

JAM JONAH

CALLED, RELOCATED AND SENT



JOURNEY WITH US AS WE MOVE BEYOND BEING PASSIVE OBSERVERS AND BECOME ACTIVE DISCIPLES OF JESUS
6 - 27 September 2026

Johannesburg is a city of opportunity, ambition, diversity, creativity and possibility. BUT it is also a city where many young people experience pressure, inequality, unemployment, loneliness, violence, corruption, injustice and uncertainty about the future. For young professionals' life can easily become a cycle of work, traffic, deadlines, money, social life and survival. While unemployment creates its own issues of hopelessness, withdrawal and financial strain with often leads to mental health issues. Which grew from lives of students that were focusing on passing, graduating on time and finding success. For teenagers they face pressures of finding themselves in this busy, overwhelming and consuming world has led us to a place where even a twelve-year-old can be diagnosed with deep mental health issues. In the middle of all of this, Jesus is still calling young people to "Follow Him".

The story of Jonah is not simply about a man, a fish and a city. It is a story about a person who was called by God to make a difference in the city God had sent him. Jonah wanted to run, and at times we want to run too. Run into our careers, into entertainment, into relationships, into comfort, into busyness, running because we believe that someone else will deal with the ill that young people face in our city. BUT God calls Jonah toward Nineveh! God is calling you to Johannesburg where injustice, hopelessness and brokenness have become normal.

This series invites us to use **youth month** to move beyond being Sunday Christians and passive observers into becoming active disciples of Jesus. To say:

"I am Jonah, I have been called. I may have run. I may have struggled. But God is still sending me." The title invites us to ask deep seeking questions of who we are in relation to Jonah, if we are willing to fully submit to the will of God regardless of our own feelings, boundaries and self-justice. Moving from passive Christianity to active disciples means allowing God to control every aspect of our identity in discipleship, giving away our selfhood to take on our Christhood.

I am Jonah called to be relocated for ministry sent into Nineveh.

Blessings

Lolo: sent to be a pastor to the young flock in Bryanston by the will of God through Jesus Christ.

Called, Relocated and Sent

Series Theme:
From comfort to
calling. From
spectators to
disciples. From
the church
building to the
city

WEEK 1:

I am called

WEEK 2:

I am not too far gone

WEEK 3:

I am sent

WEEK 4:

I am sent to people i
might not choose

WEEK 2 - I am not too far gone

God's power to save, restore and recommission. Falling short is not the end of the story when we return to God

Jonah found himself in a place where he could no longer rely on his own strength. Inside the fish Jonah prayed. The place where Jonah was trapped become the place where he encountered God again. Jonah was relocated from his goal and recommissioned into God's will for him to be a disciple. In the places where we feel trapped that is often the place where God breathes his life-giving hope in our lives, where we are reminded of our call to the other side. Discipleship means returning. The Grace of God restores us to continue following Jesus. We need to ask ourselves "Lord where have I been running from you? Where do I need to return?"

WORSHIP SONG:

Callie Day – Hear My Prayer (Acoustic Version)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y6tuT4Rk4NU&list=RDy6tuT4Rk4NU&start_radio=1

Jonah 2:1-9 New International Version

2 ¹ From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the Lord his God. ² He said: "In my distress I called to the Lord, and he answered me. From deep in the realm of the dead, I called for help, and you listened to my cry. ³ You hurled me into the depths, into the very heart of the seas, and the currents swirled about me; all your waves and breakers swept over me. ⁴ I said, 'I have been banished from your sight; yet I will look again toward your holy temple.' ⁵ The engulfing waters threatened me, the deep surrounded me; seaweed was wrapped around my head. ⁶ To the roots of the mountains I sank down; the earth beneath barred me in forever. But you, Lord my God, brought my life up from the pit. ⁷ "When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, Lord, and my prayer rose to you, to your holy temple. ⁸ "Those who cling to worthless idols turn away from God's love for them. ⁹ But I, with shouts of grateful praise, will sacrifice to you. What I have vowed I will make good. I will say, 'Salvation comes from the Lord.'"

REFLECTION ON THIS WEEK'S BIBLE READINGS

written by: Upile uThixo Bongco

Disobedience is a slow dance with death. The death of money, the death of friendships and relationships, the death of our destiny and ultimately, the death of self. The Good News is we serve a living God who not only conquered death on the cross but is also willing and able to give life to the dead (Rom 4:17). It is the same God who asks us to die to self so that He may live in us (Gal 2:20). However, our humanness often deceives us into taking the long route to the latter death, often because of prioritizing our own plans above the Lord's. And yet, we serve a God who wastes nothing, working all things together for our good (Romans 8:28). A God so gracious, He sends us still. A God so intentional, He asks of us what He is confident we can do through Him (Phil 4:13) however ugly our past may look, however far we've fled from God.

