

The Bible's Biggest Runaway

by Greg Locke

The Bible's Biggest Runaway explores the story of Jonah, who ran from God's will and faced the consequences of his disobedience, serving as a reminder of the importance of obedience and running to God for help and guidance.

Duration: 50:58

Scripture: Jonah 1:1, Matthew 5:14

Topics: "Running From God", "Redemption Found"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher shares a personal story about a missionary fellow who was asked to give his testimony in church. The missionary had a beautiful family and eagerly jumped up to share his story. However, the preacher interrupts the story to share a separate incident from his childhood where he and his friends got into trouble and were humiliated. The preacher then transitions back to the story of Jonah from the Bible, emphasizing the importance of not running away from God and the redemption that can be found in turning back to Him.

Transcript

Amen, thank you so much. The book of Jonah, chapter 1 in your Bible tonight, please. The Old Testament minor prophet book of Jonah.

Good to see you tonight. I've enjoyed myself thoroughly these past few services that we've had together. Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday of last week, and now Monday, and here's Tuesday of this week.

And then have one more service tomorrow night, our music service, which I'll be preaching in. I've enjoyed my time here, enjoyed the time here last year, and I appreciate Brother Duffy and the camp staff allowing me to be here. I hope that I've been just a little bit of a help and a blessing to you, and I've had the privilege of talking with many of you, counselors, some of you, praying with some of you even today, and that's been a blessing to me.

I'm not just here to preach, I'm here to be a friend and here to be a help in the best way that I possibly can. I've just got a message that the Lord just kind of laid upon my heart and just kind of changed it. Basically, before chapel service, I just was kind of praying about what the Lord would have me to preach, and this was not going to be it, but I just feel like this is the direction that the Lord would have me to go, and so I hope by obeying the Spirit of God tonight, it'll be not only a blessing to you, but if there's an area of

convincing and convicting that you need in your life, I hope that the Spirit of God would use that as well.

Let's all stand, please, and have a respect for God's Word as we look together at Jonah 1. Jonah 1, verse number 1, the Bible says, Now the word of the Lord came unto Jonah, the son of Amittiah, saying, Rise and go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it, for their wickedness is come up before me. But Jonah rose up to flee into Tarsus from the presence of the Lord and went down to Joppa, and he found a ship going to Tarsus, and so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it to go with him unto Tarsus from the presence of the Lord. But the Lord sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken.

Then the mariners, or the sailors, were afraid, and cried every man unto his God, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea to lighten up them. But Jonah was gone down into the side of the ship, and he lay and was fast asleep. Verse number 17, would you look there, please? Jonah 1, verse number 17, the Bible says, Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

And tonight I want to bring you a simple message entitled, The Bible's Biggest Runaway. Thank you very much, you may be seated. Let's bow our heads and hearts and ask the Lord to bless our time together.

Now, Father, I pray for these people as they listen to the Word of God. I thank you for their receptiveness and their listening ability all week long, and Lord, I appreciate that so much as a preacher, and I pray you'd bless them for it. But Lord, tonight I pray that they would listen intently again, and that you would bless them, and Lord, that you would convict in areas that need conviction and change.

And Lord, more so, I pray very humbly tonight as thy servant, that you would help me as I preach the unsearchable riches of Christ, for it's in Jesus' name that I pray and ask these things, and I know that I have that which I ask for, for I pray it in Jesus' name. Amen. I remember when I had a teacher by the name of Miss Grandstaff.

She was my fifth-grade teacher. I knew her very well because I spent two years in her class. The first year, I was in fifth grade.

I was at the Gladeville Elementary School of Nashville, Tennessee, and I had a good friend by the name of Matthew Ray. Now, I had several other friends, but Matthew Ray was probably the buddy of the decade, if you will. I mean, we were close.

We did everything together. I mean, he was always at my house, I was always at his. And from fifth and sixth grade, I mean, we were the best of friends.

I remember one day, which was not too unusual for he or myself, we got in trouble and had to do back then in public school what they called write-offs. Now, when I first went to public school, they didn't fool with the write-offs. They'd pull out a big paddle, and they'd just wear you out if you got in trouble.

But then they got to the place where they started passing rules and regulations, and moms and dads didn't want that anymore, so they made us do write-offs. They had these little science cards and these little history cards. They came out of this little bucket, this little barrel, and you just kind of pulled one.

You didn't get to pick which one you wanted, and there's probably, I probably wrote all of them four or five times a piece, but I mean, there was a bunch of them. And I'd pull one out, he'd go and pull one out, and

she would send us to different rooms to make us do these write-offs. Now, that meant we was going to have loads of homework because we didn't get any of the seat work or any of the class work done.

And so I remember my first year in the fifth grade, she sent me, I don't know, this was probably middle of the year or something like that. I got in trouble for doing something. Can't remember what it is.

Surely it wasn't my fault for sure, but I got in trouble, and she sent me to the first grade class. Now, as a fifth grader, going to the first grade, that's kind of humiliating, and I guess that was kind of the point of it, to keep me from keeping continually to doing that and going back. And so I was in the first grade class, and here I am.

I've got my little write-offs, and I'm just writing 90 miles a minute as fast as I can. And so all of a sudden, the door opens, and here comes Matthew Ray. He comes, and he sits down across the room from me, and he's kind of sitting there, and we're kind of looking at each other every now and then, just kind of giving each other the eye, you know.

And I don't know where in the world this idea came from. I'm going to be honest with you. I don't know if it was my idea.

I don't know if it was his idea. I don't know whose idea it was, but apparently we came up with the idea about the same time. The first grade class ended up going to lunch, and so here I am sitting by myself.

He's sitting by himself, and so here we are. It's not even our lunch time yet. First grade obviously went first.

And so here we are, and I'm sitting down. I'm writing. He's writing.

And all of a sudden, I don't know where it came from. Beautiful day outside. I look at him.

He looks at me, and the idea pops into both of our heads simultaneously at the same time. Let's run away from school. Now, that's the dumbest thought I've ever had and the dumbest thought he ever had.

I don't know who thought it up, but it was ridiculous, that's for sure. And so I said, Matthew, listen, I've got a plan, all right? I said, let's do the little Mission Impossible. I said, I'm going to go to the bathroom.

I said, when I go to the bathroom, I'm going to wait five minutes. I said, I've got my little clock here. I said, I'm going to be in there five minutes.

When I'm there five minutes, you tell this teacher you've got to go to the bathroom. I said, surely she won't think anything about it. I said, we'll meet in the bathroom, and then we'll have plan B in the bathroom.

I said, we'll figure out where we go from there. And so I went to the bathroom, and I waited, and I waited. And I was sweating bullets, and I thought for sure I was going to get caught.

And I washed my hands about 15 times, and finally five minutes passed, and here comes Matthew Ray. I thought, wow, that teacher was pretty gullible, letting us both go to the bathroom within the same time frame. And so here he was.

