

Date	May 30, 2010 (V4RV 2010 Campaign on the Intersection Service)
Series	Answering The Call
Title	The Chase
Big Idea	God chases us until we start chasing Him so that through us He can fulfill The Call. Motion is not enough. Motives are required.
Text	Jonah 2-4
Speaker	Roger Valci

Introduction:

*At the center of **most romance movies** is what I call **"The Chase"**. It's that point in the story where **for the sake of love** a man pursues a woman or in some cases a woman pursues a man. **The degree to which our hero or heroine will travel, fight or give up something costly to win over their "true love" is what makes a romance movie a romance movie.** As we watch this chase, we the audience, secretly confess, **"I wish someone would pursue me with such earnestness and passion."** It is a desire that **both men and women** share throughout a relationship not just in the dating chapter of it. **We all want to be pursued, celebrated, fought for. We want to be chased. (example: My chase of Janae).***

*One aspect that makes Christianity distinct from other religions is **the fact we serve a God who chases us.** He binds Himself to a person and then pursues them with earnest even when they run from Him. **The degree to which He will travel, fight and give up something costly to win over His "true love" is truly remarkable and far exceeds the most stirring emotions of any romantic movie.***

Today, as we examine the story of Jonah again, we discover **The Chase**. In this situation **it is not man who chases God, but God who chases rebellious man.**

Review:

Last week, we learned about **The Call - God's desire to reach a city through the local church.**

1. We saw in the book of Jonah that God wanted to reach a city so He made **The Call**.
2. We then connected that story to the beginning of this church, Valley Christian Center. God wanted to reach Dublin so He made **The Call**.
3. We traced **The Call** through our 47-year history to the juncture we stand today.
4. We evaluated all that we do as a church against **The Call** and **began to see that God is stirring the minds and hearts of this people back to this sacred priority.**
5. We established the fact that God has indeed spoken to past and present leadership and He has said, **"It is time to build."** That is part of **The Call** for this people today.
6. We connected the task of building to **The Call** to reach a city He cares about.
7. We understood God is building us, particularly a conviction for **The Call**, as we build Him a house.
8. We introduced the term, **"The Jonah Syndrome"** where we acknowledge that **"we love being on God's team, but we don't like his assignment."** In essence, we oppose **The Call**.
9. We listed excuses that we come with that justify why we can't enter into **The Call**.
10. We invited God's Spirit to examine in our lives those areas that we are prohibiting God from working through us, those areas where we resist **The Call**.

I understand that for some this is new thinking about the purpose and mission of Christ's church. Once you grab hold of this concept that God established churches to reach cities, it changes much of what we do and how we establish priorities.

This is what God wants to do **THROUGH** us. Believe it or not **this is only a PART of the story.** I would even dare say it is **NOT** the majority part of this little book. Yes, God wants to do something **THROUGH** us, but He also wants to do something **IN** us.

That then leaves the question what does God want to do **IN** us? May I propose to you that **THIS fact** that what God wants to do **IN** us **is as significant as the goal of reaching a city.** In a literary sense, this fact exceeds The Call. More real estate in the book is attributed to what God wants to do **IN** us than **THROUGH** us. Look with me in our text. The city is reached at the

end of chapter 3. It is the greatest revival recorded in the Scriptures and ironically it does NOT come to God's chosen people Israel and it comes through a resistant prophet. The brilliance of this little book is chapter 4. Chapter 4 is the surprise element in the story. If Jonah was a play, most of us would grab our coats and umbrellas after chapter 3 thinking the story is over in this 3-act play. But the lights go down and curtain rise **and we see that The Chase is not complete. God is looking for something more in Jonah and in us. Hence chapter 4.**

Today, I want us to talk about God wants to do **IN** us. I want us explore this concept through **The Chase**. Last week, we talked about what God **THOUGHT** about the city. Now it's time to talk about what He **FEELS** about the city. **What does He long for? What concerns Him? What is does He want to share with you and I?**

Preview:

As we look into this story, I want us to examine in the text both

1. The **MEANS** God uses to chase us and
2. The **END** to which He is hoping we will surrender ourselves when He "captures" us.

