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JONAH 1:11-16

Jonah Series

[PRAYER] It's with that humility we worship you and we come before you recognizing that we are needy people. Not only needing a Savior, but needing your lordship in our lives every day. Teach us now, Lord, as we look at your word. We need the truths that you offer in it. So we ask that you would speak to us today. In Jesus' name, amen.

Please look at your Bibles in Jonah 1:11-16. Up to this point in the book of Jonah we have seen God tell Jonah something He wanted him to do, just like you and I experience in our lives God speaking to us. He tells us things that He wants us to do. Sometimes it's through His word, sometimes it's through a person, sometimes it's through some other impression. You know what God has told you to do. But the problem is sometimes we don't like the message. The problem is we don't have a big enough view of God. God is able to carry us with His grace to do whatever He's asked us to do.

Jonah didn't have that, so He ran away from God. When he ran away from God, bad things happened. Not only to him, but to those around. Today I want to focus on the sailors because six things happen in the sailors' lives that bring them to commitment to God. By the end of the time today they are committed to God and I want you to see that.

Debora is going to share her testimony and I want you to hear her, how she came to know the Lord. I want to share with you a practical way that you can share your faith that has to do with those cards that you have in your hand.

Before we do that, let's look at these six things starting at verse 11. I want you to look at the process through which these people come to know God. The same process exists in the people all around us that we don't even know what's going on. But God is working in people's lives. So when we are being sensitive to that, we can speak by sharing a message with them that God can use. I want to show you how that happens.

Look at verse 11. *The sea was getting rougher and rougher. So they asked him (Jonah), "What should we do to you to make the sea calm down for us?"*

This is a story today about the sailors who are going to come to know the Lord. The first thing that we see is life is getting tough. It's getting rougher and rougher. They need something outside of themselves in order to solve the problem that they are experiencing.

I would suggest that the first thing that happens in a person's life that leads them or draws them to an understanding of God more or wanting to accept God into their life is to say this statement: "I want to improve my life. I want my life to be better." People say that all the time and try to find hope and fulfillment in different ways. But these guys have a very specific request.

Go back now and look at the word because I'm trying to take principles straight out of the Bible. I didn't create these principles and go find proof texts for them. What I'm doing is going right through the text and trying to draw out of the text the principles that we can apply to our lives.

The verse says – *The sea was getting rougher and rougher. So they asked him, "What should we do to you to make the sea calm down for us?"*

We want life calmer than what it is right now. Things are getting rough. We want some help. What should we do? So they're saying we want to improve our lives. We want our life to be better. People determine to give their lives to Jesus because they want something better than what they have. They catch a vision sometimes for something better.

Maybe they get sick and tired of the way they're living. Maybe there's an addiction that's creating a problem for them and finally they get tired of that addiction and they say, "I want to improve my life. I want to do something better than what I'm seeing right now." Or maybe they come to an important decision or experience in their life. Maybe getting married, or getting a new job, or having a baby are opportunities when often people are saying, "I don't know if I have what it takes to do this. I need to improve my life." They're often open then to spiritual input because they want their lives to be better.

We come to an end of ourselves, all of us, at some point in our lives. Now some people it takes longer than others. So I want to suggest to you young people, make this choice early. You don't want to wait till things are really bad before you say, "Okay. Finally I'll give my life to the Lord." You want to use that as your foundation. You want your life to be better. You want to improve your life and have God as the center of your life is what we all need.

God wants to do that. We start asking these questions, we want to bring more calm into our life. We want to have more meaning, more fulfillment, more direction. That's the first thing that happens when people are coming to God.

The second thing that happens is a believer enters the picture. We see in the next verse that man is Jonah. God uses people. Now you might say, "I became a Christian and there were no people around. I just pulled the Bible out of the hotel drawer." Well hey; a person put that there. The Gideons have a ministry to do that. You might say, "Well I found a tract on the ground." Well somebody created that tract. God uses people and it is our privilege to be used by God to pass His grace onto others.

