

Not a whole lot of love

In-depth studies in Jonah

Part 2 – Mission in the flow of life

November 13, 2011

Readings: Jonah 1:1-17 & Acts 27:9-11, 14-26

There are interesting connections and contrast between these two stories.

Jonah Chapter 1	Paul in Acts 27
1. Without warning – 1:1-17	1. Heartfelt warning – 27:9-11
2. A storm of judgement – 1:4-5	2. A storm – Acts 27:14-20
3. Forced to help – 1:6-15	3. Called to serve – Acts 27:21-26

- Caesarea where Paul starts his journey is 30 miles north of Joppa where Jonah starts his journey.
- Jonah is called to mission in the capital of a great empire and refuses.
- Paul requests to go to the capital of a great empire for the sake of God's mission.

Both have opportunities to serve:

- Jonah misses his opportunities;
- Paul makes the most of his opportunities.

Yet Jonah and Paul are both believers:

- Clearly different attitudes make a huge difference to the success of God's mission.
- We have characterised this difference as:
 - Paul – the community of faith as a **base** for mission – as opposed to
 - Jonah – the community of faith as a **bunker** for me

Jonah's story alerts us to the way God creates mission opportunities as life plays out.

Divine appointments in the flow of life

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Ephesians 2:10)

- God will create opportunities to serve him.
- Most Christians experience this a number of times in their lives.

Some missions will be:

- **Big mission projects** – such as influencing a great empire for God.
- **Mission in the flow of life** – three opportunities presented by God to Jonah.

Jonah's three missed opportunities

1. Can you pray for me?

⁶ *The captain went to him and said, "How can you sleep? Get up and call on your god! Maybe he will take notice of us, and we will not perish."* (Jonah 1:6)

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. (Ephesians 6:18)

- When the opportunity arises and people ask you to pray for them, don't simply promise to do it some time. Develop the impulse to ask permission and pray right there and then.
- Be intentional when you pray – seek to impart something of God (Acts 3:1-10).

2. Tell me about yourself?

⁸ *So they asked him, "Tell us, who is responsible for making all this trouble for us? What do you do? Where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?"* (Jonah 1:8)

But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, (1 Peter 3:15)



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- Unsolicited outpourings on our views and beliefs are generally not appreciated – however moments do arise when people will want to know about you – develop the impulse to say something direct and simple such as; *I'm a Christian, and I find that helpful*.
- *How much should I say?* The deeper the relationship the deeper the disclosure.
- *Early in a relationship?* An opening declaration that communicates by tone and body language that your faith is simply a part of your life, which you are relaxed about and is not likely to grow you an extra head.

3. What should we do?

¹¹ *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?"* (Jonah 1:11)

- The sailors are hoping that Jonah might offer some helpful guidance because of his relationship with God.
- If Jonah was wise he might have said to the frightened sailors; *"I can sort this out, I'll repent to my God, agree to follow him and God will calm the storm"*.
- Jonah's preferred option was really only a by-product of Jonah deciding that if he couldn't physically escape God then perhaps he could escape God through death, with the subtext that he could probably rely on the murdering heathens to be the instrument of his demise. (There is a lot of irony in Jonah – the murdering heathens do everything in their power not to kill Jonah).
- From time to time people will ask you for guidance – develop the impulse to offer spiritual wisdom to people.
- People with the gift of wisdom (1 Corinthians 12:8) often experience people asking them for guidance.

If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. (James 1:5)

The message of hope in Jonah 1 – God is at work in the world (John 5:19)

¹⁴ *Then they cried to the LORD, "O LORD, please do not let us die for taking this man's life. Do not hold us accountable for killing an innocent man, for you, O LORD, have done as you pleased."* ¹⁵ *Then they took Jonah and threw him overboard, and the raging sea grew calm.*

¹⁶ *At this the men greatly feared the LORD, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows to him.* (Jonah 1:14-16)

Some final advice from Jonah 1:

- Opportunities will present themselves and God moments will happen.
- Relax, and take it as it comes – trying too hard tends to muck up mission.
- Develop the impulse for mission within you – be ready and raring to go – discover the kingdom of God within you (Luke 17:21).

Discussion questions

1. John Lennon once said that; *"Life is what happens while you are busy making other plans."* What did he mean by that and do you agree with him?
2. Read Jonah 1 and Acts 27:9-26 thinking about the similarities and differences between these two stories. What do we learn about the plans of God from these two stories? What is the difference between Jonah and Paul?
3. The stories of Jonah and Paul occur centuries apart but they appear remarkably connected, why? How would you characterise these two stories? What is **the** connection?
4. Read Ephesians 2:10 – what does this say about mission opportunities?
5. Do you find praying, sharing or offering spiritual guidance to others a simple matter or something you struggle with? Are those things easier or more difficult than simply helping someone?
6. Share any mission opportunities that might have come your way in the flow of life?
7. How can you develop an awareness of mission opportunities in the flow of life?
8. How can you develop an impulse to pray, share or offer spiritual guidance when the opportunity presents itself?