Let's read the text and then comment on it. Open us to Jonah chapters 3 and 4.

I have some helpers with me today to read the text.

God chases us:

God is chasing Jonah. This fact is quite **extraordinary** and we must take time comment on it. One would think that God would cut His losses with Jonah and go to His bench for a back up. After all, He is the God of the universe and why should he “waste time” with **this stubborn, stiff-necked prophet** who wants to avoid The Call when He has **Amos, Hosea, Micah and Isaiah**, who are more than **willing and ready** to fulfill The Call. Yet, as we read the story, **we find God is quite committed to Jonah even though Jonah is not so committed to His purpose, place or The Call.**

This fact shows us God’s resilience and commitment to The Call and to those He enlists in The Call. God is NOT going to let Jonah’s stubbornness impede His desire to reach a city. Nineveh is in peril and God wants to save this city. **But to do so, God has to FIRST reach Jonah.**

So God seeks in Jonah a CONVERSION on two levels.

1. God must first **ALIGN JONAH’S WILL WITH HIS WILL** and **THEN** God wants **Jonah TO FEEL WHAT HE FEELS.**
2. One is a conversion of the **MIND.** The second is a conversion of the **HEART.**
3. One **AGREES** with The Call. The other **SACRIFICES** for The Call.
4. One is **OBEDIENCE**, which is good, but the other is **PASSION/CONVICTION**, which is far better.

Let me tell you, BOTH CONVERSIONS are EXTREMELY DIFFICULT. The **human WILL** is **STUBBORN** and **RESISTS** being told what to do. The **human HEART** is **COLD** and **filled with SELFISH INCLINATIONS.** Amazingly, God honors our choices, even when they are rebellious. **He is looking for us to SURRENDER both OUR WILL and OUR HEARTS to The Call.** Why? Because God aches over the plight of a city and as we will see in Jonah, **He is longing to partner THROUGH US to reach a city.**

God chases us THROUGH CIRCUMSTANCES. (Jonah 1:4-17)

This is too good to pass and we must pause and examine **HOW God gets us to that place of surrender WITHOUT violating our wills.** Let's review for a moment...

God is concerned about a city so He makes The Call to Jonah. Jonah rejects The Call and runs away from God. God then chases after Jonah. Jonah gets on a boat and then **SOVEREIGNLY**, some would call it a coincidence or fate, and they would be wrong, strange and unusual circumstances occur. Look with me in the text.

*Jonah 1:4 Then **the LORD sent a great wind on the sea**, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up.*

*Jonah 1:7 Then the sailors said to each other, "Come, let us cast lots to find out who is responsible for this calamity." **They cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah.***

*Prov. 16:33 The lot is cast into the lap, **but its every decision is from the LORD.***

*Jonah 1:17 But **the LORD provided a great fish** to swallow Jonah,*

Jonah runs and suddenly there is **A STORM, LOTS and A FISH.** Some may call this bad luck, but the text does not give us that option. Luck has **NOTHING** to do with it. **God is chasing His resistant and rebellious servant. Jonah thought He could run away from God. He never expected God to chase after Him.**

This is good teaching so I don't want you to miss it. God is intervening in the affairs of this world to get us to see **The Call.** What is amazing to see is **HOW** God does this without violating our wills. From the belly of the fish, Jonah, **ON HIS OWN FREE WILL**, cries out, **"Help!!!"**. Amazing, **God influences circumstance to influence our will (2x).** The result: **Jonah, who was once running from God, is now calling out to God.**

Thoughts on Running from God:

I used to think the message of Jonah was this: ***"If I was going to be rebellious from God, stay away from water."*** NO the message of Jonah is this: ***"ALWAYS run TO God, never run FROM Him."*** Why? **For one reason, there is no place you can run to be away from Him.**

David asked the question:

Psa. 139:7 *Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?*

Psa. 139:8 *If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.*

Psa. 139:9 *If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea,*

Psa. 139:10 *even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.*

Secondly, **where else can one turn?** Like Peter, when people were running FROM Jesus,

Jesus said:

John 6:67 *"You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked the Twelve.*

John 6:68 *Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.*

The very fact you are here today in church suggests that you like being on God's team.

