

A PROPHET ON THE RUN



JONAH 1: 1-17

WAVES OF REVIVAL

THE BOOK OF JONAH

by Lenya Heitzig

MEMORY VERSE

“When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, Lord, and my prayer rose to you, to your holy temple. “Those who cling to worthless idols turn away from God’s love for them. 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.’”

—Jonah 2: 7-9

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DAY ONE: RUNNING IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION

Have you ever heard of a “no first” person? No matter what the request may be, their visceral first response is a deafening, “No!” Usually, one parent in a family is that kinda person. As a result, the kids learn to ask the more amenable parent to go to the movie, spend the night, or join the circus in the hopes of receiving a resounding, “YES.”

Some people are such “no first” people they fall into the category called Oppositional Defiant Disorder. These are people who resist authority with both feet dug deeply into the dirt. Mayo Clinic describes this person as one who displays a pattern of uncooperative, defiant, and angry behavior toward people in authority. They feel mad at the world, and lose their temper regularly. This may manifest as road rage or verbal abuse. It may cause tension with authority figures, and trouble at work. It can also tear apart relationships.

Here is a partial list of ODD’s ugly symptoms:

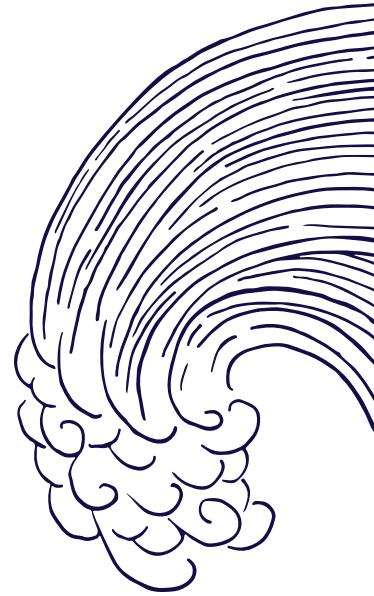
- Often loses temper
- Often argues with family and coworkers
- Actively defies or refuses to comply with rules and laws
- Deliberately annoys people
- Blames others for his or her mistakes
- Spiteful or vindictive

I wonder if Jonah suffered with either of these maladies? He sure seemed to be the “no first” prophet. When God said go East, he headed West. Those on the boat did not enjoy his defiant behavior. In fact, he created a lot of waves. Today, we’ll examine the consequences for Jonah and those around him when the prophet ran in the opposite direction of God’s will.

REFLECTION

READ THE VERSES BELOW AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me.” But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare, and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.



PRACTICAL OBSERVATION:

1. Our text begins with a conversation. List the two parties involved.

2. Where does the Lord command Jonah to go and explain why.

3. Where does Jonah go instead and explain why.

4. There are two repetitive phrases in this text; underline both and in your own words describe their connection.

Tarshish is the Hebrew word for a precious stone, the yellow jasper. It was also a city off of the Mediterranean Sea that corresponds with modern day Spain, near Gibraltar. It was the exact opposite direction from Nineveh where God commanded Jonah to go.

Went down No matter what direction a person goes to flee the Lord's presence, the Bible considers it a downward move. Tarshish may have seemed like an upgrade from Joppa with their merchant ships full of such great riches as gold, silver, and ivory. However, twice God destroyed the “ships of Tarshish” for their pride.

