SESSION 2
DEPEND ON GOD

▸ **The Point**
God is greater than any challenge we face.

▸ **The Passage**
2 Chronicles 14:9-15

▸ **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.

▸ **The Setting**
The Kingdom of Judah had enjoyed a period of peace due to King Asa’s instituting an extensive series of religious reforms. He had removed the paganism that polluted the nation’s spiritual environment and restored worship of Yahweh, the true God. King Asa also had hardened his cities’ defenses and organized his fighting forces. However, Judah’s tranquility was eventually broken. A new enemy’s approach forced Asa’s realm into war. Asa, however, continued his reliance on God for strength.
2 Chronicles 14:9-15

9 Then Zerah the Cushite came against them with an army of one million men and three hundred chariots. They came as far as Mareshah.

10 So Asa marched out against him and lined up in battle formation in Zephathah Valley at Mareshah.

11 Then Asa cried out to the LORD his God: “LORD, there is no one besides you to help the mighty and those without strength. Help us, LORD our God, for we depend on you, and in your name we have come against this large army. LORD, you are our God. Do not let a mere mortal hinder you.”

12 So the LORD routed the Cushites before Asa and before Judah, and the Cushites fled.

13 Then Asa and the people who were with him pursued them as far as Gerar. The Cushites fell until they had no survivors, for they were crushed before the LORD and his army. So the people of Judah carried off a great supply of loot.

14 Then they attacked all the cities around Gerar because the terror of the LORD was on them. They also plundered all the cities, since there was a great deal of plunder in them.

15 They also attacked the tents of the herdsmen and captured many sheep and camels. Then they returned to Jerusalem.

The Cushite (v. 9)—The identity of the Cushites is uncertain. Some believe them to be Ethiopians (Nubians) located south of Egypt, while others believe them to be a Bedouin group living near Judah.
GET INTO THE STUDY

DISCUSS: Question #1 on page 89 of the Personal Study Guide (PSG): “What’s the most dependable thing you’ve owned?” Allow time for each person to respond.

GUIDE: Direct group members to “The Bible Meets Life” on page 90 of the PSG. Introduce the importance of depending on God by reading or summarizing the text—or by encouraging group members to read it on their own.

LEADER PACK: Display Pack Item 9, the “Map of the Divided Kingdom” poster, to explain the geographical context for this study.

GUIDE: Call attention to “The Point” on page 90 of the PSG: “God is greater than any challenge we face.”

ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL): In advance, prepare to play the song “How Great Is Our God,” written by Chris Tomlin, Jesse Reeves, and Ed Cash. You may also enlist a volunteer to lead the group in singing along. Afterward, invite sentence praises to honor God for being greater than any of our difficulties.

Note: A link to the video may be found at BibleStudiesforLife.com/AdultExtra.

PRAY: Transition into the study by asking God to help us remember the importance of depending on Him. Thank Him for the gift of this group as we face challenges together.
2 Chronicles 14:9-10

9 Then Zerah the Cushite came against them with an army of one million men and three hundred chariots. They came as far as Mareshah. 10 So Asa marched out against him and lined up in battle formation in Zephathah Valley at Mareshah.

READ: Ask a group member to read aloud 2 Chronicles 14:9-10 on page 91 of the PSG.

GUIDE: Use the Commentary for the verses on the next page of this Leader Guide to describe the army that Asa and his people faced.

RECAP: King Asa and the nation of Judah had experienced a time of peace and the 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. It would have been far easier for them to stay within the newly fortified cities, but that’s not how battles are won.

DISCUSS: Question #2 on page 91 of the PSG: “What do you most appreciate about Asa’s prayer?”

RECAP: 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.
2 Chronicles 14:9-10 Commentary

[Verse 9] Judah’s period of peace (2 Chron. 14:1) ended with a threat from a foreign enemy. The Chronicler (Ezra) reported that Judah was invaded by the army of Zerah the Cushite. The exact national identity of Zerah and his army is uncertain. The ancient kingdom of Cush, equated with the kingdom of Nubia, was located south of Egypt. The Hebrew word kushi was identified with Ethiopia from the time of the Septuagint and many later English translations continue that tradition by using the term “Ethiopian” (for example, the English Standard Version, King James Version, and the New American Standard Bible). However, this should not be equated with modern Ethiopia, which is further to the southeast. At differing times the kingdom of ancient Cush had flexible boundaries and may have been made up of differing tribes of people.

