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Jonah

Inside Terry's Office: The Book of Jonah - "The Worse Prophet Ever"

In total contrast to all the recognized prophets that came before and after him; Jonah, the worst prophet ever, had the most successful results. You know the story. Jonah didn't want to prophesy to the Ninevites, hoped they wouldn't repent so the Lord would destroy them, delivered his message in a half-hearted fashion, and was angry with God when the Ninevites repented. Actually, the book of Jonah is about the need of the believer to be in ministry (for their own sake). It was for Jonah, as much as it was for the Ninevites, that God called him to prophecy. Thus, proving once and for all, (wait for it!) ... (wait for it!) that God calls us to minister to others FOR OUR SAKE (now, that was worth waiting for).

We at Plumblin are called as counselors because the world is hurting and needs counselors, BUT ALSO because we need to be counselors. By being counselors we are put in situations that confront our personal sins, expose our individual wounds, and put us in a context of healing. I can say with total confidence that every counselor on our staff knows that they need to be in this particular ministry to further their own healing and growth. If it were not so, I would not ordain them to this ministry or allow them on our staff. And, if the time should ever come when I, or any other of our counselors, begin to think that we need to be here less than others need us to be here – it is time for us to quit!

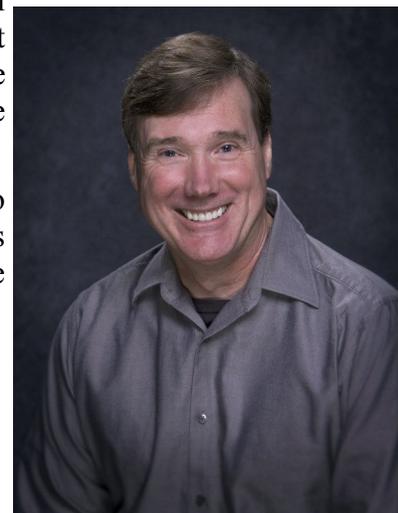
So... how about you? What ministry(ies) are you called and gifted for? Have you discovered and embraced this truth for yourself? If you do not find yourself exposed and dependent on God for your needs in the ministry(ies) you provide, then you are in the wrong ministry or are like Jonah (about to learn this truth about your calling).

Some say that the book of Jonah was known by the Hebrews as a comedy as much as a historic account. I like that too! As I look back at my history of ministry it seems something of a comedy to me. ... Have I told you the one about the nineteen year old that began pastoring a small church in rural Okla. That pastor was soooooo stupid that he actually believed that he was called as a pastor for the sake of the members of that church, when the truth was that the members of that church were given a special grace to be able to put up with him! The members of that church were so patient with him and encouraging of him that he didn't recognize who was better for whom until years after he had moved on.

Now, I'm older and wiser (somewhat). At least I know to thank God for calling and gifting me to offer a ministry that is to my benefit in offering it as much (or more) than it is for the benefit of those I minister to. ... How about you?

In His Grip,

TWE



“Not THIS Again!”

My son-in-law had given my five year old granddaughter the, what had come to be the oh so familiar, choices between first time obedience or disobey and be disciplined. She had done what she loved to do, raid “Cammie’s” closet for shoes, preferably high heels. Now it was time to put the shoes away. Knowing that putting the shoes away meant readying herself to leave, she angrily replied to her daddy, “I don’t want to!” Explaining that this was not up for discussion, Daddy gave her the options to put the shoes away (obey) or disobey and be disciplined. Inside I’m pleading to her, “Sweetie, just put the shoes away!” She continued to refuse cooperation and her daddy swept her up to move to another room to administer the discipline. As he carries her away she is crying, “No! Not THIS AGAIN!”

I have loved our walk through the books of the Bible and loved the overview of each book. I have been impressed with the consistency of how God relates to His children. Some books are rich with familiar stories and others like, Obadiah last month, are less familiar but still demonstrate the consistency of God working His plan for His children. We have seen that God uses all kinds of characters from all kinds of life situations, in any status, and through any weakness. The story of Jonah is one of those familiar bible stories if you have grown up in church. Jonah is a great example of a person of faith who had character flaws to deal with. He resisted God’s call (for

obedience) and only when God “forced accountability through Jonah’s captivity inside a large fish did Jonah do his job.”(NIV Life Journey Bible) Reading about Jonah I couldn’t help but think of my little granddaughter and her struggle for her will over her daddy’s.

