

THE BOOK OF JONAH

the relentless pursuit of God's mercy

INTRO: Grab your Bibles & turn to the book of Jonah. It's a fairly small book buried deep in the minor prophets. If you need to, use that index in the front of your Bible to find it. While you're turning there:

MISSION MONTH SPOTLIGHT: This month is Mission Month @ EGBC. Which means we are going to highlight different local & global mission opportunities each Sunday. We don't want become "navel gazing Christians." We do not want to be ignorant of all that God is doing all around the globe for the sake of His glory & the good of all people! And on top of that, because of the ability to travel & communicate – we actually get to be part of what God is doing globally at times!

This morning I want to share with you a new initiative that we are launching today! ADOPT A PASTOR. If you have been coming to EGBC for any length of time, you have probably heard about our gospel partnership with Grace Life Bible College in Central Kenya. God is using Grace Life Bible College to train pastors & church-leaders all throughout central Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. However, the biggest problem we encounter with training pastors at Grace Life is funding. The brothers do not have the funds to get to school. They do not have the funds to pay their school fees. They do not have the funds to provide food for the students while class is in session. And this is where ADOPT A PASTOR comes into play - we are hoping to see 100 pastors sponsored for the sake of Biblical & Theological training in the next year.

For \$100 a month, a pastor can be fully sponsored for his Bible college training at GLBC. To be clear, these funds are not going directly to the pastor but to the school to cover the cost of his training. We want to be very careful to not create a culture of dependance, wherein these brother-pastors become dependent upon American money to cover their regular life expenses. However, we do believe we can come alongside these brothers for the specific purpose of seeing them trained up in the Word.

So - EGBC family - would you pray about adopting a pastor? Seriously, would you beg God to help you come up with \$100 a month for the sake of gospel work in West Central Africa? I realize this is a lot, but we have a big God who is able to do mighty things. Let's pray that God gives you a raise, so that you can adopt a pastor. Or maybe, let's pray that you cut out something non-essential in life (because after all, sacrificing for the sake of Jesus is a good thing) so that you can adopt a pastor.

The insert in your bulletin covers some of the details I've just shared and a bit more. So as you pray over this, read that insert. And church – being involved in the work of the gospel takes sacrifice. Some people are called to go to the nations, but others are called to give to support the work of the gospel among the nations. Most of us haven't been called to go, but all of us have been called to sacrificially give as we are able. So would you pray about how you might be able to Adopt A Pastor for the sake of gospel proclamation in Kenya?

That was all a filler to give you enough time to find the book of Jonah. Hopefully we are there!

INTRO: The book of Jonah is widely known because a man gets swallowed by a fish. And if you have any history with Christianity or Veggie Tales, you probably think that Jonah is about a fish (somehow). But actually, Jonah isn't about a fish. And Jonah really isn't even about the guy named Jonah. *Jonah is about God.* The Book of Jonah is about the kind, gracious, promise-keeping God of the Bible **who is relentless in His pursuit of mercy towards ALL peoples.**

Jonah is a rebuke to the people of Israel (way back in the day) because they were not fulfilling their God-given responsibility to take His mercy to all peoples. Jonah is a rebuke to the people of Israel (way back in the day) because they were living in disobedience, and Jonah as the prophet of God, is representing the nation (who by the way was living in rebellion). As we go through Jonah we will see these themes and sub themes, but don't forget for a moment that the theme of Jonah is the relentless pursuit of God's mercy towards all people!

The reason we are going through Jonah this month is that the God of the Bible absolutely cares about His mercy going to all people. However, Jonah is not just for all people. Jonah is for you. Because you see, God is most definitely after the hearts of people and that "all people" includes your heart. Before God takes us to all people, in His mercy, He's going to come after you. And the first 2 chapters of Jonah are all about God coming after you and me.

Saints, I believe the Lord has sovereignly placed us in this moment for what He's going to say through His Word. I am begging the Lord to do a mighty work of transformation in each & every one of us this month through His Word. So let's beg God together right now to do that mighty work. PRAY

TEXT: Jonah 1:1-16 (Read It)

BIG IDEA: I Am Jonah

1. The Ability to Start Well | **Jonah 1:1**

A. Jonah fell in a Long Line of God's Prophets - 2 Kings 14:23-25

- The prophets were God's messengers to God's people (and at times, to those who were not God's people)
- In Jonah's lifetime - God was blessing Israel NOT because of their obedience but because of His covenant faithfulness - v. 24 & 28-29 (2 Kings 15:12)

B. A Track Record of Faithfulness to God — 2 Kings 14:25-27

- Jonah was God's voice for God's people - v. 25

- Jonah's prophetic ministry was legit (meaning what Jonah prophesied came to pass...which was a good thing for Jonah) - v. 26-27

CLARITY: Jonah gets a bad rap because he disobeys God, but it's important that we see that Jonah started well. Jonah was a good prophet - meaning He walked with God. He obeyed God. He did what God asked of him.