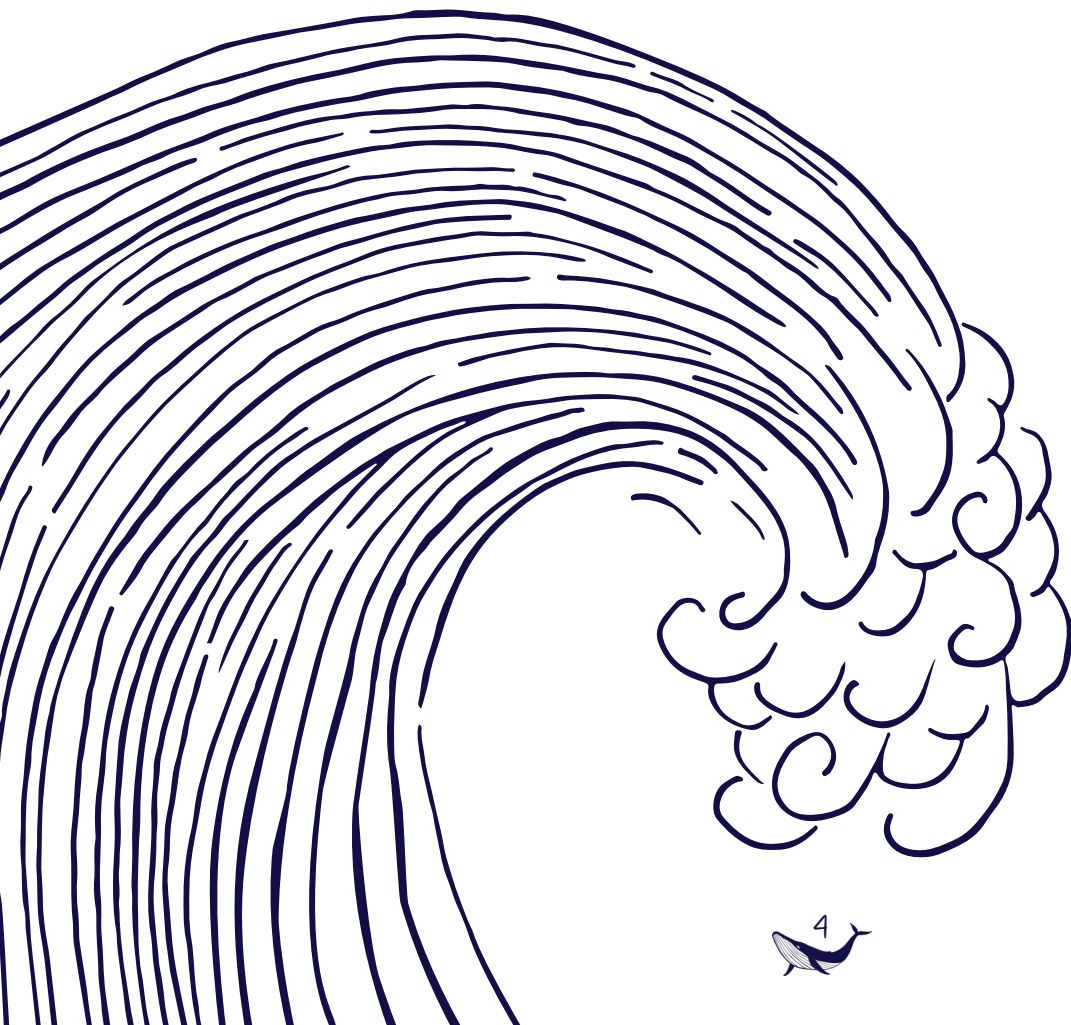
PERSONAL APPLICATION:

5. Write about a time when the Lord asked you to do something and you disobeyed. How did it feel? What were the consequences of that decision?
6. Have you ever felt like God withheld His presence from you? Describe the situation. When did this season end and why?

Presence of the Lord is mentioned 34 times in Scripture. It tells of joy for those in His presence and that the mountains melt like wax. Kings were crowned and priests were told to cast lots to determine God's will in His presence. It's hard to imagine someone would flee this place of peace and power.

“The most holy and important practice in the spiritual life is the presence of God – that is, every moment to take great pleasure that God is with you.”

—*Brother Lawrence*



DAY TWO: HIDING FROM YOUR PROBLEMS

Does running away from your problems count as exercise? I wish. Sadly, it's impossible to run from your problems because eventually they catch up with you. Why? Because, more often than not, you are the problem. That was the case with the first humans, Adam and Eve. God told them not to eat from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but they did anyway. In that moment their eyes were opened to see their nakedness, so they hid from God as He walked through the garden in the cool of the day.