Larry Crabb in his 32nd “Love Letter” also found similarity between himself and Jonah. When God called Jonah to a mission that Jonah saw as an embarrassment and unfair, he ran away. Jonah was stubborn and tried to rationalize his disobedience. Even after Jonah repented and agreed to obey and go and preach to Nineveh, which led to them turning from their evil ways” and salvation from God, Jonah became angry (Jonah 4:1). Jonah struggled like any child to understand that a parent can be lovingly responsive through both compassion as well as discipline. Also like a child he wanted his obedience to bring about the result he wanted and when it didn’t he cried, “**What’s the use in living?**” Jonah 4:3;9. Jonah knew God was “**gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love** and a God who relents from sending calamity.” (4:2) The problem was Jonah knew this about God and enjoyed it when it benefited him but he could not join God in extending this to others with whom he harbored bitterness.

Karen Purvis in her book, *The Connected Child*, says, “**Equal parts of affection and discipline** are vital to a child’s healing.” Dr. Purvis talks about the balancing act of parenting and the focus on “**connecting and correcting.**” Connecting is all about knowing the child and building “warm and positive interpersonal” bonds.

Correcting is “coaching your child how to handle himself in any given situation and letting him practice safely, without shame, until he gets it right.” We can be assured that there is nothing that God calls us where He is not completely mindful of us and yet at the same time mindful of the greater good for all involved.

I close with this final thought from Larry Crabb writing what he believes to be God’s message to us through Jonah:

“You reduce Me to a God who is supposed to submit to your understanding of what matters most.....Because I love you and because My plans for you are good, I demand your cooperation with Mine. There is no other way to enjoy My Presence.” (66 Love Letters, p. 159)



IS IT OKAY FOR GOD TO SHOW KINDNESS?

I find Jonah interesting. God asked something of him, he ran from God by getting on a boat and sailing in the opposite direction, then God sent a powerful storm, so bad that the sailors feared for the lives. Jonah was so determined to avoid the Lord that he went down in the hold and went to sleep. The sailors cast lots that pointed to Jonah. Only then did Jonah acknowledge what he'd done. He's thrown overboard after the sailors made every attempt not to. Then God sent the fish to swallow Jonah.

After being inside the fish for three days, Jonah cried out to God. He repented and God showed kindness to him. "Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from inside the fish. He said, 'I cried out to the Lord in my great trouble, and He answered me. I called to You from the land of the dead, and Lord, you heard me!'" 2:1-2

"I sank beneath the waves, and the waters closed over me. Seaweed wrapped itself around my head. I sank down to the very roots of the mountains. I was imprisoned in the earth, whose gates lock shut forever. But you, O Lord my God, snatched me from the jaws of death! As my life was slipping away, I remembered the Lord. And my earnest prayer went out to you in your holy temple." 2:5-7

The Lord told Jonah again to go to Nineva and he obeyed. He told them the word of the Lord that certain destruction was coming unless they repent. The people believed what he said and they repented. When God saw it, he changed His mind and didn't carry out the destruction He had threatened. Same kindness he showed to Jonah.

"This change of plans greatly upset Jonah, and he became very angry. So he complained to the Lord about it: 'Didn't I say before I left home that you would do this, Lord? That is why I ran away to Tarshish! I knew that You are a merciful and compassionate God, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. You are eager to turn back from destroying people. Just kill me now, Lord! I'd rather be dead than alive if what I predicted will not happen.' The Lord replied, 'Is it right for you to be angry about this?'" 4:1-4

How many times do we do the same thing? We sin and receive God's kindness, or the kindness of others then when we are offended we get mad at God for showing the offender kindness that leads them to repentance. Why? Because offenses hurt!

Sometimes they hurt a lot! And in our pain, we want justice not mercy. It feels like, if the other person gets what they deserve, our pain will somehow be alleviated.

Guess what? That's not true. What liberates us is forgiveness and loosing the other person to God, trusting Him with outcomes. It's trusting God to heal the brokenness in us so we can show His compassion toward others.

