

I NEED TO vs. I DON'T WANT TO

JANUARY 15, 2023 | JONAH | JONAH 1 | PASTOR SCOTT TURANSKY

Jonah problem number one is I need to, but I don't want to. Isn't that the story of Jonah? I need to, but I don't want to. I think we need to all consider that in our own lives. Because we all wrestle with that in our own hearts. I need to, but I don't want to. It starts when you wake up in the morning. I need to get out of bed, but I don't want to. But it continues on throughout the day. I need to get gas in my car, but I don't want to. I need to work on my taxes now, but I don't want to. I need to clean up this mess, but I don't want to. There's this "I need to" versus "I want to" that we wrestle with in our hearts. I want to help you understand the background of that and dig deeper into the heart of Jonah but even into our own hearts.

As we look at the bigger picture of how God works in a person's life. We all have a heart and that heart that we have is considered a wrestling place where we figure things out and we decide what we're going to do. It's this wrestling place.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, it says of her – *She pondered all these things in her heart.* She's wrestling with them, trying to understand.

Jesus said to the religious leaders – *Why do you entertain these evil thoughts in your hearts?*

When the two men were walking along the road with Jesus to Emmaus and they got there, and Jesus blessed the food and then disappeared, they said to themselves – *Didn't our hearts burn within us as we were walking along the road?*

This heart is a very important place in each one of our lives. It's the place where we wrestle with things, even small things like whether to get up in the morning or sleep in. But it's also where we wrestle with the bigger things like I want you to go to Nineveh. They all fit into the same category of I need to versus I don't want to. We need to know what that looks like. We need to talk about that. We need to experience in our own hearts what that means. Because we want to wrestle with those things. After all, you may say, "Well, the things that we work on, like getting out of bed is nothing like going to Nineveh." That's true. But we know in scripture that it says in the parable – *If you are faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things.* If we can be faithful in the small things in our lives, then God can use us and work in our lives and do some things that are very powerful, important, very significant.

If you're a young person here today, I have a special word for you that I want to share in just a moment. But before we do, let's read our passage, at least the first few verses of our passage today. Would you please stand with me in honor of God's word, as we read Jonah 1. We're

picking up in verse 3. Last week we looked at the command that was sent. “You need to go to Nineveh and share the message with them.”

But Jonah rose 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, away from the presence of the LORD.

But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up. Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried out to his god. And they hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship and had lain down and was fast asleep.

You may be seated.

You got to be thinking here, how could he be sleeping when he's doing the wrong thing? How can he be sleeping when there's a storm going on? It's just a fascinating thing.

I want to tell you what happens in our lives. If we don't pay attention to the “need to” and we say “I don't want to” too much, something happens in our lives. When we look at the human heart, this heart does have this workshop in it that's working. But God has placed two things inside this heart, because the heart is deceitfully wicked, above all things. It tends to go astray. So God has placed two things inside the human heart to keep it on track. One of those is the conscience, a word that's used thirty times in the New Testament. The other is the room for the Holy Spirit. So when you accept Christ into your life, the Holy Spirit comes into your life and He guides and directs and He leads, and He helps us to overcome the “I don't want to” so we can do the “I need to” in our lives. The conscience.

The reason I say I want to talk to young people is because Paul's talking to a young man. He's saying to him in 1 Timothy (who's a young pastor): I want you to understand these two ideas because they're so important. They will become the light that will guide you into the harbor so you can avoid the shipwrecks of life. It says in 1 Timothy 1:5 – *The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.* Note those two things – a good conscience and a sincere faith. He's saying to Timothy, “I want you to know that. That's important.”

Later in that same chapter down in verse 18, he mentions those same two things again when he says these words: *This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare...* We're all in that good warfare. We're going forward. We're struggling for the Lord to do what we need to do. Two things are going to help you with that. Notice what there are: *holding faith and a good conscience.* It's the same things he mentioned in the first verse.

I didn't put it here, but in chapter 3 he's talking to him about getting deacons in the church. He says there's two things about these deacons, among other things that you want them to have be characterized by. One is a good faith and a strong conscience. Wow. He's tying those two things together in our lives. We need to know about those. We need to understand them. Sometimes

when the Lord speaks to us, if we don't listen to the Lord, it makes it harder and harder for us to hear the voice of the Lord.