God call out, "Adam, where are you?" Now, we know that God knew exactly where they were. After all he is omniscient—He knows everything. And He's omnipresent—He is everywhere all the time. The fallen couple thought they could outrun God by hiding from Him. He outed them. Then they learned the consequence of their sin was catastrophic. They were expelled from their home and were plagued with a curse that extends all the way to you and me. Just like Jonah, their sin affected others.

The lesson is that when you try to run from sin you end up going to places you never meant to go—for Jonah that was the belly of a whale. If you are on the lam, don't you think it's time to stop? It's exhausting. And when you do, God can right your wrongs and heal the hearts of those you've harmed.

Here's four simple steps to stop avoiding your problems:

1. Stop avoidance behavior. These include sleeping too much, working too much, or rebound dates. Many avoidance behaviors are unconscious. Stop to examine your responses. Remember, if nothing changes, nothing changes.
2. Surrender to the pain. Facing a problem is uncomfortable. But, you know the adage—no pain, no gain. Instead of trying to eliminate all anxiety and discomfort, give yourself permission to struggle.
3. Start Small. If your problems have compounded, start with the smallest aspect. If there's one big problem, break it down into bite-sized pieces. Starting small enables you to see progress more quickly and enhances your motivation.
4. Seek Support. Often, it's the feeling that we have to handle things alone that prompts us to run away. Don't hesitate to ask for help or assistance if you need it. You'll find others are willing to help.

REFLECTION

READ THE VERSES BELOW AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

But the LORD sent out a great wind on the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship was about to be broken up. Then the mariners were afraid; and every man cried out to his god, and threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea, to lighten the load. But Jonah had gone down into the lowest parts of the ship, had lain down, and was fast asleep. So the captain came to him, and said to him, "What do you mean, sleeper? Arise, call on your God; perhaps your God will consider us, so that we may not perish."



PRACTICAL OBSERVATION:

1. How did God respond to Jonah boarding a ship headed in the wrong direction and list the consequences.
2. How did the "mariners" respond to the storm and what action did they take?
3. Where was Jonah during the storm? Can you explain his behavior?
4. Describe how the captain handled the situation and what do you learn about him from his instructions?

Tempest describes literally casting or throwing upon the sea. With just the flick of His finger the Lord stirred up a squall. The Hebrew word means to agitate or rage. Merchant ships of OT times were small and incapable of withstanding severe storms. This ship was no match against the sovereign hand of God.

Tired Just like Jesus, while the storm raged the prophet slept. But there was a big difference in their reasons for catching some Z's between the two. Jesus rested knowing that He was God and that He would calm the seas to teach the disciples a lesson. However, Jonah slept the sleep of insolence. Now God was going to teach Him a lesson.

