



“God Can Use Your Reluctance”

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An Inconvenient Truth for Jonah

God had told Abram, “Leave your own country behind you, and your own people, and go to the land I will guide you to. If you do, I will cause you to become the father of a great nation; I will bless you and make your name famous, and you will be a blessing to many others. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you; and the entire world will be blessed because of you.” Genesis 12:1-3 (LB)

WHY WAS JONAH RELUCTANT TO DO GOD’S WILL?

1. He believed some people were _____ of God’s love.

Didn’t I say before I left home that you would do this, LORD? That is why I ran away to Tarshish! I knew that you are a merciful and compassionate God, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. You are eager to turn back from destroying people.

Jonah 4:2 (NLT)

2. He was more concerned about _____ than _____.

You feel sorry for yourself when your shelter is destroyed, though you did no work to put it there, and it is, at best, short-lived. And why shouldn’t I feel sorry for a great city like Nineveh...?

Jonah 4:10-11 (NLT)

Your Job According to Jesus...

Therefore go and make disciples in all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and then teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you.

Matthew 28:19-20 (LB)

WHY ARE WE RELUCTANT TO DO GOD’S WILL?

1. We think...I need to be _____.

But Moses pleaded with the LORD, “O Lord, I’m not very good with words. I never have been, and I’m not now, even though you have spoken to me. I get tongue-tied, and my words get tangled.” Then the LORD asked Moses, “Who makes a person’s mouth? Who decides whether people speak or do not speak, hear or do not hear, see or do not see? Is it not I, the LORD? Now go! I will be with you as you speak, and I will instruct you in what to say.”

Exodus 4:10-12 (NLT)

2. We think...I need to do it by my own _____.

Unless the LORD builds a house, the work of the builders is wasted. Unless the LORD protects a city, guarding it with sentries will do no good.

Psalm 127:1 (NLT)

3. We think...the _____ isn't _____.

Another time, when he invited a man to come with him and to be his disciple, the man agreed—but wanted to wait until his father's death. Jesus replied, "Let those without eternal life concern themselves with things like that. Your duty is to come and preach the coming of the Kingdom of God to all the world."

Another said, "Yes, Lord, I will come, but first let me ask permission of those at home." But Jesus told him, "Anyone who lets himself be distracted from the work I plan for him is not fit for the Kingdom of God."

Luke 9:59-62 (LB)

4. We think...I have a better _____ for my life.

"Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go."

John 21:18 (NIV)

HOW CAN YOU DO GOD'S WILL DESPITE YOUR RELUCTANCE?

1. Take _____ forward.

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)

2. Set aside your _____.

Jonah began by going a day's journey into the city, proclaiming, "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown."

Jonah 3:4 (NIV)

The Hebrew word *hapak* has a double meaning:

- It can be translated as overthrown like a city that is destroyed (Sodom and Gomorrah).
- It can also be translated as to turn, to change, to transform oneself.

3. Watch God work _____.

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 3:5-9 (NLT)

4. _____ and _____ God's grace.

When God saw what they had done and how they had put a stop to their evil ways, he changed his mind and did not carry out the destruction he had threatened.

Jonah 3:10 (NLT)

So let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up.

Galatians 6:9 (NLT)

Sources: *The Prodigal Prophet* by Tim Keller, *The Communicator's Commentary Volume 20* by Ogilvie, and various illustrations from Preaching Today.

ANSWER KEY:

WHY WAS JONAH RELUCTANT TO DO GOD'S WILL?

1. He believed some people were **UNWORTHY** of God's love.
2. He was more concerned about **HIMSELF** than **OTHERS**.

WHY ARE WE RELUCTANT TO DO GOD'S WILL?

1. We think...I need to be **PERFECT**.
2. We think...I need to do it by my own **POWER**.
3. We think...the **TIMING** isn't **RIGHT**.
4. We think...I have a better **PLAN** for my life.

HOW CAN YOU DO GOD'S WILL DESPITE YOUR RELUCTANCE?

1. Take **ONE STEP** forward.
2. Set aside your **EXPECTATIONS**.
3. Watch God work **THROUGH YOU**.
4. **ACCEPT** and **EMULATE** God's grace.