

Jonah 1.1-3 | The Call of God
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Jonah 1: Give some background and an overview of the book.

Jonah was significant for the Jews. Their tradition for 6000 years has been that on the day of Atonement they all read the book publically chant 'We are Jonah!' "Their story is our story".

Objections: Was it a real fish? It's pure narrative. Jesus affirms it. (Matthew 12.40) 1800's. Belief and faith. Are you a skeptic? It's ok.. Even atheists sometimes doubt.

1. The call of God (vs 1)

Not much known about J. Just a man I. A prophet wasn't a career path. Gods Sovereign call.

God is looking for men, (and women) that he can use. Throughout the scripture there seems to be a helpless situation and then God calls a man. **Astounding, but true. God uses people.**

Judges: 'Once again the people sinned and God delivered them over to the.. so the people cried out to God and he sent them a judge or deliverer'.

Is 46.11: says 'From the east I summon a bird of prey, from a far off land a man to fulfill my...'

Ezra 1: God using a pagan man for his purposes, Cyrus. (Prophesied in Isaiah).

John 1.6: There was a man, sent from God, his name was John.

God using us depends on his call, not our holiness, but how we do is about holiness!

Paul: 'chief of sinners', persecuting the church, put Stephen to death. Wrote half epistles.

Gideon: 'least of his tribe, tribe was the least of all'. Defeat Midianites with army of 300 men.

Deborah:

Timothy was young and sickly. Paul said to him 'command', ordain elders etc.

David and Bathsheba, yet 'I have found David, a man after my own heart. He will do everything that I want him to do' and 'after David fulfilled Gods purpose in his generation, he died'

The disciples were fishermen, and tax collectors.

Rahab was a prostitute (in the hall of fame!)

Jeremiah was too young.

Abraham as too old. He lied about his wife (twice!) yet God called Abraham his friend.

Sarah laughed out loud at God's promise, yet gave birth to the child of promise.

Moses couldn't speak

Peter couldn't keep quiet. He denied Christ and then went on to be an apostle to the Jews, was also a hypocrite!

Saul was so insecure when it was his ordination they found him hiding among the baggage!

Joseph was an arrogant brat who flaunted in front of his brothers and became the 2nd most powerful man in Egypt.

Mary an uneducated poor engaged teenager.

Jonah is no exception! Weak, pathetic, bad theology, hasn't understood the gospel or mercy. Jesus uses the worst, not the best, like Peter and Jonah. God uses the weak, not the strong.

God could use them because, in the words of Zechariah the prophet it is '**Not by might, nor by power but by my Spirit**'. He is faithful 'Amittai' son of faithfulness.

The 'word of the Lord came': Commands him. Can God command you, tell you what to do? Are you available to hear his word? We run from drawing near cos we are scared what he will say to us. But this is a question of Lordship. Is He your Lord?

You may be here looking for the Christian God of comfort and love. But if he can't contradict you, He's not God, he's a figment of your imagination.

We can make ourselves available. Here am I, send me (2 Tim 2.20: Useful to Master).

2. Then we see the mission (Read Vs 2)

'Nineveh': was like Iraq, a fearsome city! You couldn't walk around it, meaning it was un-seigable! Nineveh was the capital of the Assyrian Empire, a name of terror and abhorrence to all who heard it. For 2 ½ centuries it dominated the middle east with pitiless cruelty. King Hezekiah when threatened by the Assyrians says to them 'I will give you whatever you want' – like when you are being hijacked. He even stripped the gold off the doors of the temple.

We see how God feels about Nineveh in Nahum: He calls them his enemy (1.2), they had slaves (2.7), they were a rich city (2.9), a bloody city, full of lies, plunder and dead bodies (Nahum 3.3) The city had a wall around it which was wide enough for three chariots to ride around! It was an impenetrable city!

God's call is often unreasonable. The call will always test us, stretch us, reveal our weaknesses and attitudes, and drive us to trust in God. But the reward of faith is responding to God's call. A Jew going to Al Queada. **Who or what is most scary or offensive to you?**

So this is basically God's call to Jonah is a suicide mission. And God's call on our lives too are also suicide missions! Perpetual suicide missions!

'evil has come before me': God responds to evil, he hates it and responds to it to win it by loving it. The redemptive gracious loving God that has not ever let us down is always proactive in that he looks for opportunities. Nineveh's wickedness comes up before God and he is perfectly entitled to destroy it without sending Jonah.

Oh the Love of God! - Application. Don't think patience is winking at sin! It's patience. God's love for Singapore is partially revealed through you!

Examples in history of God changing cities: **Welsh revival, donkeys.**

3. Why he didn't go (Vs 3).

Jonah's reasons for not wanting to go to Nineveh may not be immediately evident. It seems that it was a mixture of fear of his own life, and a sense that they didn't deserve the mercy of God (4.2).

Jonah couldn't preach gospel until he had received it! This book is about a man, city.

Jonah is called, but as we'll see, he's not up for the job! He wants to run. The message he has been called to deliver hasn't been worked out in his own life.

If you aren't a Christian and you are scared if you become a Christian you hand over your rights to God, you are right but need not be scared. The gospel deals with fears.

When the gospel has been worked out:

1. God's large mission won't scare you - you know and trust Him.
2. You won't fear for your own life - you'll trust your heavenly Father.
3. You won't be self righteous – you will long for everyone to experience that grace.
4. You won't run from God, You'll run to be with Him, even if that's in Nineveh.

You won't be like Jonah. But, until that day, we are Jonah. Which means that we are to stop running, surrender to God, let his message go deep in us, so that we can be useful to the Master.