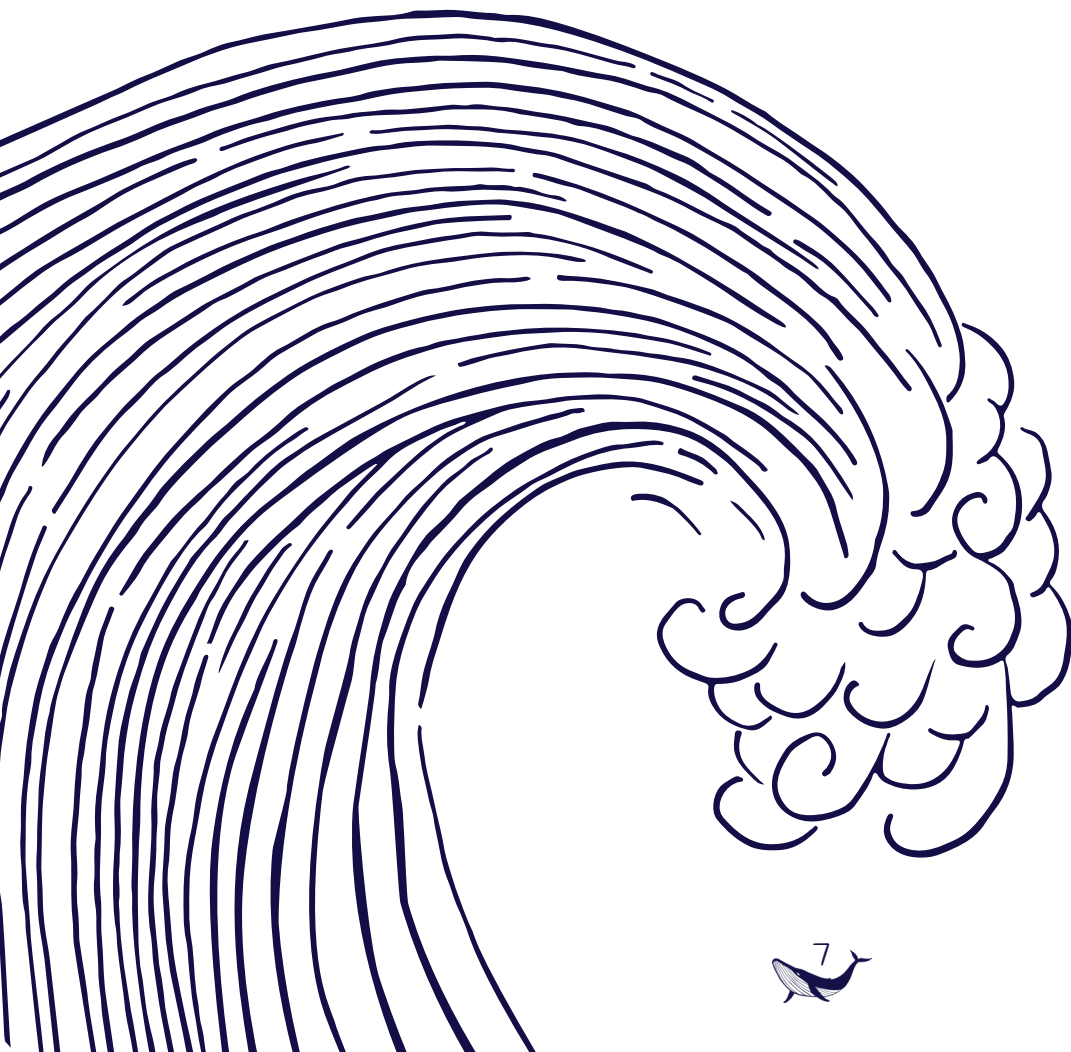
PERSONAL APPLICATION:

5. Make a list of some of the storms you have faced in life. Maybe they were debt or disease. Like the mariners did you need to abandon some things in order to lighten the load?
6. Jonah's sins led to consequences for those around him. When we sin it often harms others. Who has been hurt by one of your sins? Have you made things right with those harmed? If not, decide to be reconciled to them today.

Throw it away! *The writer of Hebrews likened the Christian life to a race. To win participants must be light on their feet. "Lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1). Treasures can be a trap. Like the mariners, there are times we must let go of things weighing us down*

"Christianity is the only faith whose founder died for His followers in order to enable them to escape the consequences of their sins."

—Tim LaHaye



DAY THREE: TELLING IT LIKE IT IS

Remember the late 60's hit TV show Dragnet? Even if you don't, I'm certain the distinctive four note music line, 'Dum-de-dum-dum,' created a wormhole in your brain. Sgt. Joe Friday spoke the opening dialogue in rapid-fire staccato: "The story you are about to hear is true; the names have been changed to protect the innocent."