He said, what do we do now? I said, well, I thought up the first part. It's your turn now. He said, well, let's go to the gym.

And so we went to the gymnasium. And people were in there. They were playing basketball.

They were playing volleyball. And we still had our little write-off cards, and we still had all that big old stack of notebook paper and pencils and erasers and stuff in our hand, and so we figured we need to ditch that. And so we walked through the gymnasium, Gladeville Elementary.

When you walk outside, to the left and the right, there's these big, huge module-type buildings, these little mobile home-type things that they had computer classes and all kind of different classes. And so we just kind of walked over, and they had a little garden area, so we just took our stuff, and we just kind of threw it in there. And so then we walked across the parking lot a little ways.

It wasn't too far from here to the light pole out there. And they had a great big old chain-link fence, and so we hopped the chain-link fence, and when you hop the chain-link fence, you're right in the woods. And so we start moseying around through the woods, and we start messing around, and he starts telling me what a great hunter he is, and we're talking about how we're going to live out in the woods for the rest of our life.

And he did a real silly thing. This is a gospel truth. He got down on his knees, and he put his ear to the ground, and he said, I think a deer will be coming by very soon.

He said, My granddad taught me how to hear deer running. I thought, You idiot. Get off your face.

It's stupid. And so he's down there listening for deer, and he goes down to the water. I mean, he's just a real Rambo.

He scoops up the water and puts it in his mouth. He's trying to impress me and all this kind of stuff. I was just interested in getting away from school.

And so we're running around, and so we pull out little wallets, and we put our money together. We probably had about \$2.50, \$2.25 together, and we thought we was going to live on that, how on the whole, for the rest of our life. And so there's a little Southern Baptist church over there.

We went and hid in the parking lot for a little while between some cars and let everybody go by. And then we went from there, and we went to this little store that they had, a little general store. And then we went from there about a half a mile.

We finally got down to the ball field, and in the ball field there was more woods. And so then we cut through those woods, and we got on this little field, and, buddy, we just kicked back and was relaxing. Now, we said, What we're going to do? After school today, so people don't think anything, we had our heads on, we'll go to the store, and we'll get our \$2.25 together, bag us a couple of bag of groceries, you know, and, man, we'll just live out here tonight, and we'll have ourselves a big weenie roast, and nobody will know where we are.

Man, we were just all excited. Here we are, run away from school. Well, all of a sudden, we were just kind of out there, and I guess probably two or three hours had passed.

The sun kind of started getting just a little bit more dismal, and it started to sprinkle rain a little bit, and I thought, Great. First time I've ever run away from school, it's going to pour down rain, you know, and so we're sitting out here in the woods, and we're sitting inside these little, these stools made out of kind of a wood-type thing. I don't know who left them out there, but they're pretty convenient, so we just kind of

kicked back, you know.

All of a sudden, I hear the boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom. Well, I looked out on the highway, and at this time, my brother had one of these crazy lowrider things. I mean, that thing was to the ground.

You couldn't drive over pig gravel with that thing. I mean, you'd have tore the bottom out of it, and he had them big old speakers. He had this little shelf that went all the way across this little cover that went all the way across the back of the bed of his truck.

That thing was full of these big wolfers and sub-wolfers and all this kind of 18-inch mess. Boom, boom, boom, boom. I mean, he's just going down the road with that thing just bouncing off the ground, and I thought, That's my brother's truck.

I said, That is my brother's truck. I said, They have called him, and he's coming to get me. And so I kind of popped up like a little rabbit, you know, and I'm kind of looking around, and all of a sudden, his car stops, and he jumps out, and my cousin, my first cousin, Tony Sparkman, jumps out, and, man, they just come barreling through those weeds just as fast as you can.

They're screaming and yelling and hollering like a bunch of wild banshees. And, man, I'm running all over the place, and I'm running in circles. I know I'm fixing to get caught.

And so I said, Run for the woods. Run for the woods. And so we're running for the woods, you know, and they're diving after us, and I fall over, and he falls over.

It's like a big slow-motion scene, you know. And my brother jumps on me, and my cousin jumps on Matthew. They shake us all up, beat us around for a little while, and throw us in the truck and take us back to the school.

And, man, you talk about humiliation. They walked us into the office, and, man, all these kids were getting ready to go to lunch. They was all looking at us.

They knew what we did. They knew we got busted, man. They had the police there.

His mom was already there. My mom was already there. I thought, What in the world are these people going to do? Well, I'll tell you what they did.

They kicked us out of school not only for that day, but for three more days. They gave us continual, continual write-offs, but I will never forget what Miss Allgood, who at that time was the principal of Graveville Elementary, I will never forget what she told me. She said, Greg, you're nothing but a little runner.

She said, you always run from your problems. She said, every time you face a problem, she says, you're always running from your problems. She said, you're nothing but a little runner.

And she said, it's time you learned to quit running. And here was a man in the Bible by the name of Jonah that was nothing but a little bitty runner. All he did was run from his problems.

When things got bad, instead of running to the Lord, he ran from the Lord. And there are several things in this portion of Scripture tonight that I think are very apropos to our Christian life that I want you to see.

Please look at Jonah chapter 1 and verses 1 and verses 2. Would you look there? Simple outline tonight.

I want you to see number one. Jonah ran from God. Jonah ran from God.

Jonah chapter 1, verse number 1. Look what it says. It says, Now the word of the Lord. Now it doesn't say the word of a preacher.

It says the word of the Lord. And that's what matters. That's what counts.

He says, The word of the Lord came unto Jonah, the son of Amittiah, saying, here's the command, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it. Why? For their wickedness is come up before me. Now look at the first part of verse number 3. But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarsus from the presence of the Lord.

God came down to Jonah one day and said, Jonah, I want you to be my man, my itinerant evangelist for the city of Nineveh. And he said, No way, Hosea. No way.

He said, I do not want to go to the city. Now there are several reasons, more than likely, that he did not want to go. They are not part of our outline, but let's just bump heads for a little bit tonight, shall we? There's only one other place in your Bible, in the Old Testament, where the word Amittiah, speaking of Jonah's father, is used.

Now this is not, alright? This is opinion. Believe what you want to. But I've read several history books about the Bible.

And Josephus kind of thinks this, that, and the other. But most people that write will say that at one time Amittiah, the father of Jonah, was slain in a grievous battle by the Ninevites. And so if that be true, if it is fine, if it's not fine, but if that be true, then no doubt Jonah did not want to go to the same city where several years earlier his father had been slain.

Now think about the Ninevites for a moment. The city of Nineveh was the capital city of a place called Assyria. The Assyrians were a wicked, vile, godless bunch of rebels that spit on the Bible, spit in the face of God.

I mean, these people were ungodly. I'll tell you how ungodly they were. Not only were they immoral, but if they had a beef against you, if you said something or did something or wore something they didn't like, if they didn't like the smell of your cologne or your perfume, they'd just chop your head off and they'd put a pole through your body.

