

SUNDAY WORD

YOUR FAMILY. YOUR HOME JAN 16, 2020

BREAKTHROUGH

PART 3

TURNING BREAKDOWNS TO BREAKTHROUGHS

WARM-UP

Jonah, God's prophet, ran away when God told him to preach to his enemies. This is the equivalent of a Jew during WWII going to Berlin to talk to Hitler to tell him that God loved him. It would be unheard of. So, Jonah ran. God said to go east and he went west, to Tarshish, which was the furthest west known to man in Jonah's day. When you run from God, you can end up in the strangest of places. One small choice to run from God in one area at age 20 can sometimes take 40 years before we realize how far we have drifted and how deep we have plunged.

ONE BIG IDEA

WE CAN RUN FROM GOD, BUT WE CANNOT OUTFRAN GOD.

STUDY

JONAH 1:1-3- "The Lord gave this message to Jonah son of Amittai: 2 "Get up and go to the great city of Nineveh. Announce my judgment against it because I have seen how wicked its people are." 3 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." (NLT)

LEARN

HOW DOES GOD MEET US AND TAKE US FROM THE MESSES WE HAVE OFTEN MADE TO THE PLACES HE WANTS US TO BE?

OUR BREAKDOWNS HELP US TO LAY DOWN (JONAH 1:17)

Jonah had other plans but God intervened. The Lord is always intervening in our lives. Bear in mind: God's intervention is never punishment. In this story, the fish, the plant, the worm, and the wind are all arranged by God. God calls this large fish to serve Him at the appointed time and the appointed place. God is sovereign over every detail of every large fish of life that swallows us up.

The Lord does not usually protect us from the consequences of our own choices and actions. In his faithfulness and graciousness towards us, God comes with us into the consequences of our choices

in order to save us there. Jonah had chosen the sea as his escape route; it was there that the Lord expected him. God does not take us out of our messes, but meets us in them. And after we have made a mess of the situation and we take our hands off, while we finally break down, we can then lay down. This is the lowest place Jonah can go. It is the place of death. But it is precisely the place where God meets him.

Sometimes, a time of breakdown is good for us. Breakdowns cause us to lay down before the Lord. By lay down, I mean to have serious reflection about our walk and life. Breakdowns reveal the depth of our sin and rebelliousness. When we make saviors out of entertainment, relationships or our friends or our children or our careers, they will fail us. And when they do, that realization is where God is trying to get our attention. God meets us there to show us there is only one Savior. Breakdowns help you to lay down.

OUR LAYDOWNS HELP US TO LOOK UP (JONAH 2:1-2)

When you lay down, what is the only place you can look? Up! No more running. No more excuses. Jonah has nothing left, except God. In the belly, in his lay down, Jonah gave thanks to God and praise Him. Interestingly, he is not asking God to get him out of the fish, but thanking God for delivering him from drowning by sending the fish. Remember, running from God is choosing death. You are going to die inwardly since God is our life and source of life. And Jonah had gotten the lowest of the low before God saved him. When you run from God that is what life will eventually be, a hell. Here's the good news: God can turn TOMBS into WOMBS. When you are broken and finally laid down to look up to the Lord, no matter how bad you've been or how dark a place you've gotten yourself to, God can transform that "place of death" into a "place of new life."

HOW DO YOU LOOK UP TO THE LORD WHEN YOU HAVE BEEN LAID DOWN BY HIM?

A. LOOK UP BY EMBRACING GOD'S WORD

God's Word becomes real and relevant to Jonah again. That is where he finds confidence, hope, motivation, urgency, power. All of his passion here is fueled by God's Word. God wants to get His Word to you. If you are never in His Word, how will He get that message to you? Friends, get back into His Word!

B. LOOK UP EVEN IN OUR GUILT

Do not let guilt stop you from praying. He is waiting for you to look at Him, to call out to Him and pray. God meets you right where you are. There is love beneath the waves of guilt. Our sins could reach far, but His grace reaches farther. Our sins are deep, but His love runs deeper!

C. LOOK UP EVEN IN DESPERATE SITUATIONS (JONAH 2:3)

Jonah sees God hurling him into the sea. He was in an impossible circumstance. It would be one thing to fall overboard when the sea is calm. It is another thing to be thrown over where 20 to 30-foot waves come at you and you know you're done. Did you notice that God allowed things to move from bad to worse for Jonah before He sent the fish? I think it is so that God can get all the glory. Jonah takes no credit here for being alive. Call out to the Lord when you are desperate. Call out to Him even if you know things cannot change. God specializes in the impossible.

D. LOOK UP IN HOPE (JONAH 2:4B)

Jonah ran away from the Lord, thinking he would never be allowed ever in the place where God's presence dwelled. But the Lord replaced his despair with the hope that Jonah would be praising Him with his people again. God is a God of living hope. Hope says, "I was so lost, God, but you have not given up on me. My days ahead are good because you are with me! I will not give up or let up!" Jonah realized if God loved him so much to plunge to the bottom of the deepest sea to rescue him out of a mess, he himself had created, surely, he had purposes for him he had yet to see and understand.

BREAKDOWNS ARE FOR OUR BREAKTHROUGHS (JONAH 2:8-10)

God does not intend for us to be broken and laid down simply to end up looking up at God. No, he wants to take us deeper with Him into the next level. Therefore, our breakdowns in life are to prepare us for a breakthrough.

Every breakthrough God wants for your life will come through the method and means of grace. Grace is what started your Christian walk. Grace is what will help you for a breakthrough in your life to walk closer and deeper with the Lord. Tim Keller once said, "Grace is the undeserved gift of an unobligated giver

The breakthrough for Jonah was a breakthrough of God's grace. And that did not come if it had not been for the breakdown in his life. When God accomplished what He wanted in Jonah for that time, the fish once again obeys the LORD and vomits out Jonah on to dry land.

If you feel like you are a mess spiritually, open up God's Word again and speak to Him from the belly of the problem and mess. Really search your heart. Do I believe Jesus loves me despite my unworthiness? But I am still thankful that we have a God more willing to show us grace than we are to receive it. May His Spirit grant us the grace to even receive His amazing grace.

GROW

Application Questions:

1. Which do you think was Jonah's biggest problem: anger, pride, selfishness, depression, being judgmental, or something else? Which of these issues do you struggle with personally? About what situations do you sometimes find yourself angry at God? What does this story reveal about God? His ways?
2. Like Jonah, we all want to receive God's forgiveness, but we are not always willing to forgive. To whom are you unwilling to extend God's grace and forgiveness? What can result when we hold on to anger, even when it seems justified? Why do we struggle with giving forgiveness more than receiving forgiveness? What are some reasons (or excuses) we use for not forgiving? How do we benefit from forgiving?

PRAY FOR EACH OTHER IN YOUR GROUP