Dragnet found a resurgence in 1987 when Dan Ackroyd reprised the role of Sgt. Joe Friday while Tom Hanks portrayed his partner. It was Ackroyd who brought this famous line to life, "Just the facts, ma'am." It was the officers way of saying just tell it like it is. No embellishment. No theatrics. No politics. Just the raw details.

That's what the mariners wanted Jonah to do—just tell it like it is. Who are you? Where did you come from? What are you doing here? They wanted him to speak honestly without avoiding unpleasant details. And that's exactly what the prophet did. In essence, he gave them his testimony. I'm a Hebrew who believes in the one true God, Creator of heaven and earth. It's remarkable the impact these words had on his shipmates.

REFLECTION

READ THE VERSES BELOW AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

And they said to one another, “Come, let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this trouble has come upon us.” So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. Then they said to him, “Please tell us! For whose cause is this trouble upon us? What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?” So he said to them, “I am a Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.”



PRACTICAL OBSERVATION:

1. Describe what the mariners did next and the reason for their action.
2. Explain who was the source of their current problem and why.
3. The mariners barrage the prophet with questions. What do you think they were trying to understand?
4. First Jonah describes his relationship to God. In your own words define “the fear of the Lord? Did Jonah exemplify this attribute?
5. Next the prophet describes the Hebrew God to the mariners. In your own words, describe the difference between Jonah’s God and idols?

Casting Lots *Is mentioned 77 times in the OT. Similar to flipping a coin, ancients believe it was a way to discern God’s will. Solomon wrote, “The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD” (Proverbs 16:33). God allowed the Israelites to use this practice.*



PERSONAL APPLICATION:

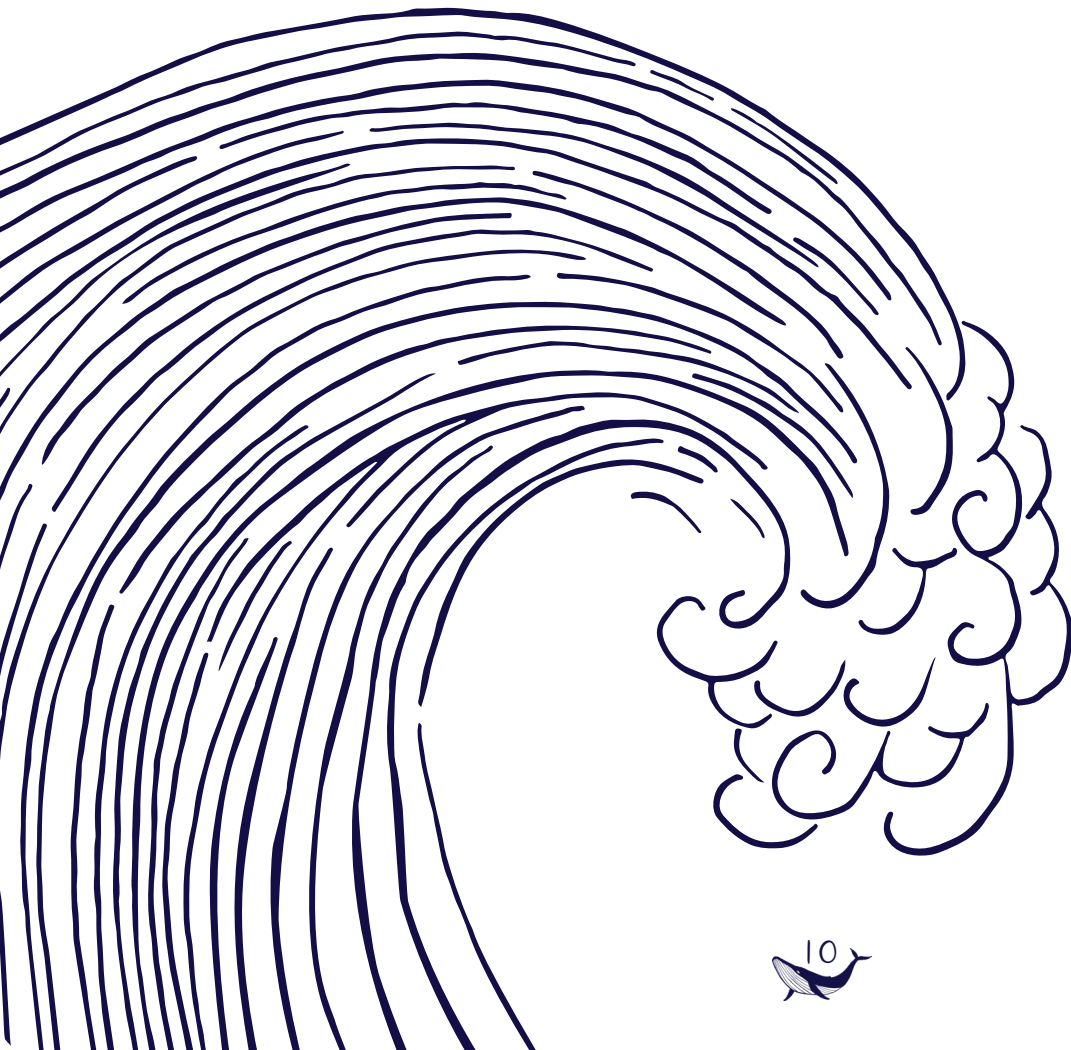
6. Do you fear God? What does that look like in your life?
7. How does knowing that God created you in His image impact you? Write a prayer thanking Him that you are “fearfully and wonderfully” made.