They'd put some type of jelly upon you that lights you up and you'd be the street lamp for the city of Nineveh. That's a pretty wicked group of people. And so Jonah thought to himself, hey, I'm not going to go be live fish bait for these people.

I don't want to go preach their God. And God said go, and Jonah said no. And because Jonah ran from God, I want you to see several things in the progression of Scripture here that happened in his life.

Verse number 3, look at it, would you? It says, but Jonah rose up to flee into Tarsus from the presence of the Lord. The first thing that happens when you directly disobey the will of God is number one, you run away from the protective presence of Almighty God. Now, it just makes sense to me.

It does not take a rocket scientist to figure out that America is in a mess. And if you don't think America is in a mess, you've got your head in the sand like an ostrich. I mean, sodomites and abortions and ungodliness.

I mean, we are in a rampant, rampant wicked society. And it would just seem logical to me that in this day and age we shouldn't be running from the presence of the Lord, but we're going to need God more. We should be running to God.

But here was a man that ran from Him. And because he ran from Him, number one, he got out from under God's protective presence. But I want you to see number two, that he paid the price of his sin.

Real simple outline. Look back at the Bible, would you? Verse number 3, Jonah rose up to flee into Tarsus from the presence of the Lord and went down to Joppa, and he found a ship going to Tarsus, so he paid the fare thereof. Now, unless you misunderstand your Bible, you've got to understand that Tarsus was one of the highest rated fisherman cities of this day.

He did not pay 50 cents or \$5 to get away from God. He paid a hefty sum. And if you look on a map sometimes, you'll find out that Tarsus and Nineveh was about 1,500 miles apart.

He paid a big price to get away from God. And if God tells you to do something and you say no, or if God tells you not to do something and you do it anyhow, not only will you be out from under the protective presence of God, but secondly, you will always pay the price in your mind, in your heart, in your body, for your sin. There has never been anybody that has never had to pay for their sin, and Jonah was not the exception.

It cost him to run from God. But also spiritually, there's something else I want you to see. Back at verse number 3, would you? But Jonah rose up to flee into Tarsus from the presence of the Lord and went, what's the word, down to Joppa.

And he found a ship going to Tarsus, so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it to go with him under Tarsus from the presence of the Lord. Look at verse number 5, would you? Then the mariners were afraid, and cried, Every man unto his God, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them. But Jonah was gone down in the sides of the ship, and he lay and was fast asleep.

Three times the Bible says that Jonah went down when he ran from Almighty God. Somebody says, well, I'll tell you what, Brother Locke, I think I can live any way I jolly well please. I think I can live my own life, and I can be my own boss, and I can do my own thing.

And my life is just fine, not according to the Bible, because when you directly disobey the will of God, your life does not get better, it does not progress, it gets worse, it degresses, and you don't go up, up, up, you go down, down, down. And here's a man that had no joy, he had no assurance, and he had no peace because his life continually went down, because he would not submit himself to the will of God. Stand and also submit, please.

I beseech you that by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living, not a dead, a living sacrifice, wholly acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. It's just reasonable for you and I to give our life to Christ. Since 2,000 years ago, He gave His life for you and for me.

And then he says in verse number 2, Be not conformed. That means don't look like, smell like, talk like, walk like, act like. Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind that ye may prove what is that good, acceptable, and perfect will of God.

But did you notice what he said in verse number 1? He said to present your bodies a living sacrifice unto God. I believe what Paul had in mind when he wrote that through the inspiration of the Spirit of God was in the Old Testament when they had the burnt offering. They would have this animal upon the altar.

They would slice that animal's throat, a lamb of the first year, just without blemish, without spot, a perfect lamb. He would slice it from ear to ear. The blood would then begin to bush out, and I don't know what they used.

They didn't have gasoline, I'm sure, but they used some type of Old Testament gasoline, some type of Old Testament lighter fluid, all right, if you will. And they put it all over the body. They doused the body of this animal.

They would then set that animal's body on fire. They would set it aflame. Now, no doubt, if your neck has just been cut, and if you have just been set on fire, your nerves are going to be going crazy, my dear friend.

And so that animal many times would twitch and would begin to just kind of gyrate and convulse back and forth. And many times that would fall off of the altar, making it what? An unacceptable sacrifice to Almighty God. So in the Old Testament, they had what was called flesh hooks.

They had long poles that were anywhere from five to eight feet long. On the end of that pole were these two great hooks that came out of kind of one little stalk, and they came out and had two hooks on it. And they would take those hooks, and when that animal began to convulse, and when that animal began to get to the place where it was going to roll off the altar and thus be unacceptable to God, that prophet, that priest would then take that staff, they would put the flesh hooks into the side of that animal, and while it was bleeding, while it was on fire, while it was convulsing and jumping around, it would hold that animal upon the altar so it would be acceptable to Almighty God.

And I believe what the Apostle Paul is saying in Romans 12, 1 and 2, is, child of God, stay on the altar and present your body a living sacrifice. Don't get distracted. Don't get to the place where you begin to convulse and you roll off of the altar and begin to live your own life and your own way.

Why? For you belong to God. And he said, stay on the altar. And here was a man that would not have had so much trouble.

He would have had not so much blight upon his testimony, if you will, if he would have just obeyed the Spirit of God willingly. But look how much trouble he got into when God said, go, and Jonah said, no. Now, I don't know what your situation is tonight.

Perhaps there'll be a young man here, God's got his hand on you, he wants you to be a gospel preacher. Many young men stood up last night and said, hey, God's calling me to preach, God wants me to be a pastor, a missionary, evangelist, whatever it is. Perhaps there'll be more in this room that you know God wants you to be a preacher, but you say in your heart, I just don't know if I can be a preacher.

Or a matter of fact, God, I don't know if I want to be a preacher. How about since you belong to God, you take your hands off your life and say, God, you can have me lock, stock, and barrel. You can do with me what you want to do.

Anytime you want to do it, take away anything you want to take away. Give me anything you want to give me. I will do thy will.

And those that say, God, your will, not mine, are those that God uses in a big and a wonderful and a blessed way. But here was a man that had a rocky boat, if you will, because he would not obey the Spirit of God. But that's not the crux of my message.

I want you to look at verse number 6, if you would, please. In verse number 6, the Bible says, so the shipmaster, meaning obviously the captain of the ship, the main fellow in charge, so the shipmaster came to him and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise and call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us that we perish not. And they said every one to his fellow, Come and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us.

So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah. Then said they unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is upon us. What is thine occupation? And whence comest thou? What is thy country? And of what people art thou? Now listen to his answer in verse number 9, would you? And he said unto them, I am in Hebrew, and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land.

Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, Why hast thou done this? For the men knew that he had fled from the presence of the Lord. How did they know? Well, look at the end of the verse, because he had told them. Number one, I want you to see that Jonah ran from God, but more importantly than that, I want you to see number two, Jonah ruined his testimony.

