

We Must Faithfully Deliver the Message God has Given Us

Message 3 of 4 in the series: "Jonah: How to NOT Be the Worst Evangelist Ever!"

A. God wants all of us to be evangelists (messengers of Good News).

"...but the angel reassured them. 'Don't be afraid!' he said. 'I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people.'" Luke 2:10 (NLT)

"to bring Good News" = "euangelizo" (NT Greek) = "evangelism"

"This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him. For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And **he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. So we are Christ's ambassadors**; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, 'Come back to God!' For **God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.**" 2 Corinthians 5:17-21 (NLT)

B. The OT prophet Jonah gave us a good example of how to be the worst evangelist ever when he ran away from the Lord so he wouldn't have to deliver a message from God to the wicked people of Ninevah.

"The Lord gave this message to Jonah son of Amittai: 'Get up and go to the great city of Nineveh. Announce my judgment against it because I have seen how wicked its people are.' But Jonah got up and went in the opposite direction to get away from the Lord. He went down to the port of Joppa, where he found a ship leaving for Tarshish. He bought a ticket and went on board, **hoping to escape from the Lord** by sailing to Tarshish. But the Lord hurled a powerful wind over the sea, causing a violent storm that threatened to break the ship apart... Then the sailors picked Jonah up and threw him into the raging sea, and the storm stopped at once! ...Now the Lord had arranged for a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was inside the fish for three days and three nights. Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from inside the fish... 'I will fulfill all my vows. For my salvation comes from the Lord alone.' Then the Lord ordered the fish to spit Jonah out onto the beach." Jonah 1:1-4,15,17-2:1, & 9b-10 (NLT)

Note: The Ninevites were wicked, cruel, greedy, violent, and idolatrous. They did NOT deserve a second chance! God chose Jonah to be His messenger to Ninevah because he was self-righteous, vindictive, and deliberately disobedient to God. He didn't deserve a second chance, either.

IMPORTANT! The God of the Bible is a God of grace. "The Lord is compassionate and merciful, slow to get angry and filled with unending love. He will not constantly accuse us, nor remain angry forever. **He does not punish us for all our sins; he does not deal harshly with us, as we deserve.** For his unending love toward those who fear him is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth. He has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west. **The Lord is like a father to his children, tender and compassionate to those who fear him. For he knows how weak we are; he remembers we are only dust.**" Psalm 103:8-14 (NLT)

"**God saved you by his grace when you believed.** And you can't take credit for this; **it is a gift from God.** Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it."

Ephesians 2:8-9 (NLT)

IMPORTANT! God loves to use undeserving sinners, saved by His grace, as His messengers. "This is a trustworthy saying, and everyone should accept it: 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners'—and I am the worst of them all. But **God had mercy on me so that Christ Jesus could use me as a prime example of his great patience with even the worst sinners.** Then others will realize that they, too, can believe in him and receive eternal life." 1 Timothy 1:15-16 (NLT)

C. After the fish spit Jonah out onto the beach, he finally went to Ninevah and delivered the message God had given him.

"Then the Lord spoke to Jonah a second time: 'Get up and go to the great city of Nineveh, and deliver the message I have given you.' **This time Jonah obeyed the Lord's command and went to Nineveh**, a city so large that it took three days to see it all." Jonah 3:1-3 (NLT)

IMPORTANT! Jonah's story reminds us that although God gives us freedom to obey or disobey, He is still the sovereign King of the Universe. He has every right to give us difficult assignments and insist that we

complete them. "I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say, **'My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.'**" Isaiah 46:9b-10 (NIV)

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything." James 1:2-4 (NIV)

D. Miraculously, even though Jonah proclaimed only impending judgment and doom, everyone in Ninevah repented of their evil ways.

"On the day Jonah entered the city, he shouted to the crowds: **'Forty days from now Nineveh will be destroyed!'** The people of Nineveh believed God's message, and from the greatest to the least, they declared a fast and put on burlap to show their sorrow. When the king of Nineveh heard what Jonah was saying, he stepped down from his throne and took off his royal robes. He dressed himself in burlap and sat on a heap of ashes. Then the king and his nobles sent this decree throughout the city: 'No one, not even the animals from your herds and flocks, may eat or drink anything at all. People and animals alike must wear garments of mourning, and **everyone must pray earnestly to God. They must turn from their evil ways and stop all their violence. Who can tell? Perhaps even yet God will change his mind and hold back his fierce anger from destroying us.'**" Jonah 3:4-9 (NLT)

IMPORTANT! The Ninevites apparently knew very little about God and only heard words of judgment from Jonah, yet they repented on the chance that God might be merciful to them. Since we have the Bible and understand all about God's plan of salvation through Christ, we are without excuse when we refuse to repent. **"The people of Nineveh will stand up against this generation on judgment day and condemn it,** for they repented of their sins at the preaching of Jonah. Now someone greater than Jonah is here—but you refuse to repent." Matthew 12:41 (NLT)

IMPORTANT! God is merciful and kind! He doesn't want to destroy sinful people. He wants us to turn from our evil ways. **"When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways,** he relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened." Jonah 3:10 (NIV)

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that **whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.** For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God." John 3:16-21 (NIV)

IMPORTANT! In order to be faithful messengers of the Good News about Jesus, we also need to be faithful messengers of the bad news about our sinfulness and God's impending judgment. "...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God..." Romans 3:23 (NIV) "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 6:23 (NLT) "Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment..." Hebrews 9:27 (NIV) "And I saw a great white throne and the one sitting on it. The earth and sky fled from his presence, but they found no place to hide. I saw the dead, both great and small, standing before God's throne. And the books were opened, including the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to what they had done, as recorded in the books... And **anyone whose name was not found recorded in the Book of Life was thrown into the lake of fire.**" Revelation 20:11-12 & 15 (NLT) "If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." Romans 10:9 (NIV) "...**Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.**" Romans 10:13 (NIV)

J O H N S C H M I D T • 03-02-25 • john@centeringlives.com

Connect Group Discussion Questions:

Read Jonah 3, and then discuss the following questions:

1. Why was Jonah willing to go to Ninevah the second time the Lord spoke to him? Why does God sometimes give us assignments we don't want and insist we complete them? (Isaiah 46:9-10, James 1:2-4)

2. Why do you think God sent a self-righteous, vindictive, and deliberately disobedient prophet like Jonah to the wicked, greedy, cruel, idolatrous people of Ninevah? (1 Timothy 1:15-16, Psalm 103:8-14, Ephesians 2:8-9)
3. How do you feel about being a messenger/ambassador of the Good News? (2 Corinthians 5:17-21)
4. Discuss the following statements:
 - God is merciful and kind! He doesn't want to destroy sinful people. He wants us to turn from our evil ways. (Jonah 3:10, John 3:16-21)
 - In order to be faithful messengers of the Good News about Jesus, we also need to be faithful messengers of the bad news about our sinfulness and God's impending judgment. (Romans 3:23, 6:23, 10:9 & 13; Hebrews 9:27; Revelation 20:11-12 & 15)
 - Since we have so much more information about God (and His plan of salvation through Jesus) we are without excuse if we refuse to repent. (Matthew 12:41, Romans 1:18-20)
5. Spend some time as a group in prayer asking God to bring a spiritual awakening/revival to our church and our city like He brought to Ninevah. What would it look like if God did this?