The conscience is this human element inside and when it prompts us to do what's right, to do the right thing, if we continue to suppress that, then what happens is the conscience become seared. If we continue to lie, then the conscience become seared. That's what's mentioned in 1 Timothy 4:2. It says – *through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared*. I just pulled the comment out of there just so you could see the word *conscience* used again. But that's what happens if you reject the voice of the Lord. If you reject the prompting of the conscience over and over again, it becomes seared in and you can't hear it anymore. And then you be content to sleep in the midst of a storm. Then you can sleep when things aren't going well.

Jonah is experiencing that. He's rejecting God, and he's not doing what God wants him to do.

Let's go back to the first part and take this verse by verse. But before we do that, I want to talk to you about something else, young people.

I'm convinced that God wants to exercise this in children and young people. This “I need to, but I don't want to.” So that's why he puts this verse for children – *Children, obey your parents*. But notice, it doesn't just say obey your parents. It says – *Obey your parents in the Lord*. Because there's some spiritual benefit to obedience. There's spiritual benefit of exercising your heart to do what you need to do, even though you don't want to do it. So that you can be ready to respond to the Lord when He tells you to do something. If you have a tendency when your parents tell you to do something and you don't like it, you think it's unfair for them to tell you to park your phone at 10 o'clock, or that you think it's unfair for them to have you do some chores or clean up in the kitchen or something. You think it's unfair and so you reject that. Or you say, “Wait a minute.” You have the “wait a minute” disease. If you do that over and over again, you're going to miss this opportunity to exercise the human heart. The “I need to” must reign over the “I don't want to.”

This is the essence of procrastination. If you have a problem with procrastinating, you need this message today. Because the “I need to” is getting squelched out by the “I don't want to.” We need to do what God wants us to do. We exercise this human heart in order to grasp this idea, in order to practice this. So when we're able to do that in the small things, then we're able to grow and be responsive to the Lord.

Some parents will say this. “Well, I don't want my children to blindly obey. I want them to question authority.” I think that's good. I think children should question authority. I think they should evaluate priorities. I think they should evaluate the ethics of something they've been told to do by someone else in authority. But those are advanced skills. Every child must learn how to give up their agenda and respond because it's in that moment, in that experience that they're learning how to do the “I need to” even if they don't want to.

Home life isn't just about getting tasks done. That's what sometimes we believe as children. We believe, “My parents are trying to get things done.” Parents are trying to get things done. But there's something bigger going on inside the human heart that if you listen to your parents and

you obey them, then you'll be doing what is right. You'll be able to work on this idea of “I need to” versus “I don't want to” in your own heart. This is so valuable and important.

Now you might be saying, there's a big difference between obeying, doing things around the house, getting up in the morning, and being called to Nineveh. Yes, there is a big difference between those. But I don't think we want to divide the secular from the sacred. We want to recognize that God works in our lives and He prepares us for the bigger things in our lives as we're moving forward.

Let me just show you one more verse along this line to help us understand how we can wrestle with the same issues that Jonah is wrestling with. I need to, but I don't want to.

James 4:17 says this: *Whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.* There's a spiritual issue here. If you know the right thing to do, but you don't do it, there's sin right there. What a fascinating idea.

Now let's take it back into our passage. Let's look at this verse by verse. It says – *But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.* Do you know why? It says that twice. He's going to say it again here – *from the presence of the LORD.* Because it's hard to be in God's presence when you're doing the wrong thing. I mean, you experience that. “I don't want to pray. I know I'm doing the wrong thing. Oh, I don't want to pray. I don't want to read my Bible. I don't want to go to church because I'm doing the wrong thing.” That's how we feel sometimes. Of course, that's not the best thing. Those are the things we need when we're doing the wrong thing. So if we're doing the wrong thing, we should be praying and we should be reading God's word and we should be going to church. Because in the midst of that, God's able to speak to us and help reorient the ship, so to speak, in our lives. We must come to God during those.

