

The **ENTRUSTED Leader's Workbook**
***“Barnabas”* Edition**

Seven Core Values that Impact Every Leader-to-Follower Relationship:
HEART-MISSION-APPROACH-STABILITY-LIFESTYLE-FORTITUDE-WORLDVIEW

Lesson Five: The Choices of Jonah & Jesus (Jonah & Mt. 26:36-46)

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Lesson Five: The Choices of Jonah and Jesus

CORE VALUE: A HEART willing to do all God asks.

BIBLE VERSE(S): The Book of Jonah and Matthew 26:36-46

ONE SIMPLE TRUTH: Every leader has a choice to orient the will of his or her heart on God's will or one's own selfish will.

APPLICATION: To become the leader God desires a follower of Christ to be requires one to orient his or her will toward God's will.

God selects a leader based on the inner orientation of his or her heart. A leader's heart, or inner nature, encompasses a person's intellect, emotion and will. The central question that determines a leader's usefulness to God centers on the orientation of the leader's will. Every individual faces this choice of one's will.

A self-oriented leader faces the possibility that God will intervene to get his or her attention. A leader who follows self-centered desires may find that God sends a "Big Fish" to redirect his or her course. A leader with a self-centered heart needs further development as preparation for God's service.

A follower of Jesus Christ who leads in the marketplace may face some very difficult choices in regard to orienting one's heart on God's will. Just the very thought of choosing God's will might overwhelm a leader with sorrow and anxiety. God patiently allows a person's internal struggle as he or she comes to grips with what God asks of those who claim to follow his Son. God looks for leaders who resolutely strive to understand and pursue his will.

Moses required forty years in the desert to prepare his heart to lead as God desired. Saul clearly understood God's will, but his self-oriented heart enticed him to disobey. God considered David a man after his own heart because David was willing to do all of God's will. This lesson examines two other individuals who faced the choice of will orientation. Jonah chose to run from the word of the Lord. Consequently, God intervened with a storm and a "Big Fish" to redirect his path. Even Jesus struggled emotionally in the Garden of Gethsemane when faced with the prospect of drinking the cup of God's will in the form of a cross.

The ENTRUSTED Leader's Workbook strives to encourage the development of seven core values that move a leader closer to the standard of leadership behavior set by our Lord Jesus Christ. This lesson: The Choices of Jonah and Jesus, along with the previous two, focuses on Core Value One: **A HEART willing to do all God asks**. This core value lays the foundation for the other six. The leader who is willing to do all God asks may struggle emotionally with the personal costs but will ultimately embrace the other six core values as one's own. On the other hand, a self-oriented leader will resist and maybe even run from them. The seven core values of an Entrusted Leader appear below. Each one conveys a unique facet of a leader with a heart oriented on God's will.

1. A HEART willing to do all God asks.
2. A MISSION for leading characterized by a faithful commitment to multiplying followers of Jesus Christ that supersedes all other marketplace endeavors.
3. An APPROACH to leadership characterized by denial of self and serving others.
4. The STABILITY for leading created by applying a balance of skills, character and compassion.
5. A LIFESTYLE that is beyond reproach and publicly demonstrates faith, hope and love in the marketplace.
6. The FORTITUDE for leading built upon faith in the love and sovereignty of God and the discipline of prayer.
7. A WORLDVIEW founded on absolute truth and the words of Jesus Christ.

This lesson, The Choices of Jonah and Jesus, examines two examples of an individual who faced the choice of heart orientation. Example one covers the life of Jonah. Read the book of Jonah and answer the following questions. Every person faces the choice to orient the will of his or her heart on God's will or one's own selfish will. Keep this truth in mind while reading and studying the book of Jonah.

The Choice of Jonah

Questions of the Biblical Text¹ (The Book of Jonah: Chapter One)

What came to Jonah? _____

What two actions did the Lord instruct Jonah to take?

1. _____
2. _____

What did Jonah do in response to the Lord's instructions?

What did Jonah tell the sailors about his voyage? (vs. 10)

What two actions did the Lord take to interrupt Jonah's flight to Tarshish?

1. (vs. 4) _____
2. (vs. 17) _____

Questions of the Biblical Text (The Book of Jonah: Chapter Two)

What did Jonah do from inside the fish?

¹ Unless otherwise noted the questions listed in *The ENTRUSTED Leader's Workbook* are based on: *The Holy Bible: New International Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996, c1984)

How did Jonah describe his circumstances?

What did Jonah say happens to people who cling to worthless idols?

What did the Lord command the fish to do?

Questions of the Biblical Text (The Book of Jonah: Chapter Three)

What came to Jonah a second time once he was out of the fish?

What two actions did the Lord instruct Jonah to take?

1.

2.

How did Jonah respond to the Lord this time? _____

Questions of Interpretation (The Book of Jonah)

Where was Ninevah in relation to Joppa and Tarshish?

Why might have Jonah set sail in the opposite direction of Ninevah?

What statements in chapter one might lead us to conclude that Jonah clearly understood God's instructions and willfully chose to disobey?