Some commentators believe this invading army may have been Bedouin Arabs (they possessed camels—v. 15)—raiders from the southern desert. Others suggest that Zerah was the general of a garrison of mercenary troops under the command of the Egyptian pharaoh. Previously, in the fifth year of the reign of King Rehoboam of Judah (931/0–913 BC), King Shishak of Egypt invaded Judah. He looted the treasuries of both the temple and the royal palace (1 Kings 14:25-26). The Chronicler provided additional information concerning this invasion. First, the invaders under Shishak “captured the fortified cities of Judah and came as far as Jerusalem” (2 Chron. 12:4). The Chronicler also indicated that the Egyptian force included Cushites (v. 3). After conquering Jerusalem, the Egyptian forces moved further north into the Northern Kingdom of Israel. For reasons which are not clear, Pharaoh Shishak eventually withdrew from both Israel and Judah. Some suggest that Shishak left a mercenary force under the leadership of Zerah the Cushite in the region of Gerar to both guard and defend Egypt’s northern frontier.

[Verse 10] Asa marched his soldiers to engage Zerah’s forces in battle. They faced off in the Zephathah Valley at Mareshah, located in the Judean foothills (known as the Shephelah) in south-central Israel. Zephathah means “watchtower,” which suggests that the two armies could look across the valley at each other. Mareshah means “summit” or “top of a mountain.” It was a Canaanite city that had been annexed into Judah’s territory. It was located about thirty miles southwest of Jerusalem and about four miles northeast of Lachish. It had long before been fortified by Asa’s grandfather Rehoboam (11:8). That may be why Zerah stopped his advance there.

Upon their arrival, Asa strategically deployed his troops in a battle formation to combat Zerah’s army. His men looked across the valley and saw the invading army. They must have felt great trepidation, yet they were ready to fight and die defending their homeland. But Asa had one more thing he needed to do before engaging the invaders. He had a powerful ally that Zerah knew not of!
2 Chronicles 14:11

"Then Asa cried out to the Lord his God: "Lord, there is no one besides you to help the mighty and those without strength. Help us, Lord our God, for we depend on you, and in your name we have come against this large army. Lord, you are our God. Do not let a mere mortal hinder you."

READ: Ask a group member to again read aloud 2 Chronicles 14:11 on page 91 of the PSG.

GUIDE: Use the Commentary for the verses on the next page of this Leader Guide to share background for Asa’s use of God’s covenant name in his prayer.

RECAP: 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.

DISCUSS: Question #3 on page 92 of the PSG: “What does dependence upon God look like in the life of a believer?”

DO: Direct group members to complete the activity, “Facing Our Challenges” on page 93 of the PSG to help them.

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. [PSG has four images from which to choose.]

TRANSITION: We should call on God when problems arise. In the next verses, we see that we should also trust in God as we face our problems.
2 Chronicles 14:11 Commentary

[Verse 11] What was it Asa still had to do? Asa prayed. He cried out to Yahweh his God. It was not the act of a desperate man facing a crisis and then suddenly turning to God. Asa was only doing what he had talked about and modeled for years. He had long before removed the high places and other things associated with the false gods that had contaminated his nation’s faith; he and his people had put their full trust back in Israel’s true Deity, Yahweh.

Asa began his prayer by addressing God by name: Yahweh (translated as “Lord”). Yahweh is the covenant name by which God had revealed Himself to Moses and the Israelites and by which He had made the covenant relationship with them. Asa’s addressing God by His covenant name demonstrated his intimate relationship with God. The first part of Asa’s statement, translated as “there is no one besides you,” is a clear theological affirmation of God’s uniqueness in all the universe. There is no being equal in power to God, which is why Asa confidently turned to Him in this situation. Taken with the rest of Asa’s words, the overall meaning of his prayer is that God can help anyone He wants and makes no distinction between the mighty and the weak. It is no harder for God to assist the powerless than it is for Him to aid the powerful.

In this case, Asa correctly perceived himself and his army to be the weak one in dire need of the Lord’s help. He nonetheless proclaimed with great faith that nothing is beyond God’s capability. He committed himself humbly to the Lord and expected the impossible, not unlike the father of the boy Jesus healed from demon possession (Mark 9:14-27; see esp. vv. 23-24).