But being here does **NOT** mean you like God's assignment.

1. Know that He runs after you.
2. Be encouraged that your choices don't thwart God's purposes in you.
3. Understand that situations and circumstances pressing against you may be God chasing you.
4. Stop running from The Call.
5. Heed The Call and watch HIM deliver you.
6. Know that part of you does not start living life UNTIL you embrace The Call
7. The best part of the life's journey is found in The Call. Embrace The Call and live life fully.

I speak **courage** and **faith** into you **to run TO God for The Call**. Yes, **RUN TO** Him not only for your needs. But also, **RUN TO** Him for The Call.

God chases us through circumstances UNTIL WE START CHASING HIM

The story of Jonah has two targets. **One is a city. The second is our hearts.**

Jonah preaches what I believe is **the worst sermon in the Bible**: *“Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned” (Jonah 3:4)*. Now I have taken about 10 to 12 preaching classes in my life and have taught a few on occasions and **this sermon violates every principle in the book**. No introduction. No conclusion. No illustration. No main points. No use of the text. No central idea. And worse of all...No heart.

Folks, I have studied sermons for a large portion of my life and I will tell you that a sermon is **NOT** a sermon **until the message and messenger become one**. **You must not just exegete the text. You must exegete God’s heart. When you have God’s heart, you need not worry about gestures or tone for the audience sees the message in the messenger they see in the speaker God’s**

passion and conviction of the text.

Let me tell you...Jonah **NEVER** got here. The way God views the situation and the way Jonah sees it could not be more opposite. Jonah’s message was simply this: *“Burn...Nineveh, you are going to burn. God is fed us with you. Sodom and Gomorrah had is easy compared to what is coming to you.”* No hope...No mercy...No compassion...No altar call...No way out.

It is as this point I want us to look at the second conversion God seeks and **that is one of the heart. Jonah is compliant to The Call, but he is not happy about it**. Even though God is chasing him, and captures him, he never chases God back.

A Tale of Two Prayers:

You can see this in Jonah's prayer in chapter 2. Look with me at **the two prayers** found in this short book. Both are a result of people who are in dire need. Both reveal **the hearts** of those praying. **Jonah prays in chapter 2. Nineveh prays in chapter 3.** At first glance Jonah's prayer looks reverent and proper. But notice two items are missing in his prayer: **Repentance** and **Surrender**. Even though Jonah does promise to keep his vow in verse 9, there is no further specification of the nature of the vow. There is no indication that he vowed to obey by going willingly to Nineveh. **Jonah wants God to deliver him from the consequences of his choices. He NEVER asks for God's heart. Jonah prays for HELP. He never prays to CHANGE.**

Nineveh, though, repents with sackcloth and ashes. They call a fast. They shut down the city to cry out to heaven. They seek the heart of God and they get it.

What's the deal with the worm?

Jonah gets his popcorn, diet coke and climbs a hill to watch the fire works. *"This ought to be good,"* he thinks to himself. What is interesting is in this story **we see once again natural events attributed to God. God makes the vine** grow somewhat miraculous. **God causes the worm** to come. **God sends the scorching wind.**

Jonah 4:6 Then **the LORD God provided a vine and made it grow up over Jonah to give shade for his head to ease his discomfort,** and Jonah was very happy about the vine.

Jonah 4:7 But at dawn the next day **God provided a worm, which chewed the vine so that it withered.**

Jonah 4:8 When the sun rose, **God provided a scorching east wind,** and the sun blazed on Jonah's head so that he grew faint. He wanted to die, and said, "It would be better for me to die than to live."

