

Am I Like Jonah?

And if we read the book of Jonah carefully, we may discover something uncomfortable: We may be more like Jonah than we think.

Am I like Jonah when I know what God says, but do something else? God's command could not have been clearer: *"Arise, go to Nineveh..."* (Jonah 1:2). Jonah understood exactly what God wanted, but instead of going to Nineveh, *"Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD..."* (Jonah 1:3). His problem was not ignorance; it was a lack of obedience. Are there things that I know God has instructed me to do, but I'm still not doing them?

Am I like Jonah when I run from difficult responsibilities? Nineveh was not where Jonah wanted to go, so he headed in the opposite direction. We may not board a ship for Tarshish, but we can still run from God. We run when we avoid the difficult conversation we know we should have. We run when an opportunity to teach someone the gospel appears and we remain silent. We run when obedience becomes uncomfortable and we begin looking for an easier way.

Am I like Jonah when I care more about my comfort than lost souls? After Jonah finally preached to Nineveh, the people repented. God showed them mercy, and Jonah became angry. Then Jonah sat outside the city, and God caused a plant to grow over him for shade. When God caused the plant to wither, Jonah became upset. God exposed the problem in Jonah's heart. Jonah cared deeply about his own comfort and think so's, but he did not share God's concern for thousands of people who needed mercy. God asked: *"And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city...?"* (Jonah 4:11). What about us? Can we become more upset when something inconveniences us than when someone is spiritually lost? Do we care more about our comfort, schedules, preferences, possessions, and routines than about reaching souls?

It is easy to shake our heads at Jonah. It is much harder to look into the mirror. Before we criticize a prophet who ran from God, became angry over a plant, and struggled to care about Nineveh, each of us should ask: "Am I like Jonah?"

- by Josh McCord

Honesty, the Only Policy

For years it has been stated that "honesty is the best policy." Nonetheless, there have been and continue to be those who act otherwise - Those who want to lie, cheat, over exaggerate, and deal dishonestly with others.

No matter how far from right this world may go, God's word must be respected. From it, we learn that honesty is commanded. Paul told the church at Rome to "...provide things honest in the sight of all men" (Rom. 12:17). For the Corinthians he prayed that they might "do that which is honest..." (2 Cor. 13:7). Is any less expected of God's people today? Certainly not!

But someone says, "It doesn't hurt to tell a little white lie," "It's o.k. to stretch the truth to get what you want." "God understands if I have to cover up some minor details from time to time." Fact is, it does hurt, it's not o.k., and He doesn't understand! Whether "white", "slightly stretched", or "just a cover up" - a lie is a lie! For the Christian, honesty is the only policy.

- by David McPherson

Authority and Communication

We so very often stress the importance of Bible authority—and rightly so. Everything we believe and practice must be authorized by God's Word (Col. 3:17). But how is that authority communicated to us?

God has communicated His will through command, example, and necessary inference. Interestingly, that is also the way we communicate with one another.

Consider a mother who wants her children to clean their rooms. She may begin by setting an example. She goes about cleaning and putting her own house in order, hoping the children will take the hint and do the same. If that doesn't work, she may communicate by implication: "There is going to be a special surprise for those who have clean rooms." The children can understand what she means even though she hasn't directly commanded them to clean. And if neither example nor implication gets the job done, she may finally give a direct command: "Go to your

rooms and clean them up!" That's communication.

And that's how God has communicated with us. The Bible contains commands to be obeyed, examples to be followed, and truths that can be understood through necessary inference. All three are legitimate means of communication, and all three must be respected when they come from God.

Our responsibility is to listen to what God has said, understand His will, and obey it. Think!

- by Greg Gwin