Here was a man that had an opportunity to preach and to witness and to be a solid witness in testimony for Jesus Christ, and here is not only the only Christian on the boat, but the only preacher or the only witness on the boat, and he's not preaching, he's not witnessing, he's not teaching the Bible. He doesn't even have a good testimony. The Bible says he's lost his burden, and he is asleep in the hole in the very bottom of a ship, and the shipmaster, the captain, had to come and wake him up and rebuke him and say, What meanest thou, O sleeper? Why don't you wake up and call upon your God, big boy? You're the one that's supposed to be a Bible believer.

You're the one that's supposed to be the big Christian man. You're the preacher boy. Why don't you wake up and call upon your God? And here was the only Christian on the boat.

For the Bible says these other men were calling upon their God, little G. These were a bunch of heathens. But here was a man by the name of Jonah that knew Jehovah God. He knew Him intimately, and now he had ruined his testimony because he had ran from the presence of Almighty God.

And he lost his testimony in front of those people that he could have won, that he could have told about Jehovah God so they wouldn't have to serve the little G but the big G, and he could have told them, but now he had lost his testimony, and these men were rebuking him for the life that he was living. Now, you won't be saved very long before you realize two things. Number one, your testimony as a believer is very vital, but number two, your testimony is the hardest thing you'll ever hang on to as a child of God.

You know, the Bible says in Matthew 5, verses 14 through 16, a city that is hid on a hill cannot be hid. Let your light so therefore shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven. Now, wait just a minute.

He did not say, Let your light shine so they can glorify you and me. He said, Let your light shine so they can glorify Almighty God and we have a command, we have a mandate as God's people that we let our light shine and that we tell a lost and dying world about Jesus Christ not only with our lips, but also with our life. You see, Jesus told the scribes and Pharisees, Ye draw near unto me with your mouth, but your heart is far from me.

And let me tell you what bothers me as an evangelist as I crisscross back and forth across America. I meet people that on a regular basis, they pay lip service to Almighty God. But if they were to go to court for being a Christian, there would not be enough evidence to convict them of being one.

And let me say very reverently and very boldly and unashamedly, I won't roll my eyes or apologize twice for saying it, my dear friend. If your lips and your life don't match up, shut what your lips say until you learn to live the life, my dear friend, because your walk will talk a whole lot louder than your talk will. And God commands and God deserves the fact that His people have a testimony not just with their mouth, but with their life, and we live for the King of kings and Lord of lords and how fine it is, not only this summer, but for the rest of your life you'll be a witness and you'll be a testimony to Jesus Christ.

The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 10 and verse number 31, Whether therefore ye eat or drink or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. Now, most of you Bible college students, you know what the word glory means. The word glory means opinion.

And God says you live in such a way that you give the lost world a good opinion of who I am. I remember when I was in high school, I'd just been saved maybe for about a year and a half, something like that. I was at an A.C.E. Christian school called Bellwood Christian Academy.

They're in Murfreesboro. I transferred after about a couple of years after I was there. I transferred to Franklin Road Christian School where I graduated eventually.

But when I first went there, I was about five years behind because of what I was saved out of and all that kind of stuff. I don't have a good time in that, but I don't have time to get into that tonight. But I was about five or six years behind in school, especially in my math and English and things, and so I had a lot of catching up to do.

And so I remember when I first got there, you know, I'd just gotten saved and people said, Oh man, you're not going to make it, you're not going to make it. And I was doing my best not only to prove them wrong, but to prove myself wrong. I wanted to know that I could live for God.

And man, I was struggling to read my Bible. Here I was living in a children's home and I was away from all my friends and my family, this, that, and the other. And I was just struggling to live for God.

And I remember they wanted to put me on the basketball team. Now, I told Coach Mike Harris, I said, Listen, this is going to be a bad move for you to put me on the basketball team. He said, Oh listen, man, I won't make you sit on the bench.

And he said, If you feel like sitting on the bench, that's fine. He said, Just get in there and play the game. He said, You'll love it.

They took me to the first game. I shot my first shot and he realized, Hey, we probably don't want you on the basketball team, friend. And I was more of a detriment than I was a health, that's for sure.

You give me 15,000 rubber basketballs and I'll shoot enough bricks to build a mansion house. I cannot play basketball. I don't know anything about the game.

And so I said, Listen, Brother Harris, I said, What if, what if instead of playing basketball, what if I could be the school mascot? He said, Well, we've never had a school mascot. I said, Exactly. I said, Let's try something a little bit new.

I said, Why don't you let me be the school mascot? He said, Well, if you really want to do that. I said, I really do. I said, Let me talk to the cheerleaders, the ballplayers.

So they all came in one day and we had kind of a little service together, you know, we was kind of talking. I said, Listen, I'd like to be your new mascot. I said, I've been talking to the board about this and I've talked to the coach about this and I said, I've got an idea.

They said, Well, what do you want to be? Some kind of eagle or some kind of buzzard or some kind of beast? I said, No, I've got some new ideas. I said, Ladies, I said, When you go home, I said, Get every pom-pom in your closet. I said, Under the bed.

I said, Go to the thrift store. Go to the Goodwill. Go to Walmart.

I said, Get every pom-pom you can muster up. And so the next day they came and I became what was known as the pom-pom man. I had pom-poms on my feet, I had pom-poms on my ankles, pom-poms on my knees, pom-poms on my chest, pom-poms on my back.

I had them on my hands, all up my arms, on my shoulders. I had a great big pom-pom on my head and they called me the pom-pom man. And if you can't figure out why, there's something bad wrong with you.

All right? And so I had pom-poms all over me. Now, I said, Coach, listen. I said, I'll tell you what.

I said, During the games, I said, I'll just get out there and I'll just jump around and act like a fool like I normally do with the cheerleaders. I said, I'll get out there and help them because the good Lord knows our cheerleaders needed some real big help. And so I was going to get out there and do everything I could.

And so I'd get out there and then put out a little trampoline. I'd jump up and slam it up the ball. Whoo! Everybody thought that was wonderful.

Well, I'd get out there in the pep rallies and we didn't have very good pep rallies. Most of the school wouldn't even come, you know, and so we'd get out there, man. We'd get that spirit stick and I'd get to running around.

Both them ladies would get to jumping around and doing all that kind of stuff. Them basketball players would get out there. I mean, we'd just get that place just to yelling and just to roaring and that was my job.

Now, I'm sure it didn't have anything to do with my excitement, but for some reason that year, man, we won the tournaments and, man, we were excited. Now, I could give the flip of a wooden nickel about basketball tournaments. I could care less.

Basketball, football, hockey, whatever it is. I'd do my best just to even hit a golf ball, alright? And so I'm not a very big sports fan. But, man, we won the national, we won the tournaments and, man, we were going to state competition.