Fear of the Lord

The culmination of the fear of the Lord is obedience. Obedience during the highs and lows of our lives. Obedience is the true test of faith and our fear of the Lord. Obedience is hearing God’s Word and acting upon it—aligning our will to His will.

“But what is this fear of the Lord? It is that affectionate reverence, by which the child of God bends himself humbly and carefully to his Father’s law.”

—Charles Bridges



DAY FOUR: ADMITTING YOU'RE WRONG

In 2018, Tesla and SpaceX owner and current Twitter CEO Elon Musk made headlines after smoking marijuana during his interview with Joe Rogan on a live broadcast. Tesla's stock plummeted 9% after the interview and angered investors. At first Musk downplayed the incident saying it was legal in California where the Podcast took place. But eventually he admitted that his behavior was inappropriate and he would strive to be a better role model.

Admitting your wrong does not come naturally to people. Take Adam and Eve for example. Adam blamed Eve for eating the forbidden fruit and Eve accused the serpent. In fact, shifting blame often feels satisfying. A 2012 study found that refusing to apologize can actually boost your self-esteem and lead to "increased feeling of power/control." But those feelings are short lived leading to guilt and ruined relationships.

Taking ownership of your mistakes in the workplace is imperative. It shows others that you are accountable for your actions and willing to take responsibility. You'll gain integrity and trust with your team which allows them to move forward and find a solution together.

Today we'll see that once confronted with his mistake, Jonah takes responsibility for it. He told the crew on the boat that he was fleeing God's presence and the storm was his fault. Here's four steps to making your wrongs right:

- 1) Apologize for your mistake
- 2) Analyze what went wrong
- 3) Prioritize moving forward
- 4) Minimize regret



REFLECTION

READ THE VERSES BELOW AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

Then the men were exceedingly afraid, and said to him, “Why have you done this?” For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them. Then they said to him, “What shall we do to you that the sea may be calm for us?” – for the sea was growing more tempestuous. And he said to them, “Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will become calm for you. For I know that this great tempest is because of me.”



PRACTICAL OBSERVATION:

1. Describe the reaction of the men.
2. What information made the men alarmed?
3. Explain why you think the men asked Jonah for a solution to the storm.
4. What was Jonah’s solution and how do you think it made the crew feel?