- **KEY:** Starting off well is easy but there will come a time when following Jesus will cost you everything.

2. Obeying the Commands of God Is Costly | **Jonah 1:2**

A. The Urgent Command to Go to Nineveh — **Jonah 1:2a**

- **LIT:** *Do not delay* — go immediately without hesitation or waiting
- **NOTICE:** There is no confusion in God's instruction to Jonah (as it so often is the case with us, God's instructions are not nebulous, hard to figure out, or confusing — much more on this in a minute).

B. The Message for Nineveh was Certain Judgment — **Jonah 1:2b**

- The prophetic message was often one of warning people of imminent or certain judgement on account of wickedness
- The prophetic warning was always an act of divine mercy — the warning before judgement is a kindness (*ILL: a tornado siren saves lives because it tells you to get out of the way // the tornado is coming regardless of the siren or not // the siren is simply giving you an opportunity to get out of the way of what is already coming // so it is with God warning humanity of certain judgement*)

C. The Wickedness of Nineveh was Appalling — **Jonah 1:2c**

- Assyria was the global super-power of the Ancient Near East — during the life of Jonah they were in a rebuilding faze, but they had and would continue to flex their power and domination on everyone around them.
- But it gets worse - Assyria was known for brutalizing their conquered enemies (which had included and would continue to include Israel & Judah — the northern & southern kingdom)

Their own historical record records show the brutality of their conquests — with things like skinning their captives alive; beheading their conquered foes; dismembering men, women, and children alive; piling body parts in front of their cities as a display of power; burying their captives alive but leaving their heads out of the ground; and the list goes on and on and on and on

TO BE FAR: Nineveh was akin to Nazi Germany in the mid-40s

- But it get's worse — Assyria would soon become the nation used by God to judge Israel (both kingdoms) and take them away into slavery/captivity/exile

Jonah has been called by God to march into the capital of the most brutal, vile nation at that time and warn them of God's judgement.

A few things running through Jonah's mind: #1 — this mission comes at immense personal risk & cost. #2 — why warn Nineveh of God's judgement, just wipe them out. #3 — of all the people on the planet, Nineveh was least worthy of God's mercy because of what they had done to Israel.

D. Loving Your Enemy is Costly

- An act that would cause Jonah to be considered a *traitor prophet*
- An act that would cause Jonah the total loss of social status and spiritual respect
- An act that would leave Jonah politically and socially homeless — *obeying YHWH this time would not result in social favor but rather in social ostracism & shame (8th century cancel culture at it's finest)*
- **TRUTH:** There will come a time when obeying Jesus will cost you everything

QUESTION: Is this not the call of the gospel on your life — IT WILL COST YOU EVERYTHING?

QUESTION: Is this not what God has called some of you to already in your life?

3. The Sobering Truth About Rebellion | **Jonah 1:3**

- Most of us will say yes to God until He puts His finger on the one area that we want to control...that one thing that is at the very core of who you are — JD Greear

A. When you run from God, you think & act like a fool - **Jonah 1:3a**

- Play on words - Jonah did rise but only to disobey God's commands (the exact opposite of what you'd expect from a prophet)
- Jonah determined to get as far away from God's command as possible — Tarshish was as far as a ship would sail in the other direction (the tip of Spain which is roughly 1500 miles in the exact opposition direction of God's command)
- **TRUTH:** Jonah knew that fleeing YHWH's presence was impossible but he was determined to get as far away as possible.

MAYBE: God would destroy Nineveh anyway and he'd come back when it was all over // Maybe he'd ask for forgiveness rather than permission latter // Maybe he figured he'd never come back but after all, he had a good run as God's prophet and this one time of going his own way wouldn't be too big of a deal.

B. Jonah figured out how to go his own way - **Jonah 1:3b**

- TRUTH: When you determine to NOT obey God's clear commands, you will go hard in the other direction (there is not natural ground or staying in the middle)
- You see - rebellion begins with an unwillingness to obey what God says // Rebellion continues with a commitment to go in the opposite direction of God's ways

WRITE THIS DOWN: Rebellion is when you are willing to obey God in every area but one!

AND IN THAT MOMENT: You will go the opposite direction of wherever God is calling you to go

- Rebellion will stop at nothing to "go your own way"

In rebellion Jonah found exactly what he wanted - found a ship... (Ferguson, p. 21)

QUOTE: When you are running from God, there will always be a ship ready to Tarshish (JD Greear) // We have an enemy whose whole role is to "ready the ship" for your disobedience (JD Greear)

TRUTH: When you are going your own way (part from God), you will often feel confident for a minute

FOR INSTANCE: I just had so much peace...the Lord just opened every door...It must have been God's will...

