

Song Story: *O How Long?*

By Amber Bowen & Kimberly Merida

The story in 2 Chronicles 20 quickly became a source of encouragement to our family, as well as one of our themes, at the start of the global pandemic in 2020. When King Jehoshaphat saw the armies of the Moabites, Ammonites, and Meunites set to invade Judah, he was rightly afraid. What did he do in his fear? He “*set his face to seek the LORD*” and gathered the people of Judah together “*to seek help from the Lord*” (2 Chron. 20:3–4).

After turning to God and acknowledging his sovereign power and might, Jehoshaphat’s prayer of lament moved from complaint, to asking for God’s help, to confessing their powerlessness, to ultimately putting their trust in God and worshiping him with gratitude. “*O our God, will you not execute judgment on them? For we are powerless against this great horde that is coming against us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you*” (2 Chron. 20:12).

The pandemic stirred up all sorts of questions, confusion, and fear. My Bible and piano provided a place of solace to cry out to the Lord for help, understanding, wisdom, and guidance. Jehoshaphat’s prayer resonated with me as this season amplified my feelings of powerlessness and uncertainty, while also driving me to cast my vision on the Lord.

After playing awhile, a haunting melody began to take shape. Amber joined me in the music room as words began to fill our hearts and minds. Shortly thereafter, a song of prayer was composed. We then captured this recording in what we affectionately began calling the “studio closet,” a small space that had been set up for our church livestream services during quarantine.

The concluding lines of the song have become our favorite: “*Living Hope, let new mercies awake // Jesus Christ, you reign.*” Here we remind ourselves of the hope we have in Christ Jesus to come again, to make all sad things come untrue. O how we long for that day! We were created for that day. May we, as Martin Luther said, “Live this day in light of that Day” by keeping our eyes on our Savior.

*We are powerless
and we do not know what to do
Overwhelmed as the darkness surrounds,
God we look to you, O how long? O how long?*

*Nations raging, Kingdoms fading
the earth gives way
Trembling hearts through this valley we walk
God to you we pray, O how long? O how long?*

*We will not be afraid for the battle is yours
Our Sword and our Shield, God is with us,
O how long?*

*God omnipotent, reigning high
You make all things new
Strongholds break at the sound of your voice
God we wait for you, O how long? O how long?*

O how long? How long?

*We will not be afraid for the battle is yours
Emmanuel, God is with us, O how long?
O how long?*

*Oh give thanks to the Lord for his love endures.
We will wait for our King, he’ll restore us.
We will not be afraid for the battle is yours
Our strength and our joy, God is for us!*

O how long?

*We are sorrowful, endless pain,
grief that’s uncontained
Living Hope let new mercies awake
Jesus Christ, you reign. O how long? How long?*