There are people around you everywhere who are just functioning. You don't know where they are in this process. When you reach out to them in a small way to give them some spiritual truth, you don't know who it's going to touch. Some people may say, "Forget it. I don't want this."

Other people are going to say nothing because maybe what you do may stimulate what God is doing in other places.

God has a master plan and He uses us. We are part of something bigger. It's an exciting place to be. We can be real with people. We can be an example. We can take a courageous step by having a conversation with someone that we know we should have or maybe even introducing Jesus Christ to someone that we've never met. God blesses people who step out. We might say to ourselves, "I'm not qualified to do that."

We have to look at the story. Here we've got a guy who has a lot of baggage. He has a lot of problems. If we look at this next verse we're going to see that it's Jonah. He's going to be the one who tells these guys what their next step is. Even though he's got baggage, he's got problems that he needs to wrestle with, God is going to use him in some good ways.

Verse 12 says this: "*Pick me up and throw me into the sea,*" he replied, "*and it will become calm. I know that it is my fault that this great storm has come upon you.*" He's giving the sailors the next step that they need to take in order to move toward calm in their life, in order to move toward the Lord. He's telling them what to do.

Now we're going to look more at Jonah next time when we look at the book of Jonah. We're going to look more at him and his own repentance process. I just want you to see something in passing here though. Because notice that he's admitting that he's wrong – "*it is my fault*" are his words – but he's not yet repentant. There are some times that people are like that. They're willing to admit that they're wrong. Oh yeah, I made a mistake. Or sometimes even blame it on other people and so on. But they haven't come to the place of repentance. Repentance is a change of mind or a change of heart so that we are going a different direction. Jonah is not there yet, but he is at this point willing to admit that he was wrong.

The third thing that happens in people's lives when they're coming to God is they have to wrestle inside of their hearts somehow. They've got to wrestle with some things. And that's what happens. Look at verse 13. *Instead, the men did their best to row back to land. But they could not, for the sea grew even wilder than before.*

So they're wrestling in their hearts with the idea of following God and obeying Him and throwing Jonah overboard and moving toward God. They're wrestling with that idea and they're saying, "Nope. I don't think we want to do that. I think we're going to go back to our human ways and try to solve this problem again. Let's try again and I'm going to pull up my bootstraps and I'm going to row harder." There are a lot of people who try to row harder in life. Notice what happens. They row harder and *the sea grew even wilder than before.*

God has designed us as spiritual people. He has designed us with a spiritual need. And that spiritual need is significant. If we come to a place where we are rejecting that, then life is just going to get wilder. It doesn't work. God has designed us to follow Him and the most fulfillment that we can have is when we follow the Lord 100%. So they're wrestling in their hearts about this. I think we're just going to row harder.

Which brings us to this point: It's not your job to save people. It's not my job to save people. It's God's job to save people. We're just vehicles that pass on information to tell people about Jesus. God is the one who does that deeper work. So we don't have to know the results sometimes. We never know where someone is in their life. So sometimes initiating is all they need and God does something deeper that we don't understand.

The fourth thing that happens is there is a crisis of conscience at some point. Now we're starting to get down into the heart. Something is happening inside of the person and we see that in verse 14 where it says this: *Then they cried out to the Lord, "Please, Lord, do not let us die for taking this man's life. Do not hold us accountable for killing an innocent man, for you, Lord, have done as you pleased."*

First of all, I want you to see they have now started to talk to Yahweh. The word *Lord* you see in your Bible is all capital letters. L-O-R-D. That's a symbol inside of the Old Testament that the writers, the translators, and we've all embraced to describe when they're using the personal name for God, Yahweh. If the letters were all in small letters, then it would be Lord, the name *Adonai*, the Hebrew word. But the Jewish people back then and even today would not say God's personal name because in the Ten Commandments it says *I will not take the name of the Lord my God in vain*. So they say, "I'm not going to say it all. It's such a holy name." And it is a holy name. Because of God's holy name, we see all kinds of things happen in the Old Testament and the New Testament because of the name of God. So that's why you see it capitalized in your Bible.