I know this personally. Something happened in my life some years ago and oh, how I wanted God to get the other person. I was in incredible pain and I thought justice was the answer. Every time I saw God show kindness to the other person, I was filled with anger. I eventually found myself in bondage to fear, anger, judgment, unforgiveness, and bitterness. Not a fun place to be. When I was finally able to repent of my own sin, and release the other party, God healed my heart and the pain of the offense.

I'm not saying it's easy. It wasn't for me. It took a lot of work and trusting God and others but it was worth it. Looking back, I'm so grateful. I wouldn't be where I am today if I hadn't had a change of heart. I'd still be stuck.

How about it friends? Do you feel angry with God about how He has dealt with someone? There is freedom. Trust Him and let go. You'll be glad you did.

Struggling, striving, growing,

Michelle Elliott



Do you have a “good” reason to be angry?

“Do you have good reason to be angry?” The Lord asks Jonah this twice in Jonah chapter 4. The first time was after the city of Nineveh repented and then again after Jonah’s shade tree had withered. I believe that the Lord was not scolding Jonah but instead asking him to hold out this emotion (and attached belief) so that it could be evaluated. In order to evaluate one’s emotion, it has to be brought into the light. When it is in the light, then we can see if we are dealing with an issue of legitimate suffering or illegitimate suffering.

One of our most used tools at Plumline, is called “Healthy Emotional Responses” aka Mad, Bad, Sad, Glad. With this tool a person can learn how to identify their feelings and then evaluate them. Since we are focusing on “anger”, a primarily “Mad” feeling, we will look at the difference between a legitimate mad and an illegitimate mad. It works the same for the other feelings as well.

Our definition of “mad” is this: “negative effects upon my life are created by someone else’s sinful behavior.” In other words, when someone is being a “jerk” to you. We all know what it is like when somebody sins against us. And there is an appropriate level of “Mad” response that should accompany those actions. However, I would also imagine that we have all experienced feeling mad over something that was an accident, or when someone close to us gets hurt, or (this is the tough one) when we think somebody means something by what they did! You see Jonah was mad at God because He did something Jonah did not want Him to do. God had not sinned against Jonah, but due to Jonah’s expectations, his own ideas of what should have happened, and his perceptions of right and wrong, he took up an offense that was not really there. Amazingly though, God loved Jonah enough to not want him to stay in that state. So He orchestrated a scenario to help Jonah see what was really going on. And then He asks the question again, “Do you have good reason to be angry?”

A very common dysfunction I see (and often experience myself) is the misappropriation of feelings. What I mean by that is that I get mad about something that I should feel sad about. Or, I do not want to feel mad so I only focus on things that make me feel glad. If we have the courage to ask ourselves this question “Do you have good reason to be angry?”, we will often find that there are much deeper, more vulnerable emotions lying below the anger. Anger is their protector. But it is not the real person. Jonah was not able to get to the deeper feelings. I could imagine that he was struggling with his own judgments on the people of Nineveh. Or that he might have experienced a time when he wanted God to intervene in something and He did not do it. Or he might even have had trouble being grateful for the little things in life. I am purely speculating here, but we do know that whatever emotions that were there, he did not voice them. Maybe he was not even aware that they were there, and that is why God choose to question him about them.

By using God’s example to evaluate our feelings and to bring them into the light, we are learning how to have healthy emotional responses but more importantly, we are learning how to share and connect with others at a deeper more significant level.

Stickman's Prayers

Plumblin's newest book, *Stickman's Prayers* has been published and is now available at Plumblin!

stickman's prayers

the everyday practice of
"loosing prayers"
and the ministry of
"exploratory prayers"



Michelle Carpenter
Terry Ewing
Erin Garcia
Margo Hanne
Carolyn Knippers
Carol McNamarra
Sue Merrill

Would you be surprised to know that the "Prayer of Jabez" was a joke?

Would you be happy to know what kind of prayers are appropriate for you to pray for yourself and what kinds are meant for you to pray for others and others for you?

Would you like confidence and freedom to simply enjoy your personal and ministry prayers?

