

Date	May 23, 2010
Series	The Call
Title	Resistance to the Call
Big Idea	We want to be on God's team, but we don't want to be apart of God's call (His goals, plan or vision) to reach a city.
Text	Jonah 1
Speaker	Roger Valci

Introduction:

*My sport of preference has always been soccer. Since my mother was a registered nurse, football never entered into my family. Working in the Emergency Room, she saw too many broken bones to put the helmet and the pads on her boys. Because of my size and coordination, the coach put me as "striker." Right up front and near the opponent's goal. My job was simple...score goals. To my surprise I had a fair amount of success and I soon loved both the sport and my place in it. **That was until I left the city league to play for my school.** The competition caught up with me and soon I found **others** taking my spot as the team's offensive leader. In fact, I found myself **reassigned from the front lines of offences to back lines of defense.** Still in the center, but now in the back, **my job shifted from making goals, to preventing goals.***

*Truth be told, the coach saw my talents were much better at defending goals than scoring them. **However, I struggled with this new role. I wanted to play soccer. I wanted to be on the team for my school, but I didn't like the assignment. I wanted to play my sport, but I didn't like my new role. I knew that soccer was my thing, but I questioned the coach's call.***

I believe many of us find ourselves in a similar position today with your faith journey. You see your need for a Savior. You find comfort in God's Fatherly care. You enjoy the community of believers. In a sense, you love being on the team.

However, I have come to learn in our faith journey, there are numerous situations where we find ourselves loving the team, but we resist the coach's assignment. We are NOT questioning our faith, our commitment to God nor our love for His church. But we are wrestling with God's assignment, God's task, His mission. We struggle with The Call.

Today, we turn to the book of Jonah to explore **The Call**. I believe the next three weeks together **are perhaps the most significant in defining our mission as a church.**

Preview:

I want us to use the story of Jonah to:

- 1. Define The Call**
- 2. Examine our Resistance to The Call**
- 3. Look at God's Response to Our Resistance to that Call.**

In our time together I ask that you come each week with your Bibles and look with me in the text to see what God has to say about The Call.

Defining The Call:

Open up your Bibles to the book of Jonah with me and let's look at our text together.

Jonah 1:1 The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai:

Jonah 1:2 "Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me."

The Cast:

The story of Jonah has three characters and one assignment: **1) God, 2) Jonah, and 3) A City** are the characters and the assignment is **The Call**. **The fish has very little significance to the story**. As we look at this book the next three weeks we need to ask ourselves how these four pieces fit together. Unlike all the other OT prophets where **their message and words and emphasized and their life is secondary, in the book of the Jonah we know almost nothing of what he preached, but WE KNOW A LOT ABOUT HIS RESPONSE TO THE CALL**. I believe we tend to put this story in the children's story category and not into the center of **WHAT God is doing on planet earth and HOW He is doing it**. What we see in the opening verses of Jonah is **this irrefutable fact:**

God wants to reach a city. God says:

"I am concerned for the course of the city of Nineveh."

"I want to see its citizens delivered from the bondage of sin and the selfish inclinations that devour and destroy that great city."

"I want her industries, politics, military, commerce, education and entertainment reflect My righteousness."

"I want My glory to be displayed in that city."

"Heaven is in agony over the affairs of men."

"Jonah, will you be My man for the moment?"

God wants to reach a city SO HE MAKES THE CALL.

I find that pattern still happens today. In fact I believe it is the same pattern that created this church. **“God wanted to reach Dublin so He started Valley Christian Center.”** Let me repeat that: **“God wanted to reach Dublin so He started Valley Christian Center.”** Now at the time Dublin was not a city. I believe it was San Ramon Village. Perhaps we can say it this way: **God wanted to reach the families of the Tri-Valley so He started Valley Christian Center.** I thought we would retell the story of VCC through the lens of The Call. Watch this video with me that shows The Call to this region. **(Show video here)**

What is The Call? The Call is God’s plan to reach a city through the local church. Let me repeat that. **The Call is God’s plan to reach a city through the local church.** Thank you Michelle for that one Amen. Let me give you some facts about The Call.