Fear *The word “afraid” expresses a less degree of fear than terrified or frightened. “Exceedingly afraid” is often translated terrified in other Bible versions. These men didn’t just have the jitters. They were shaken to the core. It’s the kind of fear that knocks you off your feet.*

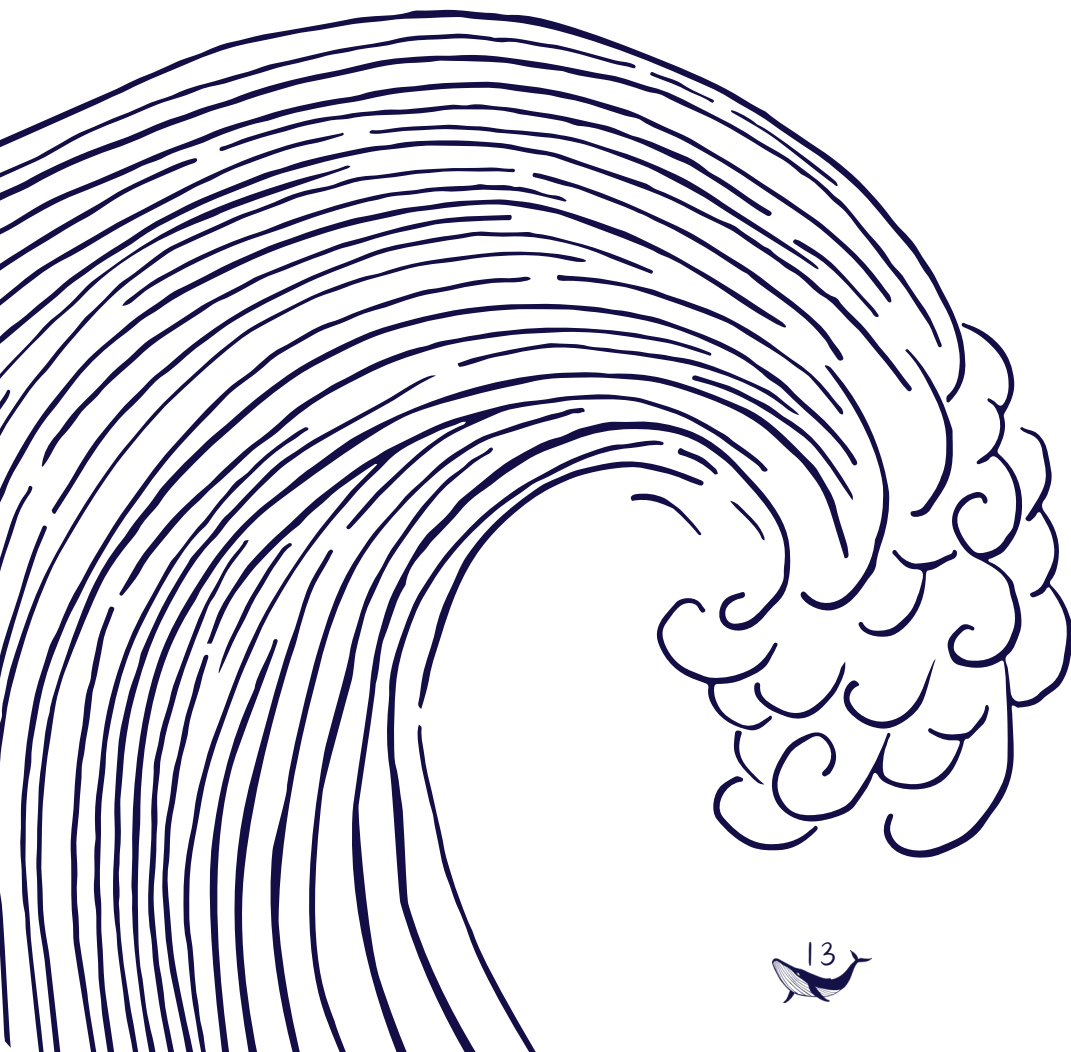
PERSONAL APPLICATION:

5. Have you ever felt terror? Take time to recount how it felt physically and what you were thinking.
6. The crew confronted Jonah for his sin. Have you ever had others point out your failings? How did you respond?