But I want you to see that now they're not crying out to their gods. Earlier in the passage we saw their spiritual awakening. They knew they had come to the end of their rope and they needed to call out and talk to their gods. So that's what they're doing. But in this case now they're crying on Yahweh, *the* God, and they're starting to talk to Him. God is telling them through Jonah that they need to remove something from their life in order to progress. Something must be removed for you to go forward.

I would suggest that that is what happens in the lives of many people. Maybe I can even say all people when they come to know Christ. They have to let something go in order to accept Christ. When Jesus was calling His disciples, He says *leave your nets and follow me*. That same thing happens in everybody's life. If you're going to follow the Lord, then you're going to need to leave something. God tells you what that is. I don't need to tell you. God tells you, hey, this is something you need to leave.

Maybe in some cases a person might be dating someone and it's a bad relationship and they need to break up that relationship. In another case if someone is married to someone, it's a hard relationship and they need to get back into that relationship and do it with the Lord's strength. In some cases people need to quit a job or stop a habit or discontinue some of the things they're doing.

I was working with a young lady who I was working with who decided she wanted to change her life. I said, "What do you need to do?" She would get into her negative habits because of the friends that she was with.

I said, “It sounds to me like you need to block a friend or two. What do you think about that?”

She said, “I think that’s right.”

I said, “How many friends do you think you need to block?”

“Ten or twelve friends,” she needs to block so she doesn’t have access to them.

I said, “Great, more power to you.” And she did. She’s moving forward in her life.

God always asks us to leave something if we’re going to follow Him.

Last week we had Maco share here from India. At lunch he was sharing that in Hinduism they have 9 million gods. Just a fascinating discussion as we talked to him about that. So one of the challenges that they have in Indian culture is that when someone comes to Christ, they often say, “Well sure, I’ll accept Christ. He can be part of my life along with these other gods” in essence is what they’re doing. They’re just accepting that other god. It’s the same thing that people do in America. They say, “Oh yeah, sure. I’ll have God. I’ll just put Him in my pocket here. I’ll wear my little neck chain or something and I’ll be a Christian,” as if somehow you can add that to your life.

The challenge they have in India is helping these people understand and I think we too in America that when you serve Christ, you serve Him 100%. That means you give up other things. We’re serving the Lord 100% in our lives. That’s the message here.

These sailors are now praying to God Himself. They’re moving toward the one God in knowing what to do.

The next thing we have is they take a step of obedience. Look at verse 15. It says – *Then they took Jonah and threw him overboard, and the raging sea grew calm.* So sometimes we have to take that step and we have to do some things that God wants to do some cleanup of our lives.

I want to make it clear though that the cleanup that God does of our lives is not the prerequisite to salvation. Some people say, “I’ve got to clean up my life and then I’ll come to God.” Rather, it’s come to God and He’ll help you clean up your life. That’s what happens. It’s not these other things that save a person. It is simply the result of being saved that takes place. So they took these acts of obedience.

Keep in mind that God requires change. If you’re growing, you’re changing. The question is are you going to grow for the better or are you going to grow for the worse. God wants us to change and He’s leading them in this direction. He tells them exactly what they need to do. They need to get rid of something in their lives – Jonah.

Then they commit themselves to the Lord. Look at verse 16. *At this the men greatly feared the Lord (Yahweh), and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows to him.* Now they’re praying to the one true God. They’re committing themselves, they’re making these vows to Him. All this is focused on the one true God.

Now the boat is suddenly filled with enthusiastic worshipers. And where's the boat going? We don't know. Maybe the boat is still going to Tarshish and they're going to get off the boat and talk there. Maybe it's going to go back to Joppa where it took off. Maybe they're just going to struggle to find a port somewhere in northern Africa or in Greece or in Italy, wherever they are. We don't know. But I'm telling you, these are sailors. When they get off the boat, they are going to tell the story. They are worshipers and they are missionaries with a story to share.