1. **Everyone** has a call, but not everyone heeds The Call. (Not just for pastors)
2. The Call has both an **individual** and **corporate** angle to it.
3. The Call is always associated with fulfilling the Great Commission **first locally** and then **globally**.

Churches do NOT exist to:

1. To create private clubs for members only.
2. To provide Sunday services
3. To create a subculture in society that is “safe” and “unstained”
4. To provide areas of interest for my to “do ministry” for “my pleasure”
5. To make friends or find a spouse
6. To give me a few hours of break from my kids
7. To earn my way to heaven by listening to a lecture each week

Some of these factors are **important**, **others silly** but **all of them** miss **the glorious end God has for His church.** **All of them miss The Call.** **We serve a God who is reaching cities and churches are but a means to that missional end.** **May I propose to you that 90% of all problems in the church stem from the fact that we are lost our mission and created programs and events to**

entertain the faithful. Somehow we have lost the fact we serve a missionary God who is reaching cities and we must join Him in that endeavor.

Church, “the word of the Lord for you today” is that God wants to reach Dublin, Pleasanton, Livermore, San Ramon and Danville and He is asking you to join Him in that endeavor. Will you respond to The Call?

We like the team, but we don't like the assignment (Jonah 1:1-2)

At this point, I can see some wheel turning. Some of you may be thinking:

1. Pastor you are getting a little too excited right now.
2. Things are fine, why rock the boat?
3. I don't believe I signed up for this assignment when I raised my hand to accept Jesus.
4. Isn't reaching cities what I pay **you** to do?
5. I just want to come to church to hear nice music and a few words on what heaven will be like.

*After all, I gave my life to Jesus. I attend church most weeks. I may not tithe, but I give what I can. I like being on this team. I like telling people that I belong to Valley Christian Center. I enjoy watching the pastors work hard. **I like being on this team but I am not so sure of THAT assignment or my place in that assignment.***

The Jonah Syndrome:

I believe it at this junction where most Christians struggle. I call this conflict “**The Jonah Syndrome.**” What is the Jonah Syndrome? Jonah loved being part of the community of faith. He was part of God's chosen people. He was in the lineage of Abraham, Moses, David and Solomon. He was in an elite circle of individuals called “prophets”. He loved being on God's team, but He didn't like God's assignment. Now Jonah did like **ANOTHER ASSIGNMENT** given

him by God. According to **2 Kings 14:25**, **Jonah was asked by God to go to King Jeroboam II and encourage him to substantially expand the borders of Israel.** While Hosea and Amos were criticizing Jeroboam for worshipping other gods alongside Yahweh and for terrible social injustice through his reign, **Jonah was assigned by God a much more exciting and favorable task: to tell him to expand the boundary markers of Israel.**

But THIS new assignment to Nineveh, THIS idea of leaving family and friends and travel a long distance to travel to my enemy's capital and THIS idea of holding an evangelistic meeting to people I hate, no way. Not going to do it. Never!!!

That's the Jonah Syndrome. It is that place in our walk where we have enough faith to remain true to our vow to be one of God's children, but enough independence to dig in our heels and tell God, "I am not going there."

We have ALL been there. Places where God calls us to leave our comfort zone:

1. Go pray for someone a few aisles away in church
2. Go serve in Open Heart Kitchen this weekend.
3. Go tell your dad of what I have done in your time.
4. Go get groceries for that family you know is hurting.
5. Go humble yourself with your spouse and ask for forgiveness.

It is that point in your faith walk where you like being on the team, but God asks you to do something you don't want to do or don't agree should be done. That's the Jonah Syndrome.