If someone asks me the question, “Do I have to stop smoking pot in order to become a Christian?” My answer is no, you don't. “Let me ask you the question again,” they'll say. “Do I have to stop smoking weed in order to become a Christian?” My answer is no, you don't have to. There's an idea in that that says, “Do I have to clean myself up to come to Jesus?” No, you don't. What you want to do is come to Jesus and then let's see what's going to happen. The first thing you want to do is commit your life to Jesus Christ, say, “God, I want to serve you with all of my heart. That's what I want to do.” And then let's see what God does. God's going to speak to you about whatever issue you want to bring to Him and He'll talk to you about that. It's amazing what happens in a person's life. They wind up cleaning themselves up in various areas, but not because they want to do that to perform before God, but because God, through His Holy Spirit, convicts us inside of the workings of our heart. That's what needs to happen.

Jonah is trying to run from the very presence of God.

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, away from the presence of the LORD. It's emphasized here again. *But the LORD hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea.* The word *tempest* there is very interesting. It's a word used for anger. We're going to see the idea of anger throughout this passage, culminating in week four. But it's talking about the angry

ocean or the angry sea. *So that the ship threatened to break up.* This is not an ordinary storm. This is one that's actually threatening their very livelihood, it's threatening their life. Maybe you've been in that situation. You're saying to yourself, "This is going to ruin me. I don't know what to do in this situation." That's what they're saying.

Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried out to his god. I find that amusing. Because we can try to live our lives as best we can. But when things get out of control and we can't manage, then we're looking for some kind of a higher power to help us somehow. So everybody has their God. Some people's god is just their own willpower. Some people have a god of money. Some people have a god of other things and those gods they go to to try to solve their problems. They're going to find in this story that the gods are not going to do any good.

I was walking through a parking lot some time back and I saw a statue on a guy's dashboard in his car. So I looked a little bit more closely. It was a saint. I looked it up later. There's a saint of travel, Saint Christopher. The saint of travel. I'm thinking, wow, that's really interesting. Here's a person who is looking for safety in their vehicle ad so they put the saint on the dashboard. I mean, if I believed in a saint to want to help me with my trouble, I'd at least turn him around so he can see where we're going.

But I think everybody has their god. What are we relying on in these difficult times?

And they hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. You know what they're doing? They're taking valuable things and throwing them overboard. They're saying, "Oh, this is really important. This is valuable, but we got to get rid of that. Maybe that'll help." This is money. We're throwing money into the ocean here, wasting our money, throwing it overboard because we're trying to get some help here. This isn't working for us," *to lighten up for them.*

But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship and had lain down and was fast asleep.

I just circled the words here, *down*. Because I think that's what happens. When you don't follow the Lord, you start disobeying, you start focusing on what you want to do instead of what you need to do, you go down. He goes down into Joppa. He goes down into the ship. He goes down into the inner part of the ship. He goes down and was fast asleep. He's going to go down overboard. He's going to go down to the fish's belly. There's a lot of going down here. I just want to suggest that in our lives, when we don't do the right thing, we go down.

But isn't it interesting that Jonah didn't experience any consequences right away? He says, "God, no, I'm not going to do this," and he heads down to Joppa. But there's no consequence. He's going, "Okay, I think I made it, I got away from God. I'm going to Joppa. Oh, and look, there happens to be a ship here. Maybe this is God's will. I'm going to take the ship and escape this. I happen to have the money and now I'm on the sea." There's all these things happening that seem to be directing him and he's saying, "Wow, I got away with it." But at some point, the storm starts to come.

You can get away with sin for a while, you can get away with not doing the right thing. But at some point, the consequences start to take effect because God has designed our world in a

particular way. God wants to direct us in our hearts. If we're not following Him, bad things happen. You go down.

So the captain came and said to him, "What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call out to your god! Perhaps the god will give a thought to us, that we may not perish."

And they said to one another, "Come, let us cast lots, that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us." That's a silly way of trying to determine something, God's will or try to figure out what's going on. But isn't it interesting, God even uses some silly things sometimes in our lives to bring us to Him. These sailors are going to get saved. They're going to commit themselves to God. We're going to see it in the passage. God's even going to use something strange like throwing dice to find out who's guilty to help them along that line. Some of you have stories like that, God used something silly in your life to lead you to Christ. That's what's happening here.