Once again, God uses **circumstances** to influence Jonah. God is knocking on the door of this prophet because He wants Jonah to **feel** what He **feels** about Nineveh. **He wants Jonah to have His heart.**

The vine in this story represents **our comforts** (in this case shelter and protection) **which God provides.** God is gracious and kind to grant us **shelter, jobs, clothing, food, insurance, family and the like.** We bless God when we have all these things and pray hard when we lose them. Yet, in this story, God tries to get Jonah, **and US, to see His higher priority.** It is not that these things are not important, if not essential. **It is that in God's criteria, they are secondary to a greater purpose. That purpose is The Call. That priority is a city He longs to reach through us. God changes us through circumstances until we start chasing Him so that through Him He might fulfill The Call.**

God is saying something here we cannot miss.

1. *"Jonah, your priorities may be on your comforts (shelter and protection), My priority is on a city."*
2. *"Jonah, I WILL provide for you, but Provision and Protection is NOT that totality of faith." "Jonah, in My economy provision and care are secondary to mission." "Jonah, I want you to make The Call a priority."*
3. *"Jonah, My heart is for a city, for the men and women and children who are bound, broken and beaten by life and I wish your heart would feel for them as I do."*

Jesus told us to seek **FIRST** the kingdom of God, and shelter, protection and other essentials will come our way (Matt. 6:33). The kingdom of God is the mission of God on planet earth. The kingdom is advancing. The kingdom is liberating. The kingdom is aligning earth to heaven. The kingdom is The Call.

What does it mean to have God's heart for The Call?

God wants to give Jonah His heart. This is seen in **two ways** in the text.

Priorities:

1. God is concerned for a city. Jonah a vine.
2. God sees eternity in the balance. Jonah sees his world being disrupted.
3. God sees a people living in darkness. Jonah sees people who enslave Him.
4. God is agony over the plight of this city. Jonah is cursing a worm.

Mercy:

1. God want to extend compassion to lost people. Jonah wants them to burn.
2. God wants to see grace prevail. Jonah has his seat and popcorn ready and want so see fireworks.
3. God is looking for a reason NOT to judge them. Jonah is looking for a way NOT to see mercy and compassion come towards them.

God chases us until we start chasing Him so that through us He may fulfill The Call.

Jonah 4:9 ¶ But God said to Jonah, "Do you have a right to be angry about the vine?" ¶ "I do," he said. "I am angry enough to die."

Jonah 4:10 ¶ But the LORD said, "You have been concerned about this vine, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight.

Jonah 4:11 But Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well. **Should I not be concerned about that great city?"**

Curtain falls. Lights on. Shocker ending.

God chases us until we start chasing Him so that through us He may fulfill The Call.

Ezek. 36:26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your **heart of stone** and give you a heart of flesh.

Also seen in...

Ezek. 11:19 I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their **heart of stone** and give them a heart of flesh.

We often interpret this from a **conditional** perspective rather than a **missional** perspective.

God, I am selfish and need to change. Yet, the context shows that God heals us, delivers and changes us so we can go where He is going.