The VCC Building Program:

It is at this juncture I must bring us to our current building campaign. It is with a sense of **excitement**, and some **anticipation**, I broach this topic. **Excitement because I believe this**

building represents: "Our commitment to God's call to the city." Buildings are never ENDS, but a MEANS to something. Pause for effect. Let's be honest, **IF we suspend the Great Commission locally and IF we agree to simply live with WHAT we have and WHO we have, WE DO NOT NEED A NEW BUILDING.** We can find a way to **MAINTAIN this church** without a new sanctuary building. **But the problem is that WE DON'T SERVE A MAINTAINING GOD. WE SERVE AN ADVANCING GOD.** In the city that we see so clearly from this hill each week are:

1. **Families** who don't know where to turn to find help in their **marriages,**
2. **Parents** who don't know where to turn with tensions with their **children,**
3. **Folks** who struggle with control over **alcohol** and **drugs,**
4. **Seniors** who feel **abandoned** and **neglected,**
5. **Business leaders** who sense **there must be something more to life** than iPads, summer homes and the next promotion,
6. **People** who wrestle **with fear of the future** because of the financial instability,
7. **Institutions** that believe they exist solely for **profit** and not for the glory of God.

It is exciting to think that God invites US to be among those He can call upon to reach the dejected, depressed and despondent in His city. This building represents The Call. You and I live at the NOW moment where God is inviting us into His cause and He is enlisting partners to reach a city.

Yet, I have **hesitation** because this all comes to us at a personal cost. Last year when I broached this topic with church, 150 people left. To be honest that freaked me out. I couldn't wait to turn the channel. Talk about the Jonah syndrome. I don't know all their reasons, but they apparently 1) they believed either this topic should NOT be discussed or 2) they did NOT want to join this endeavor because it was too costly. Many of us would rather talk about safe topics like End Times and The formation of the Bible or irrelevant topics like music styles or dress codes in church rather than any endeavor that may cost us **time** and **money**. After all, we

have all lost wealth in this Recession. And all of us are already too busy to add anything else to our lives.

So let me review a few facts:

God has spoken and He says, "Build!!!"

It baffles me to some degree **that some dispute this fact.** *God spoke to Dr. T and you heard him say from this pulpit **we are called to build.** It was always his dream to build a church here on the hill and he told me he is jealous that we get to do it. He was the first person I texted when we received our permits last week. Even now removed from us as CASA director, he and Dixie has pledged money for the new building. **Pastor Ray** wrote a letter encouraging us to build. **Everyone on the Deacon Board** believes we are called to build. **All the pastors and principals** believe we are called to build. And yes, **you new pastor** has heard from the Lord that **"It is time to build."** Even last year at our campaign, God gave a prophetic word through **Pastor David Sell** to build.*

Yet, I still hear some question, **"Should we do this?"** As some point you must ask yourself three questions. **First, how does God speak to any group of people? Second, has He indeed spoken to us here at VCC? Finally, am I living with the Jonah syndrome where I love being part of this church, but I don't like that assignment?**

I must confess to you today, **I have had the Jonah syndrome.** *I was enamored with the glory of this place and the fact that you choose me as your Senior Pastor. I tell people that "I interviewed well enough to get the job, but not well enough to know what job I was getting." Less than two weeks into my new role, I came to the realization that this building campaign*

*would consume the first three to five years of my time here. I wanted to be your Senior Pastor. I wanted to preach God's word to you each week. I wanted to unify church and school. I wanted to build a team that would create ministers. **But I was NOT so excited to inherit the responsibility and challenge of finishing a design to a church building I did not initiate, not be able to change it too much for that would cause undo burden on the process and then do something I have never done: raise money. Add to that a recession, laying off 28 people on the hill, cutting the church budget by 500k, the challenge of building a team, rolling out a vision and I have said, "Lord this is too much." "Let's go another direction." "Can I run away from this part of The Call?"***

