

At The Movies 2025
The Book of Jonah
Week 1: On The Run
Jonah 1:1-17
Pastor Brian Hagerman

Sermon Introduction

The book of Jonah is one of the twelve minor prophets in the Old Testament. While Jonah and the whale (Big Fish) is often remembered as a children's story, the book is far deeper—it is not about a man and a big fish but about God's mercy, grace, and salvation. Jonah is the human author of the book that bears name. The fact that God inspired Jonah to write this book and it is preserved for our teaching and instruction – it says something that we should never feel ashamed of what God has done in our lives and neglect to share our testimony with others.

Jonah is not celebrating his sin in this book, but sharing about what God can do in a person despite our failures, troubles, and disobedience. God uses the brokenness of man to do something glorious for His name's sake. Jonah's call, rebellion, and God's response mirror both the struggles of our faith and the hope of Christ, who referred to Jonah as a prophetic sign of His own death and resurrection.

This sermon explores Jonah chapter 1, highlighting how God gives direction, how Jonah flees, how disobedience impacts others, and how God still works despite our failures. This opening message to the "At The Movies" series is Jonah "On The Run". To help bring the message alive, scenes from the movie Finding Nemo illustrate these truths.

1 – God's Direction (Jonah 1:1)

Movie Clip – Finding Nemo (06:47–07:15): Nemo's father gives clear instruction, but Nemo resists, counteracting his father's direction—just as Jonah did with God's.

God clearly called Jonah to go to Nineveh and proclaim His message. Just as Jonah was given direction, so are we: God gives plans, purposes, and strength when we listen and obey. Our struggle is often that, like Jonah, we counteract God's plans by substituting our own. Followers of Christ are called to "Go" and "Share" the good news.

Only you can do what God has called you to do. God desires to use and bless His children. Here are a few things not to do when God calls you to do something for Him:

- Don't compare. We often compare ourselves to others. Others may have a different calling. Others also have different skill sets and giftings.
- Don't complain. We often complain, when it's not what we want. Israel often is found complaining in the Old Testament. We can see others complain. Jonah complained. And if we looked at ourselves hard enough,

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- we will find that we complain instead of obeying when God gives us instruction and / or calls us to do something.
- Don't counteract. We then try to make up our own purpose and plans – even trying to do something good in replacement of the better God calls us into. The good we choose is not God's best. He knows what is best. Jonah counteracted God's instruction and roadmap and created his own gameplan and roadmap. He counteracted God's call to action. In Finding Nemo, Nemo counteracted his father's commands. Things didn't turn out well. Jonah counteracted God's commands. We need to listen and obey the Father.

2 – Fleeing the Presence of God (Jonah 1:3)

Movie Clip – Finding Nemo (12:16–15:09): Nemo swims toward the boat, rejecting his father's warnings, showing the futility of running from authority—just as Jonah tried to flee God.

Jonah tried to escape God's plan, just as Nemo swam away from his father's warnings. We often run due to our comfort zones, things being too difficult, or believing others don't deserve God's grace. Disobedience never changes God's plan. His love and mercy remain. Running from God wastes our time (as we only get so much of it), talents (missed opportunities and blessings), and treasures (monetary; it was costly to Jonah and the sailors on the ship).

3 – Your Life/Decision Impacts Others (Jonah 1:5–16)

Movie Clip – Finding Nemo (44:19–44:57; 45:38–48:11): Nemo's disobedience and then being captured brought others into the struggle, illustrating how one life's decision impacts many lives.

Jonah's rebellion directly impacted the sailors and any others that may have been on the boat. Our choices always ripple out to affect others. Like Jonah, Nemo's rash disobedience drew others into his story: Marlin, Dory, the sharks, the sea turtles, and even the fish tank gang.

Disobedience can hurt others, but God can still use it for good. The sailors lost resources, time, and safety because of Jonah's sin, but through it they eventually came to know and fear the true God.

Don't despair. If you've made some rough and wrong decisions, God can use those circumstances to impact others for His Name and Kingdom sake. Even when we choose not to work and act for God, God is always working.

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4 – God Still Works (Jonah 1:17)

Movie Clip – Finding Nemo (01:10:24–01:13:49): Marlin and Dory, swallowed by a big fish, discover that even in setbacks, they are still moved closer to their purpose—just as God worked through Jonah’s rebellion.

Even in Jonah’s disobedience, God’s purposes moved forward. God’s plans are not thwarted by our disobedience. The sailors ended up praying, obeying, fearing God, offering sacrifice, and making vows—things Jonah himself failed to do. God is not limited by our rebellion. He works anywhere, through anyone, at any time.

Just as Marlin and Dory’s journey— even being swallowed by a large fish — ultimately brought them closer to their goal, Jonah’s rebellion still resulted in God’s glory being revealed. God will use the rough circumstances and choices in our lives to bring about His glory and still fulfill His plans. Our testimony, whether through obedience or through God’s redemption of failure, can be used powerfully by Him.

Closing Thoughts

The story of Jonah reminds us that our testimony and our life matter. God has created each of us on purpose and for a purpose. Like Jonah, we may try to run, but God calls us to mission — whether across the world or across the street.

David Livingstone, the missionary to Africa, admitted he often wanted to quit. Conditions were hard, the people resistant, and progress slow. Yet God reminded him of his calling and gave him strength to stay, and his perseverance opened doors for the gospel.

The challenge is clear:

- Are you running from God?
- What are you running from?
- Do you know Jesus as Savior and Lord?

It is impossible to be part of God’s mission apart from Him. But when we surrender, God’s direction, presence, and power are enough — He can use even our failures for His glory.