What thoughts and emotions can we speculate Jonah experienced inside the fish?

Commentary

The Lord sent his word to Jonah. The commands that followed did not originate within Jonah but from the sovereign ruler of the universe. God instructed Jonah to take two actions. He told Jonah to "Go" to Ninevah. Once in Ninevah, God desired Jonah to preach a message of judgment and repentance to the people of this great city. God clearly communicated his will to his servant. Jonah had a heart orientation choice to make. He

could orient his will with God's will and go to Ninevah, or Jonah could pursue his own self-centered agenda and not go to Ninevah.

Jonah chose to disobey. Ideally, he might have simply ignored God's command and continued on with his life in Israel as if nothing had ever happened. Perhaps, he felt the conviction of the Holy Spirit, for Jonah did not just disregard the Lord's commands, he fled from the Lord's presence. Jonah ran as far away from God's will as he could. God commanded Jonah to travel east from Israel to Ninevah. Jonah chose to run west through the seaport of Joppa to Tarshish. Have you ever noticed that people who volitionally resist God's will tend to flee from God's presence? Have you ever noticed that people who run from God's will and presence often shy away from people who do embrace God's will?

Jonah ran from God's will and presence. Jonah did so geographically. Perhaps, his conscious bothered him for he confided with the sailors that he was running away from the Lord. Jonah clearly knew God's will and volitionally chose to orient the will of his heart on his own agenda. This misalignment of his will led Jonah to take actions diametrically opposed to God's desires and intentions for him as a leader.

Application

Later in the story, readers learn why Jonah ran from the Lord's will. The relevant point to any study of leadership stems from the reality that Jonah understood, but did not agree with God's will. Jonah harbored his own agenda for the Ninevites. Jonah thought he knew better than God how to handle this situation. Jonah wanted to see the Ninevites punished for their wickedness. Jonah knew that if he went to Ninevah and preached against them, the citizens would repent and that God would forgive them.

As followers of Christ who lead in the marketplace leaders must be careful not to make the same mistake Jonah did. Perhaps, the word of the Lord has come to you recently. Maybe God has opened your eyes to a new chapter of his will for your life that runs counter to all you have envisioned up to now. Let me encourage every leader who follows Christ not to ignore these leadings of the Holy Spirit or to run from the presence of the Lord as Jonah did.

The lessons in *The ENTRUSTED Leader's Workbook* present God's will to followers of Jesus Christ as revealed in God's word. Some of the principles gleaned from this study may be new to some leaders or may run counter to what they have historically believed. Please do not accept them to be true just because I have said so. I encourage the reader to look at the passages and ask the Lord to reveal his word and to show how it applies to one's life as a leader.

Commentary

God initiated two actions intended to interrupt and intercept Jonah's flight from his will. The Lord sent a great wind to halt the progress of the ship, and Jonah, to the West. This storm was so violent that the ship and its crew were in peril. Once the connection between the storm and Jonah's running from God was established, the sailors threw him overboard.

Application

Perhaps, you have steered a course in the opposite direction of God's will. Have you ever been frustrated with circumstances that seem to impede the progress of your life's agenda? Have storms seemingly popped up out of nowhere? Keep in mind that this may very well be the hand of God lovingly trying to get your attention. You may view

the great winds that threaten to break up your ship as bad, when in reality they blow from God's grace as he patiently works to alter your voyage.

Commentary

The second action God initiated included a great fish that reoriented the direction of Jonah's trip. Jonah and the sailors assumed Jonah would perish once thrown into the stormy seas. God had another plan for the passenger sent over-board into the sea. God sent a great fish to swallow Jonah, in whose belly he lived for three days. [I believe this to be an historical event and not just an allegorical story.]

Jonah cried out to the Lord from deep inside the fish. Jonah had finally sunk low enough into his self-centered agenda that he was willing to let go of his will and orient his life according to God's will. Jonah was finally ready to go to Ninevah to preach God's message of grace. Jonah described his circumstances as dire and hopeless, yet he called on the Lord to restore him. Jonah recognized that the storm and the fish were instruments of God's grace intended to draw him back to God's will. Jonah did turn the orientation of his heart back to God's will and vowed to extend to his enemies, the Ninevites, God's message of salvation by grace.

Applications

Sometimes, when followers of Christ head in the wrong direction, God sends a storm to impede one's misdirected journey. Other times God intervenes in a more pronounced way and sends a "Big Fish" to literally redirect one's path. Maybe you find yourself in the belly of a "Big Fish" at this very moment. Perhaps the course of your life has been altered one hundred and eighty degrees. While life in the belly of a fish appears cold, damp, smelly, lonely, and uncomfortable at best, in the long run such circumstances

can be a good a person. Once a leader lets go of his or her self-oriented will and begins to follow God's will he or she may very well find themselves regurgitated onto a warm, dry, aromatic, crowded, and comfortable beach as Jonah did.

Commentary

By grace, God sent his Word to Jonah a second time. The command contained the same two instructions. Go to Ninevah. Proclaim God's message. This time Jonah obeyed; he oriented his will onto God's will not his own. Jonah went to Ninevah and warned the citizens of God's imminent judgment. As Jonah suspected, the Ninevites repented and God forgave them.