*I asked Tim Ludden, the vice-chairman of the Deacon Board, this week in our Board meeting this question: "Why would God ask us to build in the worst Recession in this country's history where people in our church are losing jobs and homes with a new pastor that has never been a senior pastor and never led a campaign?" Feels like foolishness to me. To which he responded. "Yes, Roger, God is stacking the odds against us, but history has shown that in **THESE SETTINGS GOD GETS THE GLORY FOR ONLY A MIRACLE CAN MAKE THIS HAPPEN."***

Perhaps the greater insight to this endeavor is the realization **THAT WE MUST NOT WAIT FOR THE BUILDING IS BUILT TO ANSWER GOD'S CALL TO THE CITY.** Listen to this email I wrote to our Mayor, Tim Sbranti just this week.

Tim:

Attached is a pdf document that tracks who served, how many hours and to which non-profit. Thus far, the people of Valley Christian Center have crossed the 2,000 hour mark for number of hours served in our community. We are well on our way to not only reach our stated goal of 2,500 hours of service, but will probably reach 5,000 volunteer hours this year. Last month alone, we served 654.5 hours. Just wanted to give you an update on our progress.

We would still love to have you join us on June 6th for our groundbreaking ceremony if you have the time.

Blessings,

-Roger

Roger-

It is incredible to see all of this in writing....you continue to do God's work in our community. I truly appreciate the tremendous positive impact you are having. Unfortunately, it does not appear that I can make your groundbreaking on June 6th, but please know that I am very excited to see this move forward. You and your congregation remain in my prayers. If I can ever be of further assistance, please let me know.

God Bless,

Tim

So many people have stopped me this week to comment about last week's baptism service. **I am used to reading about sovereign moves of God, not living in one.** But as grand as that moment is, one I will never forget, **may I introduce you to another one that in my mind exceeds that one in scope and influence; one that is indeed a work of the Spirit.** It is our outreach to the community. **We donated 654.5/2,045 hours thus far to the city God loves.** **God is positioning us to bless the city He longs to reach.**

Folks, I stand before you today in weakness and trembling, but also with joy and excitement for the task. 47 years this task has alluded us and in two week Curtis Smith will move the first shovel of dirt. If that doesn't get you excited, you need to get saved.

We don't like the assignment SO WE RUN FROM GOD (Jonah 1:3)

Yet, like Jonah, we tend to run **FROM** God's assignment. We flee **FROM** The Call.

Jonah 1:3 But Jonah ran away FROM the LORD and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee FROM the LORD.

Jonah has several good reasons to run. Nineveh was the capital of the Assyrian Empire. The

Assyrians were known for:

1. **Ruling** those they conquered with an iron fist.
2. **Free love** was practiced everywhere, including the streets, parks and public squares.
3. **Reshuffling** conquered people groups around the Empire. They would exile the people they conquered and make them slaves (Samaria).

We may have **our own reasons** for **NOT** responding to The Call: **(Spotlight skit here)**

1. Don't have the time.
2. Don't have the resources/money.
3. Don't want to.
4. Not my gift.
5. There are others better than me for this task.
6. Doesn't sound fun.
7. It's somebody else job to do that. I have already done my part.

There is a fine line here between **excuses** and **explanations**. One is a cop out. One **may be**, may be, a reasonable answer.

1. Some of us are running from God's Call to lead,
2. Some are stifling your gifts to serve, finance, teach or pray,
3. Some resist telling that person next to you God's story,
4. Some know they should join a certain group, but still have not.

My question to you, **"When are you going to stop running FROM God?"** When are you **going to heed The Call?**

IF God has indeed spoken, which every God-ordained authority past and present has indeed said He has...

IF God has said, "Build!", which every God-ordained authority past and present agrees...

IF we are called by God to reach a city and this building is a means to that end,

THEN it seems to me that the question before us should be, "**God what is MY part in The Call?**"

MY part in The Call:

It will take ALL of us to see this done. We need two things from everyone.

