



## EXPLORE THE BIBLE®

Amos, Jonah, Hosea, Micah Sermon Series  
Supports Session 5: No Escape  
Sermon Title: "Hitting Bottom" (Jonah 1:1-3,17)

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### Connection to Jonah 1:15-2:10

Most prophets obediently discharged their offices and preached the Word of God. Though voicing unpopular messages, all were eventually vindicated, and their messages proved true. Jonah did not obey God, he ran the other way and hit bottom, a place no one wants to go.

### Introduction/Opening

Physiologist Walter Cannon coined the term fight-or-flight response. The response relates to how we deal with stress or a perceived danger. Cannon noted how animals responded to threats and the bodily changes that occurred and introduced the idea in his book *Bodily Changes in Pain, Hunger, Fear and Rage* in 1917. When we look at the life of Jonah, fight and flight both come to mind. In the first half of Jonah's book, we find the problems that come with flight.

### Outline

#### 1. Headed to the Bottom

- a. Jonah failed to follow the faithful examples of Amos and Jeremiah who obediently answered God's call to preach to a wayward people. Amos had to cope with Amaziah who told him to shut up and leave the country (Amos 7:12-13). Jeremiah encountered unbelieving King Jehoiakim who shredded Jeremiah's prophetic words and burned them in a firepot (Jer. 36:22-26). Both prophets faithfully proclaimed their messages from God.
- b. Instead of heading east to preach in Nineveh, Jonah caught a boat and sailed to the west.
- c. Jonah's disobedience reveals what happens when we run from God. Whether we openly reject God's truth or politely ignore His way, we will find ourselves on the wrong path in life, a broad road that leads to destruction (Matt. 7:13).

#### 2. Sleeping Through the Storm

- a. Jonah indifferently went below deck to sleep while his shipmates were looking to their gods to escape the storm at sea. Jonah refused to heed the urgent request of the captain to call out to his God (1:4-6). Jonah could not see that the pagans surrounding him saw a spiritual solution to their plight.
- b. God uses many voices to bring us back to the right path. His voice of wisdom calls to us through the love of Jesus, from the heights (Prov. 9:3), and He even warns to us through unbelievers that can see we are headed the wrong direction.
- c. If we run from God and disregard numerous warnings, we find ourselves like Jonah sleeping in the hold of a ship tossed on the storms of life.

### 3. Finding the Bottom

- a. The belly of a great fish was the bottom for Jonah. Jonah experienced distress (2:1) and regret (2:4). He sank deeper and deeper as seaweed wrapped around his head (2:5).
- b. The bottom for us may not be the inside of a great fish. To observers our trials may seem small but in our emotional stress they are huge.
- c. Whatever our bottom, our solution is in the faithful mercy of God. God's mercy is detected in the fish that swallowed Jonah. Instead of drowning in the turbulent sea, Jonah was retrieved by the great fish sent by God.
- d. God then heard Jonah when he prayed. He did not ignore His wayward prophet, He listened, delivered Jonah, and commanded the appointed fish to deliver Jonah onto dry land.
- e. Hitting the bottom should cause us to reach out to God, the only One who can rescue us.

### Conclusion

Instead of running from God, we should always run to His loving arms. We may think that the end has come when we find the bottom of life. We should not fear. Instead, we can find hope, knowing that from the belly of a fish can come a life changing experience of the saving mercies of Jesus Christ.

*Ken and Welda Cox live in New Boston, Texas. In 2012 Ken retired from First Baptist Church after 20 years of service. Ken has been active in prison ministry since 1995 and presently serves as interim pastor of Mount Moriah Baptist Church, Omaha, Texas. Ken and Welda have six children and nine grandchildren.*