Now, that's big stuff. Tennessee Association of Christian Schools. I mean, here we were just a little bit of the old pole dunk school and we were going to be going to the state tournaments.

Oh, man, in Springfield, Tennessee. At South Haven Baptist Church and South Haven Christian School. So we got there.

It was going to be on a Friday night from about, I don't know, about 4.30 in the afternoon to about 10 o'clock that night and the next day was going to start about 10 in the morning, go about to 10 or 11. The next night had all kind of teams coming in. Now, we got there on that Friday night.

Man, there were people there by the glory. I mean, there were 1,200 or 1,500 people there. They were packing that place, you know, as a nice new gymnasium, nice new auditorium for the church.

Man, we got in there and, I mean, we were just going and it was wonderful. The first team got up and they played, you know, and they had their little deal. I don't know what we were, A's or triple A's.

I don't keep up with all that kind of mess, but anyhow, we was going to play somebody in our little district and then we got up there and we played and I don't know if you call them innings, I don't know if you call them whatever they are, but anyhow, we got to the end of the game, alright, and we got coming down close and we had a fellow by the name of Jason Baltimore who went to Pensacola Christian College, good friend of mine, and he was running down the court and he was a basketball robot. I mean, he was a machine, friend. I mean, he could dribble that ball, he could spin that ball, he could shoot the eyes out of that ball, I mean, he could do anything, and so he went running down and he was going to do one of them little layup jobbies, whatever you call them, alright, he was going to do one of them little layup things and what he normally did when he did a layup, he was one of these guys, he didn't just put the ball in, he'd go up there and smack the back of the backboard, you know, everybody said, oh wow, that is something else, so he'd go up there and smack the backboard.

So Jason Baltimore coming down there, you know, he jumps up, he smacks the basketball backboard. Now, the guy on the other team, I don't remember what team he was playing, but the guy on the other team, now, he thought we weren't playing basketball, he must have thought we were playing football or wrestling, because he put his arms together about like this and he knocked Jason Baltimore's legs, swam out from under him, he did a 180 degree flip and wham, right on his face on the ground. The referee came out there, he blew a foul whistle, you know, and he called the foul on our team.

Now, I was born at night, but bless God, it wasn't last night. I don't know a lot about basketball and I'm not much of a basketball fan, but I know when you get knocked on your face and you were in the air, it's not your fault. So our coach, obviously, got a little bit upset.

Now, coaches are funny things. Coaches can get red in the face and I had never seen a man get so red in the face. I mean, I thought his jugular vein was going to jump out the front of his throat, he was yelling, he

was beating the floor, he was screaming and hollering, bad call, bad call.

The other coach was saying, good call, glory to God, good call, glory to God. And so, man, they started yelling at one another. Man, all of a sudden.

Now, let me remind you where I am. I'm with a bunch of independent, fundamental, Bible-believing, so-called Baptist people and there's probably 1,500 people in this gymnasium and they went nuts. I mean, they started screaming and yelling and hollering and throwing food down the floor.

I mean, it was crazy. Now, we just had a wonderful halftime. Man, I got out there and made people laugh doing jumping jacks and handstands and all kinds of acrobatics and stuff and so I thought to myself, God knows my heart, I thought, hey, Brother Dallas, I'm the man that's supposed to make everybody laugh and so when the tension got thick, I thought, I'll just try to make some people laugh and try to break this thing down a little bit.

That's the stupidest thing I've ever done in my life. I got there and started flipping around and started doing some stuff. A couple people laughed, you know, a little big deal.

Some people got kind of upset. The coach blew the whistle. Now, when the coach blew the whistle this time, we weren't playing the game so it wasn't for a fire.

You know what he said? State tournaments are canceled. He said, not just tonight. He said, tomorrow.

Every one of them. He said, nobody's coming back. He said, never in the history of the Tennessee Association of Christian Schools have we seen such ridiculousness and people losing their testimony and yelling and screaming.

He said, they are canceled. Hey, you think that bunch of Crowder Rebels was mad before he did that? Woo! You should have seen what they did after he did that. I mean, the chairs went to flying.

I mean, people went to screaming and yelling and hollering. I mean, you see these people with video cameras. Woo! Boy, they get it all in.

I mean, people are hollering. I mean, people are getting ready to rip each other's throats out. I still wanted to be nice.

I still wanted to be nice. Going back to the locker room, you know, they're all mad beating the chalkboard and all this kind of stuff. Putting their ties back on and all.

And so the other team walks by. God knows my heart. I was just trying to be nice.

I really was. I wasn't trying to be cocky. I wasn't trying to be smart, Ellie.

I wasn't trying to do anything stupid. But he came walking by. The coach came walking by.

And these guys walking by. I was giving some of them a five, you know. And I did this.

I don't know what it was. This little chicken dance. You know, I was just kind of acting silly.

Doing a little handstand just jumping around. Just doing this that and the other. And some of those guys, I mean, they busted out laughing.

And they really needed to laugh. I mean, they looked horrible. I mean, it looked like we was at a funeral.

And I mean, everybody was mad, crying and screaming. And the other people still going crazy. You know, Bonnie's flying.

Just kidding about that. I mean, it was bad. It really was.

And so I thought I was just going to be nice and kind of break the tension. So I did. When I did that, that coach, I mean, he got enraged, pal.

He came over to me and he looked down at me and he said, you little smothered punk. I mean, 90 miles a minute he started screaming at me. Now, here's a 45-year-old man, a 17-year-old teenager.

He's looking down at me screaming as loud as he can. I'm looking up at him screaming as loud as I can. I mean, he's down.

I'm up. We're screaming and yelling and hollering. Well, I'd just been saved for a year and a half.

Man, I was saved out of meanness and pride and orneriness and about everything else. So, man, when he started yelling at me, I didn't know how to take that. And so I took the pom-pom off my head.

I raked the pom-poms off my arms. I raked the pom-poms off my legs. And here's this 45-year-old man and this 17-year-old teenager.

Here I was. I wasn't but about five foot tall. And then here he was, a great big old six, seven, something like that.

He's screaming at me. I'm screaming at him. Now, the whole time while we're screaming, I'm walking backwards like this.

Say why? He was six foot seven. I'm not stupid, alright? And so I was walking back like this. And I mean, we were hollering and we were yelling.

All of a sudden, he backed me into a little room. Now, when he backed me into that little room, it was probably, I don't know, about as big as this platform up here. He backed me right up against the wall, but it wasn't a wall at all.

It was a set of lockers. He had backed me out into the hallway and it just kind of closed off a little bit for the games. That's gospel truth.

When he backed my back up against that locker, that place was infiltrated with a bunch of lunatics. I mean, that gymnasium let out and I mean, they ran in there by the dozens. I mean, they were standing in there.

They packed it. Let's just say it was just about as big as this room. I mean, they just packed it.