1. Join The Call.

Folks, it's time to make God's call to this city our priority as a church. Our events, programs, small groups ALL need to reflect this sacred task. It's time to awaken once again that Christ's church is the ONLY institution that exists for its Non-members. There are people whom God wants to touch THROUGH US. People He wants to bring hope and salvation THROUGH US. People that need deliverance and freedom THROUGH US. **To follow Jesus is to join The Call.**

2. Buy bricks.

I have on my desk a plan to build a church in three Phases. We have enough money for Phase 1 – the Foundation. We are 700k short of the enclosed shell – Phase 2. Phase 3 in the internal work, sound system, carpet, chairs and the such. The Deacon Board believes we should build as long as we have resources. If we must stop, and no one tells me that want to see us stop in this endeavor, then it makes sense that if we stop at all, Phase 2 – the enclosed shell is the reasonable place to stop. It is at THIS juncture where we can release our deep bench of tradesman to take us home and finish much of the work of Phase 3.

In front of me are 1,400 bricks. Folks we needs to sell 1,400 at \$500.00/each to raise 700k so we can keep building through Phase 2 – our enclosed shell. We need this money by

December of this year. Can you buy a brick, two, three, five or ten? Can you do your part? Part of The Call of this church is to build God a church to reach this city. Every people, OT, NT and throughout church history, have built God a tabernacle, a temple, a synagogue or a church to reach a city. It is NOW our time to give God His house. Go home and PRAY. Do not fill it out now. **Hear from God yourselves on what part you are to do.** Then come back on June 6th, Groundbreaking Sunday, and turn it in. We will then find a way to get your brick(s) to you.

We run from God, and, for some reason, He runs after us (Jonah 1:4-3:1)

Jonah lived in an era that was rich with prophets. **Amos. Hosea. Micah. Isaiah.** God could have given up on this rebellious prophet. I would have. If people's will is going in a direction I feel is opposite of what I can do, I tend to let them go. Not God. **He binds himself to this rebellious prophet and says, "I want to reach Nineveh through YOU Jonah."**

Jonah 3:1 Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time:

I imagine there may be people here who have the Jonah syndrome. You like being on God's team, but you don't like The Call. That may be your specific call and ministry. That may be the calling of this church to build God a house to reach a city He loves. Know that when we run from God, for some reason, He still runs after us. Somebody beside Michelle get excited about this.







2010

2008

2001

1995

1982

1977

1971

1968

1962

Resisting
THE CALL

“Should I not be concerned about that great city?”

Jonah 4:11b



*¹ The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai:
² "Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it,
because its wickedness has come up before me."*

Jonah 1:1-2

The Characters of
THE CALL



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Defining
THE CALL

THE CALL is God's plan to reach a city through the local church.



1. **Everyone** has a call, but not everyone heeds **THE CALL**.
2. **THE CALL** has both an **individual** and **corporate** aspect to it.
3. **THE CALL** is always associated with fulfilling the Great Commission **first locally** and then **globally**.

Facts about

THE CALL



Jonah Syndrome

That place in our faith journey
where we love being on God's team,
but resist God's assignment.

In essence, we oppose **THE CALL**.



*25 He (Jeroboam II) was the one who restored the boundaries of Israel from Lebo Hamath to the Sea of the Arabah, in accordance with the word of the **LORD**, the God of Israel, spoken through his servant Jonah son of Amittai, the prophet from Gath Hopher.*

2 Kings 14:25

Being selective to

THE CALL



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VISION FOR
OUR VALLEY



Answering
THE CALL



VISION FOR
OUR VALLEY

God has spoken and He says:

“BUILD!”

