

# When God's Ways Shake Us

## DAY 1:

1. There are times in life when life throws you a big curveball. Life can be confusing, perplexing, and leave you reeling. Where is God? Why did this happen? Why won't He answer my prayers for change or relief?

2. We will look at these questions in the next four weeks through the eyes of Jonah, Saul( before his conversion to Christ), and Hezekiah. There are important lessons to learn in each of their stories. God IS up to our ultimate good, joy, and shaping us, even though we may not be able to see any good in our immediate lives.

3. Theme verses:

*Isaiah 55:8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. <sup>9</sup> "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

4. What strikes you about these two verses in Isaiah?

*Rom. 11:33 Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! <sup>34</sup> "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?" <sup>35</sup> "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay them?" <sup>36</sup> For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.*

5. What strikes you about these verses in Romans?

6. Here is an overview of our next four weeks

- a. Jonah—Resisted and ran from God.
- b. Saul—Distorted and denied God and His message
- b. Hezekiah—Trembled and trusted when life shook him.

7. When life shakes us, our heart gets exposed. We finally see some of the beliefs that really are the most important drivers of why we do what we do. Each of these men had a central driver:

- a. Jonah: "I know better."
- b. Saul: "I can make it better."
- c. Hezekiah: "There is nothing better."

8. What strikes you from today's devotional?

## DAY 2:

1. We need humility if we are to live according to God's ways, His purposes, and His wisdom. Our pride can torpedo us.
2. Troubles humble us and cause us to ask hard questions of ourselves and God. Or at least we should.
3. When our Christian "life" is not producing enough blessings, when difficult problems don't go away easily, when temptations continue to rattle us, when some of our prayers remain unanswered, when God's ways don't make sense to us, we are left with three options:  
Option #1: Resist God's hard commands and run to a life that seems easier and more immediately fulfilling. Live to feel better as a top priority. (We'll look at the other two options later in this series).
4. Underline below, what you discover about Jonah's flight from God:

*Jonah 1:1 The word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai: <sup>2</sup> "Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me."*

*<sup>3</sup> But Jonah ran away from the Lord and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the Lord.*

*<sup>4</sup> Then the Lord sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up. <sup>5</sup> All the sailors were afraid and each cried out to his own god. And they threw the cargo into the sea to lighten the ship. But Jonah had gone below deck, where he lay down and fell into a deep sleep. <sup>6</sup> The captain went to him and said, "How can you sleep? Get up and call on your god! Maybe he will take notice of us so that we will not perish."*

*<sup>7</sup> Then the sailors said to each other, "Come, let us cast lots to find out who is responsible for this calamity." They cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah. <sup>8</sup> So they asked him, "Tell us, who is responsible for making all this trouble for us? What kind of work do you do? Where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?"*

*<sup>9</sup> He answered, "I am a Hebrew and I worship the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land." <sup>10</sup> This terrified them and they asked, "What have you done?" (They knew he was running away from the Lord, because he had already told them so.) <sup>11</sup> The sea was getting rougher and rougher. So they asked him, "What should we do to you to make the sea calm down for us?"*

*<sup>12</sup> "Pick me up and throw me into the sea," he replied, "and it will become calm. I know that it is my fault that this great storm has come upon you."*

*<sup>13</sup> Instead, the men did their best to row back to land. But they could not, for the sea grew even wilder than before. <sup>14</sup> Then they cried out to the Lord, "Please, Lord, do not let us die for taking this man's life. Do not hold us accountable for killing an innocent man, for you, Lord, have done as you pleased." <sup>15</sup> Then they took Jonah and threw him overboard, and the raging sea grew calm. <sup>16</sup> At this the men greatly feared the Lord, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows to him.*

5. What are the things that struck you about Jonah?

### DAY 3:

1. The book of Jonah is only four chapters long, but three of them are about Jonah's shaping, and only one chapter about Jonah's ministry.

2. There are two storylines in Jonah. (1) God's storyline of shaping Jonah, and (2) The storyline Jonah wanted and wanted God's cooperation in bringing about.

3. We see in Jonah two strong aims: (1) a life that is comfortable, convenient, and enough blessings to keep Jonah happy and (2) feeling superior to people who were immoral people.

4. As we'll see Jonah looked at himself and saw nothing that needed changing, nothing that required repentance, nothing that required David's prayer of, "search me O God, and know my heart. Try me and know my thoughts and see what wicked ways lie within me and lead me in the way everlasting." He was not a man caught up with honoring God in how he lives, of being a blessing to the people around him. Instead, Jonah cared most about himself and leading a comfortable life.

Jonah is the only prophet whose story is told in the Bible who wouldn't even speak to God when God's ways made no sense to him.

*Jonah 1:3 But Jonah ran away from the Lord and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the Lord.*

5. Jonah also had a ministry assignment to God's people, a positive message the people wanted to hear. Jonah became popular.

*2 Kings 14:25 He was the one who **restored the boundaries of Israel** from Lebo Hamath to the Dead Sea, in accordance with the word of the Lord, the God of Israel, **spoken through his servant Jonah son of Amittai, the prophet** from Gath Hepher. <sup>26</sup> The Lord had seen how bitterly everyone in Israel, whether slave or free, was suffering; <sup>1</sup> there was no one to help them. <sup>27</sup> And since the Lord had not said he would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven, **he saved them** by the hand of Jeroboam son of Jehoash.*

6. Jonah's message was "Good times are coming. The economy is going to turn around."

7. When Jonah received God's call to preach repentance to Nineveh, he was revolted. "Them?!? Repentance?!?! Never! They're wicked ruthless murderers!" Jonah wanted God to judge them!

8. God's ways made no sense to Jonah. He rebelled and ran!

9. What strikes you from today's devotional?

#### DAY 4:

1. As you read Jonah 2, mark Jonah's words that you find odd. He was sorry, but for what was He sorry? He talked and prayed to God, but about what?

*Jonah 2:1 2 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.' " 10 And the Lord commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.*

2. Reluctant Jonah was reluctant in his repentance, and still irritated at God, blaming God for being hurled into the sea and nearly drowning. He also blamed God for being "banished from Your sight" even though it was Jonah who ran away from God!

3. And Jonah's belly-of-the-fish "repentance" was shallow and therefore had no power to form his soul. He never confessed the sin of resisting God and running away from Him. Jonah's prayer was a foxhole prayer, "Get me out of this trouble."

*Jonah 2:8 "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.' "*

4. Jonah clings to his storyline. He scorns the wicked Ninevites who are idolaters while reminding himself that he is one of the good guys.

5. Reading these two chapters in Jonah is convicting. When life "goes my way," I'm living happy and free, praising God for His blessings, but when God's blessings turn to troubles, I turn into Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, grumpy, sulking, sometimes like a whiny toddler, and sometimes like an entitled, moody teenager. My prayers have more to do with fixing my troubles and restoring the blessings and good life I believe I need in order to be happy. My prayers have little to do with looking inside to see what God is exposing through my trouble, what he is trying to change in me, in my character, in my real values, and what I am primarily living for.

6. What strikes you from today's devotional?