God is so powerful that *even the wind and the sea obey him*. When you've gone through a challenging experience like this one and you've seen God work, then you want to share that with people.

I'm impressed with what God has done in Debora's life. So I've asked Debora to come and share her testimony with us. I want you just to hear how God worked in her life and what God has done. Because I think it will inspire us to share the gospel with other people as well.

Debora come on up and share.

[Debora] A little over a year ago I accepted Christ and was baptized by Pastor Scott, almost a year to the day. So when he asked me to share my testimony with you again, one year later, I was more than happy to do so.

I find it interesting that Pastor Scott chose this time, during the study of Jonah, to ask me to share. Even as a nonbeliever I had always been intrigued by the story of Jonah. I think every nonbeliever knows the story of Jonah as well. And yes, even for nonbelievers this book is overflowing with life lessons. As a nonbeliever we focus on the consequences with not accepting responsibility, refusing to take action, and of allowing hatred, fear, and prejudice to prevent a person from having a heart for other human beings.

In fact, shortly after my baptism I took the initiative to take a Bible study in Jonah to take a more Christian perspective and understand what was really going on in the book. Even though Jonah never quite grasped this concept, it definitely summarizes my experience. A life interrupted by one of God's storms or callings may be a difficult and challenging life, but it is in fact the most privileged life, the most meaningful life of rewarding Christian service.

So here's my personal testimony one year later.

Although I grew up in a very religious part of rural Pennsylvania, I had no real Christian instruction. As a youth I went to church a few times as a non-Christian, but I admit that each time I was really bored. I used to think that if I ever suffer from insomnia, I'd get a pastor to come and talk to me. I think a lot of youth may feel that way in the beginning.

I had a happy childhood. My parents raised me with a really good moral compass. I excelled academically; I was paid to go to college and grad school and ended up with a lot of degrees, to say the least. I even was lucky enough to spend two and a half years abroad. I worked successfully in my field, but then took a huge risk to start my own business, which paid off really, really well. I started competing athletically as well and took a few national titles. I don't

say this to boast, but rather life was treating me really well. I worked with all my might to win the world's favor and it was paying off. The world was handing me accolades left and right and I felt invincible.

So let me clarify. It wasn't a cakewalk. It's not like I sat back and all this came to me. I worked long hours, fourteen hours a day. I was a hit by a car, had my legs reconstructed, and still went on to compete nationally. I started my own business from scratch, which is pretty hard to do. Yet no challenge was ever so great that I felt that I needed any spiritual help. I never needed to look to God. Even the death of a very close friend never steered me to look towards God. My ambition and intellect were blessings, which gave me success, but they also kept me from looking to God for any help. I was able to solve problems really quickly.

Looking back, I can now see very clearly that God had been pursuing me with a seemingly endless amount of patience and perseverance. He waited for me to come to Him for almost fifty years. (It gives away my age, right?) But until I understood I needed a Savior, that I needed a way out from temptation and sin, that I needed a life free from doubt and anxiety, a life driven by more than worldly accolades, I would never need Christ. At this point in my life, I simply did not understand that while my life involves me, it is not ultimately about me.

It came across as very challenged at the age of 39. My life was so rudely interrupted by a storm I could not handle. Let's just say I married the wrong man. Alcoholism, unemployment, infidelity, and theft were quick to surface after the wedding. It was my pride that kept me from coming to Christ. I had never failed at anything before. I was at a crossroads. As the sailors in Jonah used all they had to combat the negative affects of the storm, I too used my knowledge, skills, and ambition to fight my way through the storm. But I quickly realized I needed help and I was sinking quickly in doubt and anxiety. Then it happened. Here was my great storm, my chance at salvation.