Praying is the most natural thing in the world for Christians; an ongoing conversation with our best friend, counselor, and confidant; gratitude to our Savior and provider; intercession on behalf of our friends; requests to our Creator. In this regard, a book on prayer may seem presumptuous. When you write a book on Prayer aren't you suggesting that some are praying wrongly, or, at least could be praying better?

That really is not the kind of message we look to promote. So...why the book?

The Stickman's Prayer's serves two purposes. First, to challenge some ideas that other teaching and preaching concerning prayer has promoted. And, to offer simple encouragements to personal prayer and prayer ministries.

SAFE PEOPLE

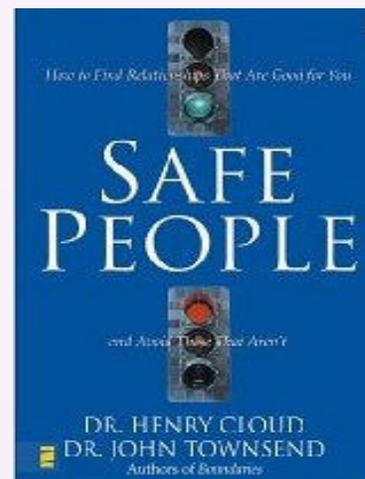
Tuesdays

June 7 - August 9

6:30 to 8:30

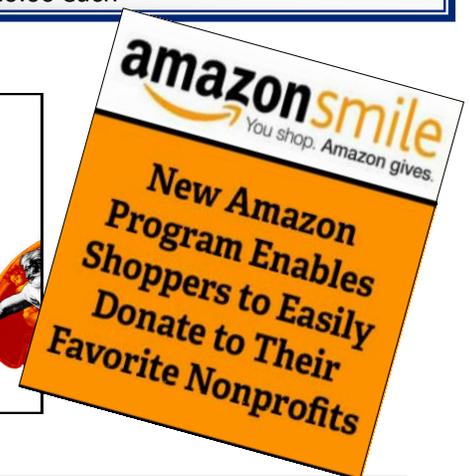
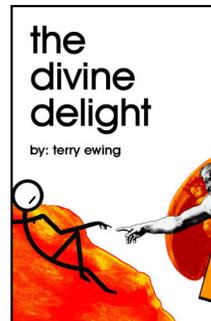
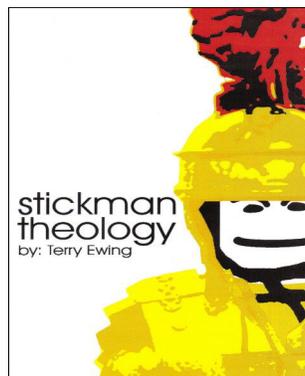
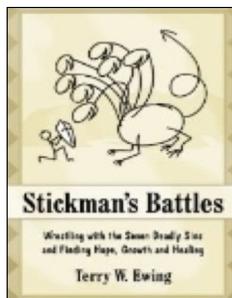
**Cost: \$70.00 plus Book Safe People
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Taught by Margo Hanne



Financial Snapshot	April 2016	Year-to-Date 2016
Number of Client Hours	318	1,257
Contribution Income	\$8,310	\$39,282
Operations Expenditures	\$10,099	\$43,336
Shortfall	(\$1,789)	(\$4,054)

Available at Plumline for a suggested donation of \$10.00 each



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Stickman Theology

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Establishing a Plumblineline in the Heart of God's People

Plumblineline Ministries

Plumblineline is a nonprofit Pastoral Counseling and Teaching Center

Our Mission is to partner with churches in order to offer Pastoral Counseling, to provide services to the community at large, and to establish a nation-wide teaching ministry promoting the principle that God delights in the struggling, striving, growing believer.

We accept clients through our sponsoring churches at no charge to the client, and from the public for a service fee. (\$65.00/hour)

Our sponsoring churches are:

Asbury United Methodist Church

Believers Church

Liberty Church

Northside Christian Church

Parkview Baptist

River Oaks Presbyterian

Members of any of the sponsoring churches, please bring a signed intake form from your pastor to be put on the waiting list. Clients from the public, download an intake form from our website and bring it to our office or come by the office for a copy.

Visit us on our website at www.plumblinelineonline.com.

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