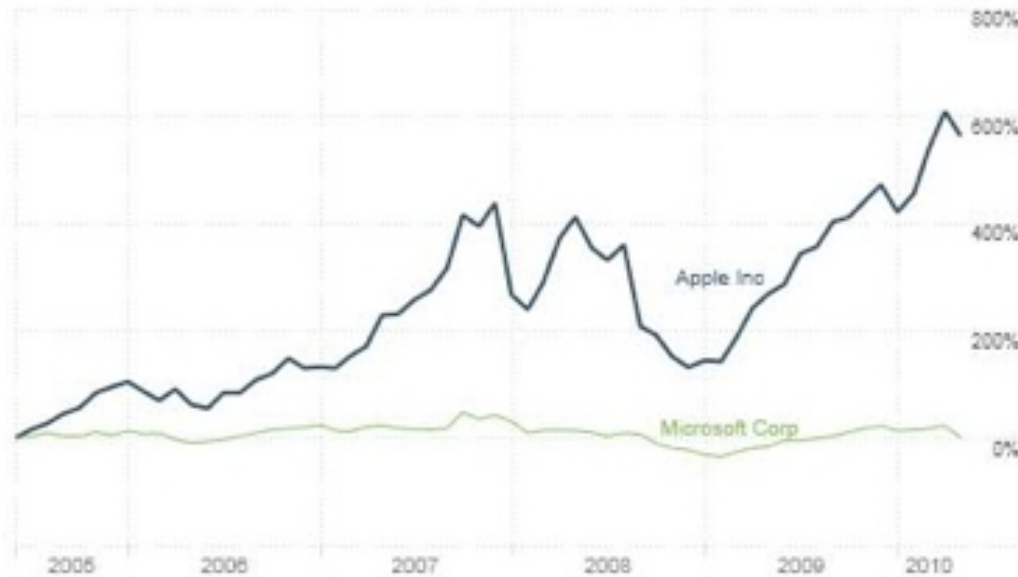
Ezek. 36:36 **Then the nations (cities) around you will know that I the LORD...I the LORD have spoken, and I will do it.'**

Prayer time:

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

Parents, your kids have heard you pray for **needs**. Can you know model before them what it is to pray **for God’s heart, His concern and His priority**. **Can you pray before them The Call?**

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2010

2008

2001

1995

1982

1977

1971

1968

1962

Reflection of
THE CALL

“Should I not be concerned about that great city?”
Jonah 4:11b





Defining
THE CALL

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



1. God chases us



The God who chases us to
THE CALL



1. Conversion of **The Will.**
2. Conversion of **The Heart.**

The God who chases us to
THE CALL



God chases us
② *(through circumstances)*



The God who chases us to
THE CALL



***4 Then the LORD sent a great wind on the sea,
7 They cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah.
17 But the LORD provided a great fish to swallow Jonah.***

Jonah 1:4, 7 & 14

The God who chases us to
THE CALL



1. Where can one run from God?
2. Where else but God can we turn?

The God who chases us to
THE CALL



God chases us
(through circumstances)

3. *until we start chasing Him*



The God who chases us to
THE CALL



*¹ But Jonah was greatly displeased and became **angry**.*

*⁴ But the LORD replied, “Have you any right to be **angry?**”*

*⁹ But God said to Jonah, “Do you have a right to be **angry** about the vine?”*

Jonah 4:1,4&9

The God who chases us to
THE CALL



6 Then the LORD provided a vine and made it grow

7 God provided a worm, which chewed up the vine

8 God provided a scorching east wind

Jonah 4:6-8

The God who chases us to
THE CALL



God chases us
(through circumstances)

until we start chasing Him

④ so that through us

He might fulfill

The Call



The God who chases us to

THE CALL



1. Priorities

2. Mercy

What does it mean to have God's heart for
THE CALL



9 But God said to Jonah, “Do you have a right to be angry about the vine?” “I do,” he said. “I am angry enough to die.”

10 But the LORD said, “You have been concerned about this vine, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight.

Jonah 4:9-10

The God who chases us to
THE CALL



11 But Nineveh (Dublin) has more than 120,000 people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well.

Should I not be concerned about that great city?"

Jonah 4:11

The God who chases us to
THE CALL



God chases us
(through circumstances)

until we start chasing Him

④ so that through us

He might fulfill

The Call



The God who chases us to

THE CALL



26 I will give you a new heart
and put a new spirit in you;
I will remove from you
your heart of stone
and give you
a heart of flesh.

