

Jonah 1 & 2

Growth Guide

For Individual Use Only

Read Jonah 1:1-5, 17; 2:1-10 from a Bible version of your choice. Put yourself in Jonah’s shoes. Why is he running? Why is he delaying his obedience to God? He told God he’d serve him as prophet, now he’s breaking his promise to God. Why? What were the consequences for his actions? What did it take to turn him around?

Put yourself in God’s shoes. Why did God get so angry at Jonah? How would you have dealt with Jonah’s failure to use what God had given him to address a huge opportunity – to save Nineveh and its people from impending judgement? Think of the impact Jonah had on Nineveh and how that impact rippled down generationally because he stopped procrastinating from carrying out his purpose.

1. What is procrastination in general? Is it really that serious of a behavior? Think of the potential consequences or dangers of procrastinating? To help, reflect on these two proverbs, one coming from the Bible and the other from a philosopher and statesman:

“A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest—and poverty will come on you like a thief.” Proverbs 6:10-11

“The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.” — Edmund Burke

2. What is procrastination in relation to God? How serious does God take procrastination? Here are two passages you can use to reflect on:

“I prefer obedience more than sacrifice.” 1 Samuel 15:22

“To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice.” Proverbs 21:3

3. Read the passage below and reflect on it. Isn’t it beautiful!

For you created my inmost being;

you knit me together in my mother’s womb.

14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;

your works are wonderful,

I know that full well.

15 My frame was not hidden from you

when I was made in the secret place,

when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.

16 Your eyes saw my unformed body;

all the days ordained for me were written in your book

before one of them came to be.

17 How precious to me are your thoughts, God! Psalm 139:13-17

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4. God has several callings on our lives. The first is the call to salvation: *"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."* John 3:16 Have you responded to that call? If not, do not proceed. You need to answer this call before you can move on to the next.

The second call is the call to ministry:

"Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." And with that he breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.' As the Father has sent me so I send you." John 20:21-22

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Matthew 28:18-20

What are you doing for heaven's sake? What are you doing to participate in this second purpose for your life?

5. After 31 years as a Pastor, I've found this proverb to be true: *"20% of the people do 80% of the work."* Why is that? What reasons do people give for not volunteering to serve, whether it is within the church or in the community?

What reasons do you have for not serving and are they legit or not?

6. Reflect on this statement: *"Your purpose is found at the intersection of who God created you to be, your life experiences, your wounds and the opportunities that emerge in your life."*

Brainstorm forms of service that match who God created you to be, the life experiences you have, and the current unmet needs around you. Consider, if you aren't already involved, some form of service in the church or in the community, to pick one mission to do once a month and do it. Get involved and see if your reasons for not getting involved were valid or not.

In my experience, most people are under involved. They use too much of their resources and God-given talents on themselves and too less on the purposes of God. That may be you or not. Some people have the opposite problem. They are over committed and burning out. Is that you? If so, why do you have a hard time saying No?

Take steps to bring balance to your life. Reserve some time, talents, and resources for yourself and your family. It's not being selfish. It's having healthy boundaries. Jesus took lots of time for rest in his ministry and he used the resources he had both for God and for himself and his disciples.