Jonah 2 invites us to share in a moment of deep intimacy with God: Prayer. This is the first time we see Jonah speak to the Lord since he was called to go to Ninevah; Not directly after the Lord sends him, not in the boat when the sailors ask him to pray to his god, not even as the great fish swallows him whole. It seems Jonah delays until he has reached the end of himself before reaching for the Lord. But why wait? Why did Jonah wait until he was inside the fish for three days and three nights before calling to the Lord? Why did he wait until 'life was ebbing away (before he) remembered the Lord?' One might claim it was the shame of fleeing

BIBLE READINGS:

WEEK 1:

Jonah 1:1-3

Psalm 139: 7-10

Matthew 28: 18-20

WEEK 2:

Jonah 2:1-9

Psalm 18:6

Luke 15: 11-24

WEEK3:

Jonah 3:1-10

Psalm 103:8-13

Matthew 12:38-41

WEEK 4:

Jonah 4:1-11

Isaiah 55:6-9

Matthew 20:1-16

from God and that kept him away because, *'how do I ask the same one I was running from to rescue me?'* Another might call it pride, because going back to God means having to fulfil the very mission he rejected. One possibility we hesitate to admit to is the fear of picking up our own cross. Perhaps knowing that the Lord often calls us to do *'the hard thing'* – the thing no-one wants to do because it asks us to sacrifice our worldly treasures, our social standing, our own plans, the thing that could end in our persecution. The cross is heavy indeed. And it is often in the very moment where we must pick it up, that we forget that God covers where He calls (Isaiah 41:10).

The human tendency to rely on ourselves and exhaust our options before running to God is one He has long considered. Although He instructs us in Proverbs 3:5 to *lean not on (our) own understanding*, we, just like Jonah, prioritize our own plans anyway, allowing our disobedience to create distance from God. But here, we meet a God so merciful, He breaks to position, waiting for us to reach the end of ourselves, to watch our worldly treasures die, only to learn that true life is found only in Him. In Luke 15:14-24 Jesus tells the story about the lost son, where the younger of two sons demands his inheritance from his father and moves to a distant land where he wastes all his money in wild living. Like Jonah, the son delays when his disobedience draws him towards death. He doesn't return home when he runs out of money or even when he is starved by the great famine. Instead, the son approaches a farmer that makes him feed his pigs and offers him nothing to eat. Like Jonah, this is where the lost son reaches the end of himself. This is where the breaking takes place. This is where disobedience comes to die, where we begin to understand that God's power is made perfect in our weakness (2 Cor 12:9). Where we then willingly die to self so that we may have life and have it abundantly (John 10:10)

Whether it is shame, pride or fear that is keeping distance between you and God, these scriptures remind us that there is no place too far from the merciful hand of God – not the belly of a fish, not a farmer's pigsty, not even the grave that wraps its ropes around us (Ps. 18: 5). Both Jonah and the lost son recognize that their distress is a result of their own disobedience. More importantly, they know that however far they've strayed, they can return. Even when Jonah felt the Lord had banished him from His sight, he knew he was not far from His presence. He knew his prayers would reach Him and that the Lord would answer (Jonah 2:2). Similarly, in Psalm 18, David shares how when he was in distress, his cry to God was heard in His sanctuary and God saved him from his enemies (Ps 18:3). While there is relief in knowing that God hears our cries and answers when we call, there is an even greater comfort in knowing that our return to God is worth celebrating.

In Luke 15:18-19, the lost son builds his repentance on shame, preparing to return to his father's house as a servant that is not worthy to be called his son. His breaking finds him operating from a place of self-condemnation. However, upon his return, the father calls for a celebration, dressing him in fine regalia, calling him out of the identity his shame, pride or fear had tied him to. This demonstrates how ours is a God who rejoices in our return, *when even one sinner repents* (Luke 15:10). More so, we meet God so gracious, He calls us higher. In contrast to the lost son, Jonah builds his repentance on the revelation that *"salvation comes from the Lord alone"* and he vows to take up his cross with *"grateful praise."* Unlike the lost son, Jonah's breaking reminded him who God called him to be, and he finally moved from a place of obedience. How comforting it is to know that God doesn't hold our transgressions against us, that He rejoices in our return, that He sends us, still.

The highs and lows of our past define us only if we let them. If we're willing to change our perspective, we could find something better: the character of God. Disobedience is certainly a deadly route to take. But however far you have gone is never too far gone, because salvation is a gift God gives freely to all those who call to Him and are called to Him. And just as the father called his son out of shame and into celebration, your return to God is too, worth celebrating, for this is the beginning of discipleship.

GROUP AND CLASS QUESTIONS to take the reflection deeper

1. Where has shame built you a hiding place from intimacy with God
2. What is God asking you to kill to walk in His purpose?
3. How can you begin to reconcile with God's unrelenting love for you and His calling over your life?