WAKE UP: When you are going your own way - stop trying to find some mystic providence to affirm your rebellion!

APP: you are convicted by sin so you pray about it...you ask God for some mystic guidance...and when you find your mystic answer...you excuse your sin (i.e. not happy in marriage and I found someone who makes me happy...God provided someone to be my companion in loneliness, etc.)

WRITE THIS DOWN: Rebellion is when you are willing to obey God in every area but one!

4. The Mercy of God When You Run | **John 1:4-16**

A. In God's mercy, He pursues Jonah - **Jonah 1:4**

- In rebellion Jonah foolishly thought that he could run from the God who is every-where present & who is universally sovereign over all things

TRUTH: *Rebellion against God is the true definition of insanity* — for in that moment you think you both know better than God and that you will get away with your sin against God.

- DON'T MISS IT: *The storm was not God paying Jonah back — the storm was God bringing Jonah back*

TRUTH: Is this not what God promises to do for those He loves in Hebrews 12 - *His discipline is not to pay you back for your sins but to bring you back from your sins* (a kind and gracious discipline)!

B. In God's mercy, He pursues the sailors - **Jonah 1:5-8**

- Rebellion doesn't care about the pain and harm it causes other people - **v. 5**

Jonah's sin placed the sailors in great danger - **v. 5a**

The pagan sailors are crying out to their gods but Jonah is running from the One True God - **v. 5b**

Jonah is oblivious to the suffering that is his fault - **v. 5c**

TRUTH: Your failure to walk with God has eternally devastating consequences for those around you (JD Greear).

- **IRONY:** The idol worshipping captain is used by God to rebuke Jonah - **v. 6**

The repetition to *arise...call out* is a strong rebuke that repeats what God commanded of Jonah in v. 2

- **CAUGHT RED HANDED:** God is sovereign even when you are rebelling - **v. 7**

Casting lots was not uniquely spiritual but God's sovereignty was all over it landing on Jonah (*Jonah would have been picked EVERY time because God was after Jonah*)

- The unbeliever cries out in desperation for answers - **v. 8**

Jonah is calloused to their suffering but they are desperate - about to die - begging for answers since their suffering is Jonah's fault!

C. In God's mercy, He disciplines Jonah - **Jonah 1:9-15**

- Jonah owns who he is — kinda sorta - **v. 9**

Notice how Jonah proclaims what is theologically true but he's not living like (what a sobering warning for us today!)

- **IRONY:** The pagan sailors begin to believe in the power of Jonah's God - **v. 10-11**

The one in rebellion isn't asking the questions BUT RATHER the pagans are asking how the suffering can be alleviated

TRUTH: The one in rebellion is unwilling to ask the honest questions because he already knows the answer! The one in rebellion always refuses to acknowledge the real problem!

- Jonah would rather die than obey God - **v. 12**

TRUTH: If Jonah repents, the storm stops

TRUTH: When you are determined to go your own way, the one thing you cannot do is repent. No matter how bad it gets, you will stick to your guns and go your own way!

- The pagan sailors realize they are no match for the God of the Sea & Dry Land - **v. 13b-14**

- Jonah is cast overboard (*in discipline not judgment*) - **v. 15**

REALITY: Jonah thinks his story is over — he has run from YHWH and at least he will not have to go to Nineveh

TRUTH: God is relentless in His mercy and He is not done disciplining Jonah.

DON'T MISS IT: Sin always starts with small disobedience; but it ends in total disaster (for you and those around you)

D. In God's mercy, He redeems the pagan sailors - **Jonah 1:16**

- Jonah's rebellion is used by God to bring pagan sailors to repentance
- **IRONY:** The prophet who should have feared YHWH did not & the sailors who worshipped idols end up fearing YHWH

BIG IDEA: The Relentless purse of God's Mercy

CONCLUSION: Jonah 1 proclaims that we are Jonah. We, just like Jonah, can profess all the right things. We, just like Jonah, can start off well. We, just like Jonah, can do great things for God. We, just like Jonah, are able to rebel when God puts his finger on the one thing that is at the core of who we are. We, just like Jonah, can go our own way when we think God is asking too much. But we, just like Jonah, will know the mercy of God that is relentless in its pursuit of us. Brothers & sisters - is God pursuing you

today. Christian, is God's mercy coming after you in a gracious and kind discipline. Is God trying to get your attention but you're not having it.

Oh my friend, flee to Him. Run to him. The storm would have stopped the moment Jonah repented. The Lord is eager to restore all who cry to Him. Jonah knew this, but he refused to stop running. Saints — don't make God take pursue you with such severity.

In God's mercy, He's after your heart. He will stop at nothing short than having all of you. Before we can even begin to look at God's mercy to all people, we need to look at our own hearts. We need to seek the Lord wholly & truly — for He is after all of us!