One of my friends, Stephanie, and I compete in absolutely everything. And I do mean everything. If she deadlifts 210, I'll deadlift 215 pounds. If she jumps over twelve risers, I'll jump over thirteen. Stephanie is a Catholic and she celebrates Lent. So for Lent she gave up two of her favorite things, peanut M&Ms and pre-workout. Well you know I had to beat her on that and come up with something better. So I sat down and I thought for a little bit and I said I'm going to give up doubt.

I quickly realized that I needed help to give up fear and doubt. I needed to set aside my pride and trust that someone else would help me make the right godly choices, would be there to guide me away from any possible sin, and protect me from temptations. Someone who would lead me, not only in the right direction, but in the righteous direction. That was the day everything changed. I stopped doubting and God was there.

God frequently allows hardship to relay spiritual instruction. We see in the book of Jonah that although the sailors' introduction to Yahweh was not under the best circumstances, the events set in place their conversion. God can use anything for His glory. He used the storm in my life to change my heart. I began viewing temptations and hardships in life as probably the most awesome to the keys of Christian growth and maturity. Through my personal challenges I grew

and I continue to grow in joy humility, faith, and love. By resisting and resenting difficult spots in life, we miss so many opportunities to work towards Christ-likeness.

As with all endeavors, if you are unwilling to push through the discomfort, you will not grow as a person. When a non-Christian feels alone, defeated, and filled with doubt, she will be tempted by absolutely everything. But a Christian never feels alone and doubtful because God is always there. We grow in our faith, we never doubt that God is for us and always has our best interest in heart. I now understand and admire the immense courage it takes to follow and please God rather than follow and please this world. So listen carefully. God's wisdom may come from very unexpected sources. After all, it was a nonbeliever that prompted to come clean and pray to Yahweh.

God can use anything for His glory, even a storm. Whether you are in the midst of an ocean storm or currently on calm water, there are four words you need to say with whole-hearted belief: Thy will be done. Thank you.

[Scott] Debora, I appreciate your sharing.

I want to make evangelism easier for us. I think we face three challenges. One: How do you get it started? Two: What do you do when people ask hard questions? Three: How do you get people to take the next step?

I think I've got a solution for you that will help you with all three of those things. That's the cards that you have in your possession. This is a card that has information about Calvary Chapel Living Hope so that people can find our website where people can go and learn more about Jesus Christ. It also has a website on the back called truelife.org. On truelife.org there's video answers to hard questions so that people can go there and they can learn all kinds of things that would be helpful for them.

Now what you can do is you can take this card and you can say to someone, "I would like to invite you to come to my church. If you have any questions about spiritual things, that truelife.org, there's answers to hard questions right there." In thirty seconds you can pass on information that God might use in someone's life to deal with those things. You've got a starting point, you've got a way to deal with the hard questions of life and you've got an action point because they can go visit the website or our website, and maybe they would even come to church.

I want to give you an example of how this works. Let me show you a video. It's simple in a gas station.

[Start of video]

[Man] Excuse me. How are you ladies doing?

[Ladies] Good, how are you?

[Man] I don't know if you go to a church anywhere in the area, but I'd like to invite you to Thomas Roads Church. See here. If you don't have any time to make it to church quite yet, you can see on the back truelife.org where you get free video answers to life's hard questions.

There's all kinds of different videos on there to answers that people have, like "is there a God" and "why do we suffer" and things like that. So take a look at it. Remember the Lord loves you. [End of video]

That was fast. This guy is taking initiative and sharing with someone with no introduction.

I want you to do this. Take the cards and put them in your wallet or purse, somewhere that you'll have access to them easily because I'm going to pray that God is going to provide you with opportunities this week and you're going to say, "Oh where's that card. I wish I had that card." I want you to have it ready to go so that you can share it with someone. As I pray that God gives you an opportunity this week, you want to pull it out and all you're going to say is, "Hey, I've got some answers to your questions. Just take a look on the back here. And if you want to visit our church, here's some information about our church."