Ezekiel 36:26



The God who chases us to
THE CALL



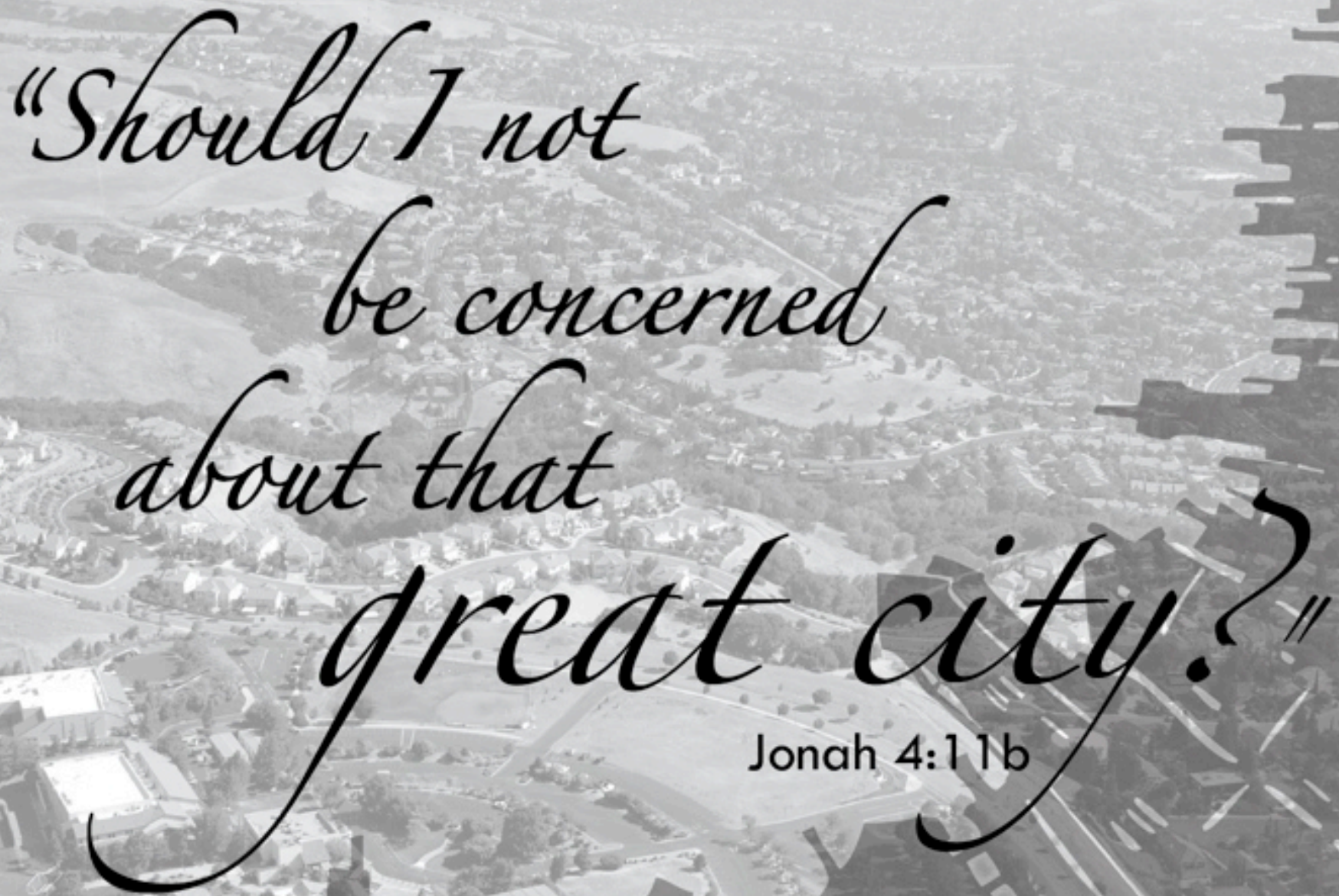
36 Then the nations around you
will know that I the LORD...

I the LORD have spoken,
I will do it.'

Ezekiel 36:36



The God who chases us to
THE CALL

An aerial, grayscale photograph of a city, likely Nínive, showing a river winding through the landscape and various buildings and structures. The text is overlaid on the image.

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

Jonah 4:11b