Friends have the obligation to hold one other accountable. Of course, we expect our friends to applaud when we succeed and sympathize when we're in pain. But a true friend will tell us the truth even if it hurts. "Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses" (Proverbs 27:6).

"Sometimes you have to shut up, swallow your pride and accept that you're wrong. It's not giving up, it's growing up."

—Anonymous



DAY FIVE: SAILING AGAINST THE TIDE

In *Castaway*, Tom Hanks plays a FedEx executive who must transform himself physically and emotionally to escape a deserted island after his plane crashes somewhere in the south pacific. His only hope of escape is to construct a boat by carving wood with an axe made from an ice skate found in one of the packages among the wreckage. Using plastic as a sail and making rope from tree fibers braided together he paddles wildly against the tide. At just the right moment he unfurls the sail to capture the prevailing wind and escape the current. At last he's escaped. We can't help but cheer as we witness our hero triumph over nature.

Today we read how the mariners rowed hard against the wind and waves created by a hazardous squall. In truth, a sailboat cannot sail directly upwind. Instead, they sail a zig-zag pattern known as tacking. But if conditions are poor and the sailors unseasoned, they can spend a lot of time moving quickly over the water only to discover they have made little or no progress. For our sailors, try as they might, they cannot beat the storm that they know was caused by Jonah as he ran from God. Exhausted, they realize that they cannot beat the odds and are forced to take desperate measures. Jonah must become "man overboard."

Sometimes storms come from God to get our attention. When the disciples rowed against the storm on the Sea of Galilee they discovered that Jesus was Lord over all—even a raging sea. And their faith needed to conquer fear. James reminds us that we should count it all joy when we encounter tough times because they have a heavenly purpose—making us more valuable to God. "Count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing" (James 1:2-4).

REFLECTION

READ THE VERSES BELOW AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

Nevertheless the men rowed hard to return to land, but they could not, for the sea continued to grow more tempestuous against them. Therefore they cried out to the LORD and said, “We pray, O LORD, please do not let us perish for this man’s life, and do not charge us with innocent blood; for You, O LORD, have done as it pleased You.” So they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice to the LORD and took vows. Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.



PRACTICAL OBSERVATION:

1. Despite Jonah’s offer to be thrown overboard, what did the men determine to do and why do you think this was their decision?
2. How do you see God’s hand in the weather and what do you think was His overall plan?
3. Describe the prayer of the mariners and their conclusion regarding the storm.
4. What desperate measures did the men make and list the three responses they made to the Lord?
5. Explain how God disciplined Jonah and while keeping him safe simultaneously.

Making Vows *The waves subsided as soon as Jonah hit the water and the sailors were in awe of God’s power. As a result they offered sacrifices to God and made vows to Him. A vow is a sacrifice and a promise to God. I may be your finances, your service, your prayer, or worship. “When you make a vow to God, do not delay in fulfilling it” (Ecclesiastes 5:4).*

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

6. The men saw the cost Jonah paid for disobeying God yet tried to eliminate the consequences. Have you ever done something similar? Has someone you loved been disciplined by God and you tried to shield them from pain? Write a prayer asking God to give you wisdom the next time you encounter someone suffering the consequences for their sin.
7. Sometimes God puts us in time out—a dark season where no escape seems possible. Describe a time God set you apart. How did you respond? How did God eventually deliver you?

Dark Places *Elijah hid in a cave. Noah lived though 40 solid days of rain. Lazarus lay dead for three days. But darkness does not mean the absence of God. The psalmist understood that for God “Even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you” (Psalm 139:12).*

“Often, we endure trials seeking God’s deliverance from them. Suffering is painful for us to endure or to see those we love endure. While our instinct is to flee trials, remember that even in the midst of suffering, God’s will is being done.”

—Paul Chappell

