

June 2020



God Wants YOUR Attention!

As a new Christian, all the influence in my Christian life came from church services. If I wanted to grow more, what was I going to do? Go to church, of course. This is what everyone did.

Then I started to notice some things that didn't make any sense to me. Every Sunday the preacher announced a different title to his sermon, but by about halfway through, it was obvious that this was the same sermon he had preached the last Sunday . . . and the Sunday before that. I concluded that he could only preach one sermon, no matter what title he put on it. It was a salvation message, again and again, pounding on the main principles of salvation with an appeal to come to Christ.

There was only one problem. There weren't any unbelievers in the service.

Then I noticed some things as I visited evangelistic services in other churches. The speaker was usually billed as an evangelist. Then you went to the service and there were only Christians in attendance, and many times, not too many of them. The church was half empty.

So, I thought the role of the evangelist was to evangelize, in other words win unbelievers to Christ. Why, then did they speak only in churches, where over 90 percent of the audience was Christian?

You will not find many unbelievers in the church building. Unbelievers don't frequent church. They don't like it. If they liked it, they would be there. I have a saying, "The unchurched don't like church. That's why they are called unchurched."

If you are going to draw unbelievers under the hearing of the Gospel, you have to get their attention. They are not interested in the same old tired appeals

of the church. Come hear an evangelist or come hear this Gospel group. The worst thing you can do is to hold an evangelistic meeting in the church and expect them to come. If you want to draw unbelievers to the hearing of the gospel, you have to throw away tired, old methods that don't work. You have to be extremely creative.

We had an audience of over 40,000 people in a five-year period by being very innovative. At least 50% were unbelievers. The "how" of that is explained in my soon to be released book, *"The Eye Of The Storm."*

Rule number one, is that you have to get their attention.



When I was a young man in the business world, I attended a seminar in which one of 3M's top salesmen was the featured speaker. He said a revolutionary thing that changed the way I did sales and advertising. He said, "Ninety percent of sales is getting their attention. If you don't have their attention, you will never make the sale." Well, that was no news to God. He, of course, has known that from the beginning.

In the eighth century BC, there was this wicked city, Nineveh, the largest city of the Assyrian empire. It was located in what is now northern Iraq. It was so wicked, that God decided to destroy it, but He would first send a prophet to appeal to the Ninevites to repent.

For reasons known only to God, the prophet Jonah was chosen for the task. Jonah lived in a small town in the northern kingdom of Israel. Israel and the Assyrians were enemies, and Jonah wanted no part of the assignment.

He decided to run from God (a prophet should have known better) and he got on a ship bound for Tarshish, the opposite direction of Nineveh.

God sent a severe storm to the ship and the passengers feared they were all going down. "There must be someone on the ship who has brought us this misfortune," they reasoned. They cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah. "Yeah," Jonah said. "It's my fault. I'm running from God. If you throw me overboard, the storm will stop."

They did, and it did . . . stop, that is.

God sent a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah prayed. Most of his prayer was praise and adoration for God. Apparently, Jonah's attitude had changed completely.

So, after three days, God had the fish spit Jonah up on dry land. Then he told Jonah the second time, "Go to Nineveh."

The Bible narrative says that Jonah was "three days journey" from Nineveh. He went to Nineveh and warned them the city would be destroyed in 40 days because of their wickedness. Jonah didn't want God to spare them. He wanted them destroyed. After all, they were Israel's nemesis.

Here's the thing not mentioned in the Bible narrative. When a man spends three days in the belly of a great fish, something quite drastic happens. The digestive juices of the fish turns that man's skin pure white. Also, Jonah would have smelled really bad . . . except that if he had three days to get to Nineveh, he may have had time to clean himself up . . . maybe.

Or he may have stunk to high heaven when he arrived in the city. In today's world, the smell of a skunk is nearly impossible to get rid of. How long does it take to get rid of the horrible smell of decay . . . from the belly of a fish?

I think God had this all set up from the very beginning.

He wanted the Ninevites to repent. He needed to get their attention. So, His messenger walks into a city of very dark-skinned people . . . and the messenger is completely white, a real albino . . . and he reeks!

Do you think that would get the attention of a crowd? You'd better believe it!

So, much to Jonah's dismay, the whole city repented. The king and his people donned sack cloth and sat in ashes. The king decreed to the whole city that no one was to eat, they should not even drink water.

Mission accomplished! Nineveh was saved . . . because God got their attention . . . with a stinky, albino prophet!

So, how about this pandemic we are going through? Is God trying to get our attention?

**How about you?
Does He have yours?**

Note: In the late nineteenth century, the story of a man swallowed by a whale was reported by several American newspapers. According to the story, the man lived several days in the whale, until fisherman captured and cleaned the great fish, finding him in the stomach. His skin was bleached white, and he reported there was a terrible stench of decomposition in the stomach. He lived eighteen years after the incident. In the New Testament, Jesus referred to the story of Jonah, comparing it to his own three days in the tomb, before being resurrected. (Matthew 12:38-42).

**Can Anything GOOD
Come Out Of A Pandemic?**

Since the pandemic

- the air is cleaner
- the rivers are cleaner
- murders are down
- online church attendance has increased dramatically
- traffic accidents have decreased
- people are reaching out to their neighbors now more than ever
- families are spending more time together

In His Service,

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