Application

The Word of the Lord came to Jonah. He clearly understood God's message. Jonah had the opportunity to orient the will of his heart on God's will or his own self-centered will. Jonah initially chose to run from the Lord and follow his own agenda. God sent a storm and a fish to impede his flight and redirect his journey. Once Jonah's heart was like David's, willing to do all God asked of him, God used Jonah to bring a great salvation to Ninevah.

As a leader you will face the choice of whose will to follow. God's plan for your life may include storms and a "Big Fish". Let me encourage you to view God's interruption of your personal agenda as part of your preparation as a leader. If you are in a storm or the belly of a fish seek God's favor and ask him to restore your path according to his will.

The Choice of Jesus

Jesus is fully divine and fully human. Within his humanity Jesus possesses a will. Accordingly, Jesus faced the same choice to follow the will of the Father or his own will that Jonah did. The devil tempted Jesus in the desert to choose a path other than God's will. (Matthew 4:1-11) Jesus' response to the devil's suggestion included quoting scripture that revealed the will of the Father. One must assume that the possibility did exist that Jesus might choose his will over the Father's. Without two possible choices the devil's temptation had no potential for thwarting God's plan of salvation for mankind. The story of Jesus being tempted by Satan presumes Jesus faced the choice of whose will to follow.

Jesus was without sin in part because at no time was his will not oriented on God's will. Consequently, Jesus' actions were always in line with God's commands. Within his humanity, Jesus had the capacity to choose his own will over the Father's. Perhaps there is no better illustration of the tension between Jesus' human will and the divine will of the Father than is captured by Matthew in his description of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. Read the account of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane in Matthew 26:36-46 and answer the following questions.

Questions of the Biblical Text (Matthew 26:36-46)

Where did Jesus go with his disciples? _____

Jesus told the disciples to sit while he went and did what? _____

Which three disciples did he take with him to keep watch while he prayed?

How does Matthew describe Jesus' countenance in the presence of these three disciples?

How does Jesus describe the condition of his soul?

What did Jesus request of the Father (vs. 39)?

Although this prayer request was born out of Jesus' desire to see his own selfish will prevail, whose will did Jesus also affirm would always take priority in his life?

How many times did Jesus repeat this request to God?

Questions of Interpretation (Matthew 26:36-46)

What is the "cup" to which Jesus is referring in his prayer?

What did Jesus mean by asking that the cup pass from him?

How intense is sorrow to the point of death?

Commentary

The will of the Father for Jesus included the cup of suffering and death on a cross. This instrument of punishment provided the means whereby God's perfect lamb would pay the penalty required for man's sin and purchase our salvation. Jesus asked the Father if there was another way. Three times Jesus left his disciples to make this request of the Father, and three times he returned without the answer he hoped. Finally, seeing that God's plan was already in motion, Jesus told his disciples to rise for his time to submit to the cup of God's will had come.

Before he left with his captives, Jesus struggled mightily with the personal price God's will was going to extract from him. Matthew described Jesus as sorrowful and troubled. Jesus himself said: "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death..." (Matthew 26:38 NIV) In his humanity, Jesus struggled with the choice of God's

will over his own will. Fortunately for mankind, Jesus chose to orient the will of his heart on the Father's will, even though much pain and suffering resulted.

Application

The reality of what God is asking of you may bring you to your own Garden of Gethsemane experience. A follower of Christ may become sorrowful and troubled when one considers the implications of God's will on his or her life as a leader. I for one am encouraged that Jesus struggled emotionally with the choice of God's will over his own will. As a follower of Jesus Christ, I find comfort in knowing that I can do as Jesus did and go to the Father in prayer when faced with the prospect of sacrificially obeying God's commands. If you are facing such circumstances, I encourage you to pour your heart out to God in prayer.

Conclusion

Every leader has a choice to orient the will of his or her heart on God's will or one's own selfish will. Becoming the leader God desires requires one to orient his or her will toward God's will. Jonah initially chose to follow his own will and ran from the Lord. God sent a storm to impede his flight and a fish to redirect his path. God gave Jonah a second chance to obey his commands. Once Jonah aligned his heart with God's, the Lord used Jonah to carry out his will in the marketplace of Ninevah. Jesus struggled with the personal price of orienting his will with the will of the Father. Jesus asked God for another way while affirming his commitment to do God's will when the time arrived.

The choices of Jonah and Jesus illustrate why God looks for a leader willing to do all he asks. This criterion used by God to select leaders summarizes the first core value of an ENTRUSTED Leader which is: **A HEART willing to do all God asks.** Each follower

of Jesus Christ who leads in the marketplace must honestly ask: Am I willing to do all God asks of me? The implications of applying the second core value of an ENTRUSTED Leader (**A MISSION for leading characterized by a faithful commitment to multiply followers of Jesus Christ that supersedes all other marketplace endeavors**) will quickly expose the limits to which a leader will follow through and actually do all God asks!