So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. Then they said to him (they're going to interrogate him now), "Tell us on whose account this evil has come upon us. What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?" He didn't even have time to answer the question. They just keep throwing these questions at Him because they're panicking because the ship is about to go down.

Jonah is about to introduce them to God. I find it interesting that God is even going to use a wayward prophet to introduce these guys to the God that they need in their own lives.

And he said to them, "I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Yahweh. (That's the word LORD, capitalized means Yahweh. That's Gods' personal name.) He is the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land." He is not just a God, He is the God. And He's the Creator God who has made these things. *Then the men were exceedingly afraid and said to him, "What is this that you have done!" For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them.*

He wasn't just doing something wrong. He was fleeing from the presence of the Lord. Obviously, he told the whole story to them and they're going, "Oh, this is bad. We get it. You're in trouble and we're suffering for it." That's the sad thing about sin. When we do the wrong thing, other people end up suffering for it. Maybe you've been one of the people that suffered because someone else is doing the wrong thing. It happens. It's a sad thing that's going on.

So they say – *"What shall we do to you, that the sea may quiet down for us?" For the sea grew more and more tempestuous* (that's that same word, angry). What they're asking is, what is the right thing for us to do right now? We want direction. Would you please tell us what we need to do (we're back to the "need to" versus "I don't want to." You're going to see it right here. Tell us what we need to do.

So Jonah said – *"Pick me up and hurl me into the sea; then the sea will quiet down for you, for I know it is because of me that this great tempest has come upon you."*

I go, “You got to be kidding me.” Jonah, you are so stubborn. Why don't you just say, “Okay, God. I get it. I will follow you. Call off the storm. I will go to Nineveh.” No. He's so stubborn he's willing to die instead of repent and change. Man, the stubbornness of this guy.

We see these sailors now hearing the right thing to do. The “I need to.” Here's what you need to do. Do you think they're going to do it? Throw him overboard? No, they are not because they don't want to. It's the “I need to” versus the “I don't want to.”

Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to get back to dry land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them.

This is what happens when a person doesn't want to do what God has instructed or they don't want to do what they need to do and they think of all kinds of ways to get out of it. They have all kinds of human ideas to solve the problem.

Sometimes when parents are reporting challenges with their children, they're saying, “Look, if he would just do the job, he can get done in a few minutes. But he's got to take all this time to be disciplined and so on in order for us to get there.” There's a long way and there's a short way.

Jonah is going to learn that. You can either do and follow the instruction that God wants or you can take a detour.

God provides detours. Unfortunately, parents are the tour guides for children and they don't like that sometimes because they have to help them manage their Jonah experience. But Jonah needs to take some time and he needs some work here. So God is going to work in his life.

Therefore (notice what the mariners did) *they called out to the Yahweh*. Remember before they were calling out to their gods. Well, now they're calling out to Yahweh, the God. Because they realized that Yahweh is the God that they need to be worshipping. If Jonah were able to tell them all of the information about this, he would probably come to the Ten Commandments where the first one is *you shall have no other God before me*. We can pretend to have these other gods, but there's only one God. And that's the God we put first in our lives. That's Yahweh.

Therefore they called out to Yahweh, “O Yahweh (a first name for God), let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not on us innocent blood, for you, O LORD, have done as it pleased you.” So now they're going to do what they need to do instead of they don't want to. *So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging.*

We're going to now see what the response is here. We're going to first see what happens in the sailors' lives. It says – *Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly*. This isn't just “I'm afraid of the storm.” This is the awesome respect for God. The respect that says, “Lord, I want you to be the number one person in my life. I want you to be the God on the throne of my life. That's what I want to do.” These men are being converted. These men are coming to know that God is *the* God and they need Him.

What's prompting them to come to the salvation experience? It's fear, isn't it? They're scared to death.