Asa invoked the name of Yahweh (trans. “Lord”) a second time, telling Him that Asa and his army trusted and depended entirely on Him. He audaciously reminded the Lord that it was in His name that they were fighting this war. So, in a way, Asa was putting the Lord’s reputation on the line. Asa then used the divine name a third time, acknowledging Yahweh as the God of the covenant made with Israel. For that reason, the king was confident that no mere mortal could possibly prevail against Him. In this case, even Zerah with all his massive forces could not defeat the almighty Lord of Hosts!
2 Chronicles 14:12-15

12 So the Lord routed the Cushites before Asa and before Judah, and the Cushites fled. 13 Then Asa and the people who were with him pursued them as far as Gerar. The Cushites fell until they had no survivors, for they were crushed before the Lord and his army. So the people of Judah carried off a great supply of loot. 14 Then they attacked all the cities around Gerar because the terror of the Lord was on them. They also plundered all the cities, since there was a great deal of plunder in them. 15 They also attacked the tents of the herdsmen and captured many sheep and camels. Then they returned to Jerusalem.

**READ:** Ask a group member to read aloud 2 Chronicles 14:12-15 on page 94 of the PSG.

**RECAP:** 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!

**DISCUSS:** Question #4 on page 94 of the PSG: “When has God greatly blessed you through a crisis?”

**RECAP:** 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.

**DISCUSS:** Question #5 on page 95 of the PSG: “How has God used our group to help you during challenging times?”

**GUIDE:** Refer back to “The Point” for this session: “God is greater than any challenge we face.”
2 Chronicles 14:12-15 Commentary

[Verses 12-13] King Asa and his soldiers trusted in God when faced with the massive enemy army of Zerah, and so it was that the Lord routed the Cushites. Note whom Ezra credited for the victory: the Lord. The exact details of how He did it are not given. Whatever the Lord’s method may have been, the Cushites were crushed and fled the field of battle!

Judah was victorious, and Asa’s warriors pursued the Cushites as far as Gerar. Gerar was a city between Gaza and Beersheba over twenty miles to the southwest of Mareshah. Gerar was on Judah’s southern border with the Negev (a desert region) and the fastest way for the Cushites to get back to their own territory.

The Cushites fell in such numbers that there were no survivors. Note again how Ezra gave the glory to God. The Cushites were thoroughly vanquished by the Lord and his army. It was a holy war; the army of Judah was the Lord’s army.

The Chronicler also reported that the army of Judah carried off a large amount of plunder. It was the common practice of victors in ancient wars to take whatever valuables they could from their defeated enemies. It was considered their rightful reward for risking life and limb in battle. In this instance, the spoils were probably military equipment, other provisions, and treasures of gold, silver, and so forth formerly possessed by the defeated, dead Cushites.

[Verse 14] Asa’s soldiers then continued their plunder attacks on the cities around Gerar. Ezra wrote, the terror of the Lord had overtaken the citizens, who probably fled their cities. The text does not indicate the relationship of these cities to the Cushites. However, given the actions of the army of Judah these cities must have been aiding the Cushites in some way. The men of Judah attacked and plundered the cities. The “terror of the Lord” is associated with only three kings in the Bible—King Asa of Judah, his son Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. 17:10; 19:7; 20:29), and King Saul (1 Sam. 11:7).

[Verse 15] The soldiers of Judah did not stop with the defeated cities in their post-war mopping-up operation against their enemies. They also attacked the tent cities of the herdsmen who lived in that region. The herdsmen may have given aid and support to the Cushite invaders when they passed through. Another possibility is that the presence of these tent-dwelling herdsmen is indicative that the Cushites were Bedouin nomads and the tents and herds belonged to them.

Asa’s army had completed its mission. The Cushites and their allies were completely vanquished. Asa now felt secure to return home to Jerusalem where he was probably met with a hero’s welcome. The Lord was the One who had routed the enemy, but Asa and the people had still needed to carry through in battle to secure the victory. They surely gave God the glory for what He had done. Yet, the army had risked their lives to defeat the invaders. They deserved some measure of honor from the people of Judah for their sacrifice.
LIVE IT OUT

**GUIDE:** Direct group members to page 96 of the PSG. Encourage them to choose one of the following applications to carry out this week.

- **Share.** Talk with your group about one of the challenges 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.

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**Wrap It Up**

**TRANSITION:** Read or restate the final paragraph from page 96 of the PSG:

“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.”

**PRAY:** Conclude by thanking God for being One we can always depend on. Ask Him for courage to trust in Him in those moments when we are most inclined to give up.

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