I mean, they were all in there. Let's recap just for a moment, shall we? Fifteen hundred independent fundamental Bible-believing Baptists at one place supposed to be glorifying God instead of just playing some basketball. And the gospel truth, I'm serious, is a bad heart attack as sure as I'm standing here and sure as this pulpit is made out of wood.

You could hear those people around me, a seventeen-year-old teenager and a forty-five-year-old man, you could hear those people in that room say, hit him, kill him, whoop him, tear him up, whoop him, hit him, kill him. I mean, they wanted us to go at it, friend. I mean, they wanted a forty-five-year-old man and a seventeen-year-old teenager to rip each other's head off.

Now, it's bad enough to do it about that time. I mean, they were hollering at you. It's not like a pro-wrestling sport or something.

I mean, they were screaming and yelling, hollering. All of a sudden, the security guard came up to me, turned me around, slammed my face up against the locker and threw some handcuffs on me. I thought, great, this is wonderful.

And so, he takes me out, and he asked me like this, you know, he said, don't you open your mouth. If you open your mouth, your mom and dad are going to pick you up in jail tonight and all this kind of stuff. He said, where's your bus at? I couldn't say nothing.

I had my hands behind my back. He told me, I told my mouth, I'm going to put my head over there with badness. And so, he stuck me on there.

He took my handcuffs off. He slammed me down in the seat. He said, don't you open your mouth.

He said, don't you say another word. He walked off. I didn't say a word for about 15, 20 minutes.

I was scared to death. He walked off, and he left. Little by little, they started trickling off.

A couple started coming here. Some started coming here. Call team started getting on.

Teachers started getting on. Bus driver came in. Boom.

Cranked that big diesel bus off, and we pulled out of the road. We pulled on the road. Well, we was going to be stopping in Nashville, which is still a good ways away, and we was going to be going by McDonald's or something like that.

And so, I didn't say a word. I was scared to death to say anything. I thought that cop was following us.

You know, he's going to find out I said something. Take me to jail that night. And so, I didn't say nothing, and we'd been in that van or bus, whatever the crazy thing was, for about 15, 20 minutes, and all of a sudden, I don't know what it was, came over me.

I started busting. I mean, busting out crying. Does anybody in this room know what the Heaven Hovens is? If your mom and dad ever took you to the woodshed and wore your tail out, you got the Heaven Hovens.

Now, the Heaven Hovens is different than crying. Crying. The Heaven Hovens is a lot different.

Man, you can't hardly breathe. I mean, you can't hardly talk. I mean, your eyes get filled up with tears.

Here I was on this bus with all my friends. I couldn't say nothing. I mean, the tears were flowing, the snot was flowing, and I was trying my best to stop, but I couldn't.

You know how girls are, little teenage girls. They come over there, you know, they start putting their little napkins out of their purse, you know, a junk mess. And they came over to me, you know, and they came over to me, they put their little arm around me.

It'll be alright. God, you shut up and leave me alone. Let me cry for a little while.

Let me tell you something, ladies. Most of you in this room are not married, but can I tell you something? When a man cries, he has a reason. When a woman cries, and you say, what's wrong? And she says, nothing.

That's what she means. There ain't nothing wrong with her. She's just crying because she wants to cry, okay? That's just part of their makeup.

That's fine. That's the way God made them. Just let the woman cry.

But when a man is weeping and crying, leave him alone. There's something bad wrong with him. Alright? And so I was weeping.

And so I didn't want them girls to bother me. And so, I'll never forget it. Little short, red-headed teacher by the name of Miss Tyree.

Every time I preach in chapel there at Murfreesboro, we talk about this. She came over to me. She had her Bible open.

She sat down beside me. She put her arm around me. She said, Greg, what is wrong with you? She said, why are you crying so much? She said, now we understand you shouldn't have gotten mad and popped off at the mouth and screamed and yelled and all that kind of stuff.

She said, we understand that. She said, but if anything, she said, son, she said, you were provoked. She said, we don't agree with what you did.

She said, but then you were provoked. He was just as wrong as you were. She said, why are you taking all the blame? She said, why are you so upset? She said, why are you crying so bad? I'll never forget what I told her.

I did my best to clear the tears out of my eyes. And I looked at Miss Tyree and he squared down my eyeballs. And I said, Miss Tyree, in front of 1,500 people at the South Haven Christian School in Springfield, Tennessee, and more than that, in front of the family, in front of the church members, and in front of my school peers from the Bellwood Christian Academy, I said, I just ruined.

And what took me a year and a half to build at the Bellwood Christian School took me five minutes to lose. And I learned that day how vital a Christian testimony really is. You say, well, I'll tell you one thing.

Only get mad every now and then and jump off every now and then. That's all right. I don't take a shotgun one time to go off to blow somebody's head off, too.

Somebody told me one time when I used to be a little hot-headed teenager, they said, you know what, your temper's so important, you ought not ever lose it. I think that's pretty good advice. I don't care if it's your temper.

I don't care if it's your mouth. I don't care if it's your dirty jokes, your dirty stories. I don't know what your habits, whatever it is.

You better be real careful as a child of God that you have a godly, consistent, sold-out, separated testimony for the glory of God because if you don't, not only will you hinder other people from growing spiritually, but perhaps you could send millions, hundreds of people headlong to a devil's hell because they look at your life and say, phooey on their Christianity. You say, well, I don't know if I believe that kind of preaching. Well, let me tell you about a man by the name of Gandhi.

Gandhi has sent billions and I mean the word billions of Hindus to hell. While he was living and long since Gandhi's been dead, these people believe in this Hindu religion, this mysticism, and all this New Age mess and all this guru stuff. They're going to hell by the millions.

But you know what Gandhi said? Gandhi got up there in the land of India behind his great big brazen pulpit one day and he said, I would become a Christian if it were not for Christians. And I think the reason Gandhi said that is because he looked at a lot of shallow people who said, yeah, I'm a believer. I believe the Bible.

I'm a child of God. But their life was a mess. Their lips did not match their life and he looked at somebody and oh yeah, he'll still go to hell.

He's still responsible for rejecting the gospel. But I would hate to be the set of Christians that had such a bad influence on Mr. Gandhi that sent him to hell. And here was a man that ran from God's will for his life and because he ran from God's will for his life, he ruined his testimony.

He was in sin and everybody on the boat knew that he was in sin. Now let's say that I said heads bowed and eyes closed but I didn't. All right, so don't bother.

But let's say that I didn't. Let's say that I gave an invitation tonight. It'd be a pretty silly way to end a message.

It'd be kind of drabby, wouldn't it? Here was a man that at one time was right with God then he ran from God, had the blessing and power of God taken off of his life. Then his life went down, paid the price of sin, ruined his testimony. Hey, let's give an invitation.

But I'm glad the story doesn't stop there. Why don't you flip over to Jonah chapter number 3, would you? Jonah chapter number 3 where I give you the rest of the story but this will be through in just a few moments. As we get to Jonah chapter number 3, let me give you the context of the rest of chapter 1 and all of chapter 2 of what is taking place very quickly.