Sometimes a person will come to me and they'll say, "I've just been learning about hell and I don't want to go to hell, so I want to get saved." I'll say, "Great. I think that's a good reason to get saved so that you won't go to hell. I'll help you." So we lead them to the Lord. But I know that there's going to come a place as they grow in Christ that they're going to figure out and discover the riches of God's grace, they're going to experience the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives, and they're going to enjoy the presence of sitting right with God in His presence. And they're going to say, "Wow, this is so big. It's not just I'm afraid of something. But there's something I'm delighted in." *When we delight ourselves in the Lord, he will give us the desires of our hearts.*

These guys are afraid, but they're coming to the Lord. *The men feared the Lord exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows.* This is their commitment. They're saying, "Okay. We're going to follow the Lord." Well, that's these sailors.

And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

There are some who struggle with this part of the story. Because they're asking how could you want to breathe for three days and three nights in the fish? Or how could a person live inside of a fish for that period of time? I understand the question. But the answer to the question is way back earlier in the Bible. If you start with the first four words of the Bible, *In the beginning, God*, then the rest of the Bible makes sense. I just got to tell you. There's going to be a lot of strange things you're going to read in the Bible. You're going to read about Jesus feeding a whole multitude of 5,000 people with just some loaves of bread and some fish from a little boy. It doesn't make sense, unless you read the first four words of the Bible – *In the beginning, God*. When you get that down, everything else makes sense and it's really an adventure.

One girl who was ten years old was in her family having devotions. They were studying this whole book of Jonah and learning about it. She was just enthralled by this whole story. Somehow she's at school and she's telling one of her friends about this. The teacher overheard it and said, "That's not really a true story. We know that because science tells us that the whales don't have a big enough throat to swallow a person."

The girl says, "Well, the Bible says that the whale swallowed Jonah."

The teacher rolls her eyes and says, "It's just a fable. That didn't really happen."

The girl says, "When I get to heaven, I'm going to ask Jonah how it happened, how he got down the whale's throat."

The teacher says, rolling her eyes again, "Well, what if Jonah didn't go to heaven?"

To which the girl said, "Then you can ask him!"

I know this is a story about a fish and this is a story about Jonah. But this is really a story about the Lord. So here just on this page, I've circled six times that the word LORD is there. But there are five other times in the previous pages or slides that the word Yahweh is present. Because this whole book is a story about a God who creates the world, a God who wants to have a personal relationship with people. He wants to send them on missions. He cares about people who are not

repenting in another country and He wants to send His people to do that. It's a God who cares about a man so much that He's going to stop the process, and He's going to help him because he has a repentance issue he needs to deal with in his heart. Here's a God who is powerful, who's just, who's righteous, who controls the elements.

This is a God that you want to get to know. This is really a story about God. The more we get to know Him and the more we appreciate Him, the more we'll be able to wrestle with the "I need to" versus the "I don't want to" in our lives. Sometimes we just call that responsibility. But I'm convinced that the "I need to" not overcome by the "I want to," that we're doing the "I need to," what that does, it sets us up to be able to be responsive to God. So when God speaks and when God gives us direction, we'll be able to say, "Okay, Lord, even though we don't understand."

So maybe you didn't have the privilege of growing up in a home where obedience was emphasized. Maybe your parents didn't teach you to do things even though you didn't. Maybe they talked you into it or persuaded you with rewards to get things done. You're at a bit of a disadvantage. But it can start now. You start by obeying God in the small things, being ready to listen to Him whenever He tells you to do something. And when you respond to the small things, then He's able to increase those and He'll send you to Nineveh.

I got to tell you, we all have our own Ninevehs, don't we? I'm mean, look at your life. You got a Nineveh. I don't know what it is. But we all have these Ninevehs that get in the way sometimes and God says, "Okay, we're going to tackle that." We need to say, "Okay, Lord," not "here I am; send him." "Lord, here I am, send me. I'll follow you. I'll allow you to direct the paths of my life."

Let's pray together.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, we are grateful for your word and the power that it represents to change our hearts. We thank you for all that you do for us and the grace that you share in our lives. Lord, we need you. We desperately need you. So make us so sensitive to the whispers of your Holy Spirit in our hearts that we will respond immediately to them. Make us so sensitive to the promptings of the conscience so that we are ready to do the "I need to" in our lives. Lord, we want to serve you with all of our hearts and we ask you to do that deeper work in our lives as we continue to worship you now. In Jesus' name, amen.