

The Blob

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Jonah 1:1-2

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When I was a kid, we used to play this strange game called The Blob. It was kinda like the game of Tag, where one person was “It” and tried to touch someone else. Well, in Blob, the rules state that rather than the next person now being “It”, these two people had to lock arms and move together as a group. And when the next person was tagged, they locked arms with the first two, and so too did the next and the next. The game ended when eventually every individual would become a part of the group; the Blob. I remember once playing with about 50 other people. And as the last man running, there were 49 other people, all locked together arm in arm, chasing me around a football field. True to its name, The Blob grew because that was its purpose.

I love playing The Blob with a bunch of people for the first time. It always takes a few minutes, but eventually they learn. The only way to win at this game is to move together as a body. If one part of the group starts running in one direction, trying to chase down a person, but the rest are moving toward another, the group accomplishes nothing. They end up pulling at one another instead. The best way for the group to win is to listen to the direction of one person. When your leader gives direction, the group follows. And man, is that a lesson Jonah needed to learn.

God had called Jonah to be a prophet sometime around 800 BC. And Jonah spoke for God at least once before in his life (2 Kings 14:25). But this time, something was different. Something caused Jonah to run the other way. It’s not like God was vague because His instructions were quite clear. **The Lord gave this message to Jonah son of Amittai: ²“Get up and go to the great city of Nineveh. Announce my judgment against it because I have seen how wicked its people are”¹** (Jonah 1:1-2). But instead he jumps on a boat and travels to Tarshish. Why was that? Why did he not follow God’s leading? Maybe it’s because this time God wanted Jonah to look outward beyond the nation of Israel.

¹Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. "Text edition"--Spine. (2nd ed.) (Jon 1:1-2). Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

As I read through the book it was obvious to me that Jonah thought more highly of his own comfort and safety than of others. When the storm hit the ship, where was Jonah? Asleep down in the hold ([Jonah 1:6](#)). If he had really cared about the others, he would have been up on deck helping to fight the storm. And when he has them throw him overboard what he basically was saying is that he would rather be dead than preach to those in Nineveh ([Jonah 1:15](#)). In the belly of the great fish, again he thinks only of himself. It wasn't like he said "Okay Lord, I'll go". God has to tell him a second time to go to Nineveh ([3:1](#)). So Jonah goes and gives his obligatory statement in the city, then whines after the people repent and God changes his mind ([4:1](#)). He wanders outside of the city to watch what happens and is still thinking only of himself. He basks in the comfort of shade one day ([4:6](#)) but suffers and complains in the sun the next ([4:8](#)).

What would cause this man to be so self-focused? Why in the world would he refuse to listen to such clear instruction from God? I believe it's because Jonah was more interested in protecting and maintaining his heritage than fulfilling the calling of God. I believe it's because Jonah was a slave to the law rather than understanding God's grace. I believe it's because Jonah wasn't interested following God's directions.

God needed to teach Jonah to see others through His eyes. God needed to do the same with Peter in Acts chapter 10. After a powerful vision where God said He would determine who was unclean, Peter hears a knock at the door. It's a group of people from Caesarea. Listen to what Peter eventually learns from God through this experience. ³⁴Opening his mouth, Peter said: "I most certainly understand *now* that God is not one to show partiality, ³⁵ but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him. ² (Acts 10:34-35). Now remember, this is the same Peter who at his first sermon had 3000 people respond and become believers ([Acts 2:41](#)). That's a large group! This is the same Peter who did great things for the early church. But God felt he still had a lesson to learn. Just like Jonah, Peter needed to learn the dangers in looking inward only. Even back then there were

²*New American Standard Bible : 1995 update*. 1995 (Ac 10:34-35). LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

people who would lock arms and close the circle with their backs facing outward; the only people they could see were those already a part of the group.

You get a group of people to connect with one another and over time they eventually will begin to organize; they elect leaders and adopt a constitution. A budget is created and, if it is a church, they look for ways to care for one another. They will stand together in a circle with arms locked together in unity, but by standing this way their backs face outward. It seems God needs to constantly open the minds and hearts of His people. It seems that over time, God's people figure the game is over; the group is large enough. They look only at themselves, caring for their own needs, and making decisions for the benefit of the group.

If Christians today are not careful, they will find themselves just like Jonah; even when God says "Go", they will find that they have become slaves to their constitution; they will question how "Going" will benefit the group. Their decision to "Go" is motivated more by the budget rather than any calling by God. And they wonder what effect "Going" will have on their heritage.

The truth is, in spite of the great things a person or a church may accomplish for the Kingdom of God, they still need to be willing to go when God speaks; to understand that when He gives the direction, they must follow. And what will happen if a church runs off in another direction? They'll accomplish nothing. Oh, they might be able to fill positions and balance the budget, but that's about all. And in thinking about what God did to Jonah, I can't help but wonder what He might allow in the life of a person or a church that runs the other way when He says "go".