My wife had an experience this week. She has advanced information all the time here at Calvary Chapel Living Hope. She already did this with someone, so Carrie come and share what you did.

[Carrie] I was shopping yesterday at Macy's. I had to look for a dress for a conference that I'm going to and I found a really nice dress. I came out to pay for it.

At first the gal asked me, "Are you going to use your Macy's card?"

I said, "No, I think I'm just going to use my MasterCard. Unless there's a sale. Is there a sale if I use my Macy's card?"

She said, "I don't know, let me check." So she took time to check and said, "Oh yeah, if you use your Macy's card you'll get 20% off."

I said, "Oh great. I'm always good for a sale."

So I tried to use my Macy's card, but for some reason it wouldn't work. It was declined. So she said, "There's got to be a way that you can get the discount. I know, you just buy a gift card for that exact amount and then we'll use the gift card to pay for your purchase."

I said, "Oh thank you. That is so nice of you." So we did that and I purchased the dress.

I thought this lady was really nice to me, I wish I could do something for her. Then I thought, "Ah! I have a card!" So I pulled this out and I said to her, "You have been so kind to me and I just really appreciate you helping me today. I wanted to give you this invitation to our church. On the back it has a website where you can see some videos that answer faith questions that are kind of hard questions in life."

She said, "Oh wow. Thank you. Okay, I'll take a look."

So that was just an easy way to share.

[Scott] Thank you, Carrie.

How many of you think you could do that? Alright. Good. Where's Ed? Next Sunday when you teach here, I want you to ask people how many people were able to share. Let's have some stories next week. Can we do that during your teaching or whatever you're going to do next

week? If you would just ask some people. Let's just have some people share like Carrie did. What did you do? If the person happens to visit, you may share or may not. But we'll be grateful for that.

This week I took the mailing to the post office and I didn't have the cards yet. I'm just pumped about this because on Monday I start working on my sermon and I go, "Oh this is so cool, six things here. Hey, we've got to do some evangelism." I started looking at it, end up buying the site license, and having these business cards made this week. So they didn't arrive till Thursday.

But on Wednesday I go to the post office where I'm delivering this mailing that went out to 25,000 homes. I took it up to the guy who has to process the non-profit mail. He says, "Oh is this a church?"

I said, "Yeah, it's a church."

He was quiet. I was wondering if he was going to say something else. He doesn't say anything. So I said, "Are you looking for a church?"

He was a quiet for a minute and then he said, "I'm Catholic."

"Well great! You're welcome at our church." And then we didn't say anything.

He's pondering this, obviously. He sits back, stops working on my projects, just thinking about all of this. Continues to work on it. At the end I wrote down 'truelife.org' on the piece of paper and I said, "Here, take the card. Don't put it back in the pile. You take this card because it will tell you about our church and here's a website you can go to get real answers to hard questions in life." I don't know what God's going to do for Roy, but I've been praying for Roy that God will do something. Maybe he'll show up here.

Who knows who's going to show up here. Who knows what we're doing. All I know is we're the lighthouse and this church, Calvary Chapel Living Hope, is moving. We're not stagnant. We're moving. We're a body and we're handing out things as a body. We're using the hands and feet that the Lord gave us to share the message of Jesus Christ with others. Would you work on that with me?

I am passionate about this church. I do a lot of stuff in life, this is the favorite thing that I have that I do. I'm thinking about Calvary Chapel a lot and trying to help our church grow here.

If you're here today and you haven't accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, that's the decision that you want to make next. That's your next step. Obviously God is working in your life. That's why you're here. So I welcome you to come up during this ministry time.

Let's stand together as we sing a song. During this song, if the Lord is speaking in your life about anything, for you or someone else, you want to pray for someone else in your life, then come on up here and allow someone to pray for you. This is an opportunity for us to do some very personal heart work with the Lord and draw our hearts closer to Him in prayer. So let's sing this worship song and if you'd like to come up for prayer, please do that.