Answering

THE CALL



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Blessings,

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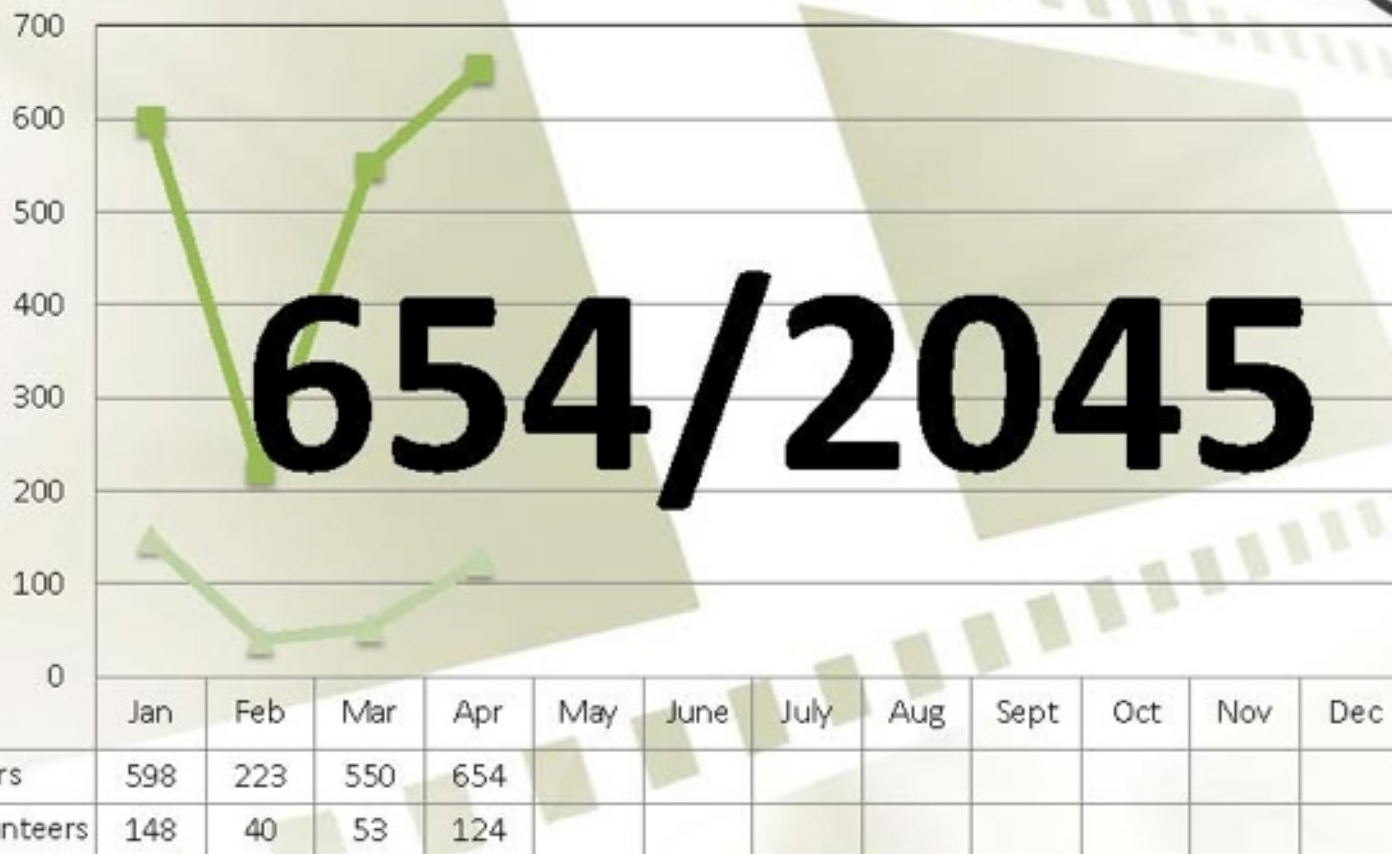
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COMMUNITY OUTREACH

BRING



Current month volunteer hours/Yearly total



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Jonah 1:3

Running from
THE CALL



My part in
THE CALL

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2. Buy bricks.

My part in
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