each of us is flawed spiritually and morally as well. Imagine a spiritual x ray I could shine at you right now. You would run and hide in fear!

c. We are limited in *power*.

Even if we were wise and good, we would still lack the power to do the right thing every time a dilemma comes.

When I was a young child, I often wondered why a very strong person could not sit in a chair, reach down with both hands to grab the edges of the chair, and pull himself up, with the chair, to float into the air.

Nathaniel asked me the same question recently (like father, like son)!

I told him the powerful laws of physics prevent anyone, no matter how strong, from lifting himself into the air and floating away.

We are extremely limited in wisdom, goodness, and power. Even the best of us. The strongest, smartest, holiest people are limited. Sin infects and affects us all. Other people get in the way and often bring us down or trip us up. Illness and weakness conspire to slow us down.

But, thank God, there is a God upon Whom our eyes can be set.

2. “But our eyes are upon you.”

Why? Why did Jehoshaphat say this, and why should we follow his example?

a. God is unlimited in *wisdom*.

He knows the universals, and the particulars. The big philosophy question is: what is more fundamental to reality, the building blocks, or the building? God creates and knows both. God knows everything, perfectly. He knows the end, the beginning, and everything in between. God knows what you did, and what you

didn't do, but should have. He also knows what you will do. He knows your actions, your words, your motives and your intentions.

This should humble us, frighten us, but also comfort us.

Isaiah 55:9.

For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

b. God is unlimited in *goodness*.

God is perfectly good, meaning, He not only lacks sinfulness, or pollution, or imperfection, but He is also fully holy, righteous, loving, and good.

None of the badness you can think of is to be found in God. And all of the goodness you can think of has its source in God. Have you been to Chicago Botanic Garden? The Rocky Mountains? Iceland?

God is the Source of all of that beauty, and more.

James 1:16-17

Don't be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

c. God is unlimited in *power*.

By the word of His power, he created the universe. He can do anything that He wants to do. Nothing can stop Him. God is not limited by outside forces.

As children, we used to ask the question "If God is so powerful, can He make a rock that is so big, He cannot lift it or move it?"

Now, that is a ridiculous question. God cannot contradict Himself.

God can and will do all that He can do for His glory and your ultimate good.

God's most awesome display of His wisdom, goodness, and power was in sending His Son, Jesus Christ, incarnate, to live among us and die for us and rise again after three days. The Gospel is the pinnacle of God's wisdom, goodness, and power.

Isaiah 40:21-31

Do you not know? Do you not hear?

Has it not been told you from the beginning?

Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?

It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers;

who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to dwell in; who brings princes to nothing, and makes the rulers of the earth as emptiness. Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown, scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth, when he blows on them, and they wither, and the tempest carries them off like stubble. To whom then will you compare me, that I should be like him? says the Holy One.

Lift up your eyes on high and see:

who created these?

He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name;

by the greatness of his might and because he is strong in power, not one is missing. Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the Lord, and my right is disregarded by my God"? Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength. Even youths shall faint and be weary,

and young men shall fall exhausted; but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.

Conclusion:

See Job 42:1-6

1 Then Job replied to the LORD: 2 I know that you can do all things; no purpose of yours can be thwarted. 3 You asked, 'Who is this that obscures my plans without knowledge?' Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know. 4 "You said, 'Listen now, and I will speak; I will question you, and you shall answer me.' 5 My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. 6 Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.

Application:

1. What do you do in your family, or at work, when you really do not know what to do? Are you a parent? Do your children ever cause you to shout, "Help, I don't know what to do?"
2. Have you been harassed at work by people who abuse power? Have controlling people caused you constant anxiety?
3. Are you struggling with depression, despair, weariness, and you just don't know what to do?
4. Have health problems caused you to fear for the future? Are you still hoping to see a Doctor who knows everything?
5. Are your eyes upon God this morning?