DAILY MEMORY VERSE AND PRAYERS

MONDAY

Verse: *"From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the Lord his God."* — Jonah 2:1

Prayer: Lord, teach me to turn to You in prayer, even from the deepest places.

TUESDAY

Verse: *"In my distress I called to the Lord, and he answered me."* — Jonah 2:2

Prayer: Lord, help me remember that You hear and answer me when I cry out to You.

WEDNESDAY

Verse: *"When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, Lord."* — Jonah 2:7

Prayer: Lord, bring my heart back to You whenever I feel overwhelmed or far away.

THURSDAY

Verse: *"In my distress I called to the Lord; I cried to my God for help."* — Psalm 18:6

Prayer: Lord, thank You that my cry reaches You and that You listen with love.

FRIDAY

Verse: *"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him."* — Luke 15:20

Prayer: Father, help me trust Your compassion and return to You with an open heart.

SATURDAY

Verse: *"This son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found."* — Luke 15:24

Prayer: Lord, restore what is lost in me and fill my life with the joy of Your welcome.

SUNDAY

Verse: *"But I, with shouts of grateful praise, will sacrifice to you."* — Jonah 2:9

Prayer: Lord, let my week end in grateful praise as I remember that salvation comes from You.

KIDS AND TEENAGER SECTION: Family Time Devotion: I Am Jonah

Written By Children & Youth Intern: Dineo MATHAKGONG

Week 2: I am not too far gone

INTRODUCTION

This series invites us to use youth month to move beyond being Sunday Christians and passive observers into becoming active disciples of Jesus. To say *"I am Jonah I may have run. I may have struggled, But God is still sending me"*. The title invites to ask deep seeking questions of who we are in relation, if we are willing to fully submit to the will of God regardless of our own feelings, boundaries and self-justice. Moving from passive Christianity to active disciples means allowing God to control every aspect of our identity in discipleship giving away our selfhood to take our Christhood,

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Jonah finds himself in a place of weakness. He is now inside the fish. In a place of hopelessness and where he finds himself cornered. After running away from God's command, Jonah finds himself in a dark and frightening situation. Where he is now confronted with the one thing he was running from. He turns to God in prayer. In this part of scripture we see in a dead-end Jonah finally turns to God. Sometimes life relocates us into situations we never planned for. It places us in places that we never thought that we would be. We may experience changes in our family, work, relationships, finances or spiritual journey. In those moments, it is easy to ask, **"Why am I here?"**.

Jonah reminds us that **a difficult location does not mean the absence of God.**

Sometimes God uses unexpected seasons to prepare us for what comes next. The fish was not Jonah's destination; it was part of the process that brought him back to God's purpose. The same can be true for us. A change in our circumstances may be uncomfortable, but God can still use that season to shape us,

strengthen our faith and prepare us to serve Him. Jonah story reminds us as well that we will never be too far from God. Even inside the fish Jonah found comfort in the Lord. Due to the fear that relocation brings. The fear of not knowing where God is leading us to next we tend to run and hide. Until we find ourselves in a space or position where we are unable to run from our purpose anymore. And because of this guilt we carry we do not see ourselves worthy to be in front of the lord. Or to even be sent in his name. But even in the darkest place. A place where it seems like there is no way out. He will give you a new purpose, relocate you. And put you back on the path to your destiny. **YOU ARE NOT TOO FAR GONE.**

Discussion Questions for Younger Children: (Ages 4-11)

1. What helps you remember that God still loves you when you make mistakes?
2. Have you ever done something wrong and felt scared to tell someone? How did you feel?
3. How can we show someone who has made a mistake that they are still loved?
4. When you make a mistake, what do you think God wants you to do?
5. What does it mean to you when we say, "God gives us another chance"?

Discussion Questions for Teenagers (Ages 12-18)

1. What would it look like for you to stop running from God and start moving towards Him?
2. What does a "fresh start" look like for you right now?
3. If you knew that God had not given up on you, what is one thing you would have the courage to change?
4. When you disappoint yourself, do you find it easier to forgive yourself or to believe that God can forgive you? Why?
5. What would it look like for you to stop running from God and start moving towards Him?

Family Activity: "Take One Step Back"

As a family, identify **one thing that may be pulling you away from God** and choose **one action you will all take this week to move closer to Him.**

Challenge:

"This week, we will leave one thing behind and take one step closer to God—together."

Examples: Pray together, forgive someone, spend less time on phones, read Scripture together, or help someone in need.

Prayer

Lord, thank You for reminding us that we are never too far gone for Your grace. When we feel lost, help us to turn back to You. Give us strength to trust You in every season, courage to follow where You lead, and hearts that are willing to be sent. Help our family to walk together in faith and to remember that wherever we are, You are with us.

In Jesus' name, Amen.