They said, Jonah, we don't want to throw you overboard. But he said, listen, if you do throw me overboard then God's wrath will be appeased and the sea will get back to the place where it's calm again. I mean, they were being tossed around like a toothpick in a bathtub.

And so finally after they threw over some of the cheese and they began to throw over some of the weights and they began to throw over some of the other food and some of the other articles of clothing and all kind of stuff, they tried to lighten the ship to try to stabilize it a little bit but they just couldn't do it. The more they threw off the more the waves got. So finally they picked him up.

They 1, 2, 3'd him over the boat and the Bible said that the wind would cease from raging and the storm was calm and down in the bottom of that sea here comes a great big fish. Jesus called in the book of Matthew a great big whale. I don't know what it was.

It was a custom-built boat ride for Jonah, I promise you that. And the Bible says that he swatted him up and for three days and three nights Jonah was in the heart of a fish's belly, a picture of Jesus Christ for three days and three nights being in the heart of the earth. I had a lady come to me one night, sometimes you get some people that are kind of smiling and I don't know if she was playing or what she was doing but she said, Brother Locke, you don't believe that business about Jonah being swallowed by a great whale? I said, well that's what the Bible says, of course I believe it.

She said, well I don't know if I believe that. She said, what about you? I said, well I'll tell you what ma'am, I'll be just as nice as I can. I said, I'll tell you what? I said, when I get to heaven, I'll ask Jonah if it happened or not.

She said, what if he's not there? I said, then you can ask him. But the truth of the matter is, according to the Word of God, Jonah was swallowed by a great fish because God said he was. I've seen a ridiculous bumper sticker about three or four months ago.

This fellow was driving down the road, one of his bumpers on his back window. It said, God said it, I believe it, that settles it. Hey friend, that's unscriptural.

God said it, and that settles it whether you and I believe it or not, whether we understand it or not. And God said he was swallowed by a fish. So guess what? He was swallowed by a great fish.

And that fish swam between fourteen and fifteen hundred miles and the Bible says, vomited him up onto the land. Now let's speculate just for a moment. Could you imagine? Could you imagine a man that has lived in the belly of a fish for three days and three nights? When he got out to preach that crusade, he didn't look much like an itinerant evangelist, friend, I'll tell you that right now.

I mean, he didn't get out and have all kind of Don Juan, suave hairdo, have on his little three-piece suit like Benny Hinn, the bust of Richard Crooks on TV and all that kind of mess. Hey man, I mean, this guy was looking terrible. I'm sure all the gastric juices and all that kind of junk, I mean, whatever went inside that fish's belly hit him right straight up in the face.

And so here he was, man, his hair's probably all melted off, you know. He's about half bald-headed like Mother Duffy, something like that. I didn't just say that, did I? Did I just say that? Oh my, just kidding.

But I mean, his hair was all rotted off, man, his skin was all plastered up with this stuff and the Bible says that he just vomited it out right there on the land, that's what the Bible says. I remember when I was in Mexico back in January, I'd been there several years in a row and I was in Mexico and they said, hey, you want to go fishing? I don't care nothing about fishing. I know they're about to have a big fishing seminar here but I don't care nothing about fishing one bit.

I don't like it. I'm not good at it. I guess that's why I don't like it.

But they said, do you want to go deep sea fishing? I said, how much it cost? They said, \$75. I said, no, I think I'll sleep in. They said, we'll pay for it if you go.

I said, okay, I'll go. And so me and a couple other preachers, Brother Kingsbury from Rockford, Illinois, North Love Baptist Church and a couple other guys from Alabama, we get out there and these Spanish guys right here on this boat, they took us like 10 miles way out in the sea and they took about 10 lines and they dropped them all at one time and these Spanish guys was on there and they was all talking together and I thought, man, what are they saying? Brother Kingsbury said, they're probably plotting to kill us and throw us overboard and take all our money. And I thought, oh great, that ought to be real good.

I said, witness to them, do something. And so we're down here and they said, we got one, we got one. Well, I was the first one that was supposed to get one whenever he got hooked.

And so I jumped down and they strapped me in this big old seat and they put a pole out there. I mean, that thing was great big. They said, lean back and pull in, lean back and pull in.

Man, for 30 minutes, I was leaning back and pulling in, leaning back and pulling in. I mean, the sweat was coming off my hip and you'd see that thing jump up in the air. You'd get it right back to the boat and you'd think, oh boy, this is going to be a big one.

It'd run all the way back out about 3 or 4 more football fields. Back and forth, back and forth. after we got through, I took a little nap on the boat.

We got back. We had to run back to the hotel there in Acapulco. We had to pack our bags.

We had to get down to Tony Roma's. We had a little dinner together there. We didn't have time to take a shower.

We didn't have time to change. We got on a bus and we drove about 4 hours back to Mexico City. We got on an airplane early the next morning.

We flew to Atlanta, Georgia. We got off in Atlanta, Georgia. It was all stormy and all nasty.

I got to Nashville and the very next morning, we were supposed to start our next meeting in Dixon, Tennessee with the Robertsons and Brother Robertson had already come up and taken my trailer down for me and set it up. So, man, I got in there. First thing, I seen my wife, the children's home.

I walked up to her and gave a big hug and a kiss and she said, You've been fishing. I said, How did you know I've been fishing? She said, You smell like a can of tuna fish. Now, here I was.

I was out fishing with some friends for just a few hours and caught 2 big old whoppers and I was stuck to high heaven after several hours of getting off an airplane but can you imagine a man that lived in a belly of a fish for three days and three nights? That joker was roasted for him. I mean, he stunk. And the Bible said that he got out and he began to preach.

Look what happened in Jonah chapter 3 in verse number 1, would you? And the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time. Thank God we serve a God of the second chance. The second time saying, Arise and go unto Nineveh.

Hey, the command never changed. Go unto Nineveh, that great city and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee so Jonah arose and went unto Nineveh according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days journey and Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey and he cried and said get forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown, verse number 5. So the people of Nineveh

believed God and proclaimed a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest of them even to the least of them and 175,000 people that day that did not know their right hand from their left were saved by the glorious grace of God because Jonah lastly returned to the Lord.

Jonah ran from God and it cost him. Jonah ruined his testimony because he ran from God but I thank God the story does not stop there because Jonah returned to the Lord and we serve a God of the second chance and although he was a disobedient prophet and got out of the will of God God gave him another opportunity to come back and use his preaching and use his ministry in a wonderful mighty victorious way. But you know what? I believe the story of Jonah would have been a whole lot more impactful if you will.

Would have impacted more lives and you can believe what you want to. This is just opinion obviously. I think the story would have been a whole lot better had Jonah just obeyed the first time.

It's amazing to me the circumstances and means that God will use to get his people's attention and no doubt putting you in the belly of a fish for three days and three nights out here in the Lake Shittik would get your attention pretty good but I wish that he would have never left to begin with and I say that to give you this illustration we'll be through. When I first started in full time evangelism and I say full time because we traveled for a couple of years and my wife and I first got married four years ago and that's when I first came up here Brother Duffy let me preach. When I entered into full time evangelism I started out in a camp meeting in Priceville Alabama at the Anchor Baptist Church.

They had I don't know probably respectively 25 or 35 or 40 preachers there that week. I mean there's all kind of preachers and they had what they call popcorn preaching. They'd just say hey you ready to preach? I'm ready to preach.

They'd just have you jump up and preach for about 15-20 minutes. You'd sit down and have somebody else jump up, popcorn up and get up and preach back and forth and did it all day long. Well I got to preach on Monday morning and Brother K.C. Poole I told him I was going to go to my church on Wednesday night because I was a staff evangelist at that time for Somerville Baptist Church and it's only about 15 minutes down the road and so I said I'm going to go to Brother Royce's church tonight, my home church and I said but I can service.

They were having two speakers every night and I knew they were going a long time 10-11 o'clock so I said I'll be back and he said good. He said when you come back he said between the two services he said I want you to give your testimony and I said well how long do you want me to preach?

He said well just go about 15 minutes something like that and I said that'll be fine and so between the two speakers he let me get up and I turned to 2 Corinthians 5:17 a message I preached a million and one times what in the world has happened to you and I just preached on my testimony and how God saved me out of rap music and this that and the other and put me in a children's home and God saved me in a revival meeting and all that kind of stuff and I just preached on that for a while and so after about 15 minutes I closed my Bible and I sat down in the front row like I do when I'm just not preaching but when I'm just visiting a church and so I sat down and he said we got about 5 minutes left Brother Casey said he said we got about 5 more minutes left before the field kid gets up here

and preaches he said and Brother Kenny said if it'd be alright for you he said I'd like this missionary fellow that's here I'd like this young man to come up and give his testimony he said just tell us where you're going he said you got about 5 minutes that fellow jumped up had his Bible in his arm had a little boy and little girl

sitting there had his wife sitting there beside him just beautiful looking family you know he just kind of jumped up he just kind of walked up here and I just sat down and he said Brother Kenny said give us about 5 minutes this fellow got up here missionary man I don't remember if he was going to Micronesia he was going to some type of island I don't remember where it was Jamaica or something like that I'll never forget it Brother Duffy he walked up here he got

up and mounted the pulpit and he took his Bible and he just kind of dropped it like that he looked out across the crowd about 250 people there that night he said I don't know about you he said I don't know if I have much of a testimony to give after that and that's what he said I'll never forget it he said I grew up in a Christian home he said I was saved when I was 5 years old he said my daddy has always been a pastor for an independent Baptist church he said my mom and dad always stayed together never divorced he said I got saved in that independent Baptist church he said my daddy baptized me in that independent Baptist church he said I was a youth leader in my youth group he said I've always been in a Christian school from K-4 all the way through 12th grade he said I graduated from a

good Christian fundamental high school good Christian fundamental college he said I've never smoked a cigarette he said I've never touched booze or alcohol Budweiser mental high life anything like that he said I wouldn't know what a marijuana cigarette was if you rolled it up licked it and dropped it in my lap he said I've never been with another woman he said that woman that's sitting right there on the front row he said I don't have any illegitimate babies running around he said I've never touched another woman until I touched my wife on my wedding day he said I've never been with anybody else he said I've never done anything like that he said I've never been to a movie he said I can't ever remember a time in my life Brother Mick when I ever took the name of the Lord thy God in vain he

said never one time and he said it just seemed like every time we got in our car and had a holy magnet on the front of it we showed up at church somewhere he said I just remember living limp like that and he said after hearing this tonight he said I just don't know if I have much of a testimony big watermelon tears rolled up my eyes and I thought to myself dear God I don't have any children right now but if you ever see fit in your sovereign plan to let me have some that's exactly the kind of testimony that I want my boys and girls to see I'm going to tell you what our problem is in fundamentalism in America we've got this ungodly stupid warped idea that in order to be used by God you've got to be all messed up in sin and you've got to mess around before you're married and you've got to

smoke dope and drink and Budweiser and all that kind of stuff and man you've got to be high on the hog and you've got to do this that and the other and then you have some dramatic salvation experience and you get up and say hey look what God saved me from what a wonderful savior and I say Tommy Rot to every bit of it I wish to God I could get up and tell you that I never smoked marijuana I wish to God I could get up and say I grew up in a Christian home and didn't have to go to a children's home for four years of my life I wish to God I could get up and say that I'd never looked at wickedness or heard wickedness or been around wicked people I wish to God I wish I never would have woke up at three or four o'clock in the morning my eyes rolling back in my head and vomit all over my clothes

I wish to God that's the kind of testimony I had friend because that's the kind of testimony we need in America we need some people that didn't back up pack up slack up or shut up that they were taken up by the glory of God not a bunch of rebels and ingrates that jumped off into sin and kept going out and kept coming back and kept going out and kept coming back but they stayed true to the word of God and I get so frustrated I get so mad and I get so invigorated when I'm preaching some of these youth conferences

and some of these young people come to me and say brother I'll tell you one thing the only reason I'm going to a Christian college because my mom and dad make me go I'll tell you what I'm tired of these standards and I'm sick and tired of these standards and I'm sick here at Camp

Jetech and I'm tired of these standards here and I'm tired of these dress standards and these movie standards and I'll tell you what I'm just sick and tired of the fact that I grew up in a Christian home my parents just won't let me do anything and I'd like to take a young man and a young lady like that and pull them eyeball to eyeball, rip their stinking jugular vein out and say, what in the world is wrong with you?

You better thank God you grew up in a Christian home. You better thank God mom and dad got on their knees and prayed all the needs in.

You better thank God you were raised in a place that taught you godly principles, godly music, godly movie standards, and didn't let you jump around and whore hop from this place to that place. You better thank God if you've got that kind of testimony, because everybody in this world does not. And don't you swallow the doctrine that, well, God can use those people that get their lives involved in sin.

No, I think God would have used Jonah a whole lot more had he obeyed the first time, instead of the second time. And tonight, let me just ask you this question as we close. What's your testimony tonight? Do you have a testimony that will convince people that you not only love God, but you live a life that shows how much you love God? Do you have a testimony that shows that you're a separated Christian? That you mean business with your faith? That you don't just have lip service? You don't just go to some Bible college and carry some Bible around with you because it's just part of your wardrobe on Sunday morning? Do you really have a passion to know God and to have a testimony that when people look at you, they say, man, I would love to have in my life what you so dynamically have in yours? I beg you in God's dear name tonight, do not, do not, do not be one of the Bible's biggest runaways.

If your heads are bowed, your eyes are closed, please. There's no one looking, no one talking.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/0/SID0447.mp3>

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