The Jonah Complex

Living the Message: Sharing Good News & Growth

LifeSpring Seminar Series

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What is the Jonah Complex?

Asking the Hard Question: Do I Have the Jonah Complex?

The Cure for the Jonah Complex
What is the Jonah Complex?

Michelangelo's “Jonah” in the Sistine Chapel
A familiar story...

A play in four acts:

- Chapter 1- Jonah flees from God into the belly of a fish.
- Chapter 2- Jonah cries out for mercy and receives it.
- Chapter 3- Jonah acts as God’s mouthpiece of judgment against sin.
- Chapter 4- Jonah is angry at God for being merciful to anyone but him.
What is the Jonah Complex?

**Symptoms:**

1. Received God’s mercy, but unwilling to extend it to others.
2. Resists God’s command to take His message to the world.
3. If compelled, will condemn sinners publicly, but not offer them hope.
4. Becomes angry at God for showing mercy instead of judgment.
5. Cares more for personal comfort than the lives of people.
Asking the Hard Question: 
Do I have the Jonah Complex?

- Checking myself for symptoms: Received God’s mercy, but unwilling to extend it to others.
  - Do I have a hard time offering mercy to those who sin the way I did? To those who sin in different ways?
  - Do I act like the servant who was forgiven much, but refused to forgive little?
  - Do I consider myself to be better and more deserving of God’s forgiveness than those who have not been saved?
Asking the Hard Question:
Do I have the Jonah Complex?

- Checking myself for symptoms: *Resists God’s command to take His message to the world.*
  - Am I in the habit of telling non-Christians about Jesus and His offer of salvation?
  - Am I in the habit of lovingly engaging non-Christians with a lifestyle of care and service?
  - Do I habitually make and cultivate friendships with non-Christians?
  - Or do I run/hide from opportunities to share my faith through word and action as part of a lifestyle of avoiding contact with non-Christians?
Asking the Hard Question: Do I have the Jonah Complex?

- Checking myself for symptoms: *If compelled, will condemn sinners publicly, but not offer them hope.*
  - Do I typically talk “with” non-Christians or “to/about” non-Christians?
  - Am I more likely to condemn sin or offer salvation to sinners?
  - Am I prone to respond in shock and disgust when sinners act like sinners? Similarly, do I hold non-Christians to the same moral standards as Christians?
Asking the Hard Question:
Do I have the Jonah Complex?

- Checking myself for symptoms: *Becomes angry at God for showing mercy instead of judgment.*
  - Do I identify with the older brother in the story of the “prodigal” son?
  - Do I secretly wish that certain people had to endure punishment before being absolved of guilt?
  - Do I withhold the good news from certain people because deep down I truly wish they would “go to hell”?
  - Do I evaluate fellow and/or prospective Christians as fitting in two categories: those who are deserving of mercy and those who are not?
Asking the Hard Question:
Do I have the Jonah Complex?

- Checking myself for symptoms: *Cares more for personal comfort than the lives of people.*
  - Am I more troubled by the loss of convenience and comfort than I am by the death of a non-Christian?
  - Am I so consumed with my comfortable and familiar life (work, school, church, family, recreation) that I simply don’t have time to offer salvation to the perishing?
  - Do I have more compassion for anything non-human than I have for non-Christian humans?
The Cure for the Jonah Complex

- **Symptom #1:** Received God’s mercy, but unwilling to extend it to others.

- **Cure:**
  - Embrace the mercy of God as something to both receive and give.
  - Recognize that I am no more worthy of receiving God’s mercy than anyone else.

- **Prayer:**
  - God, I am undeserving of your great mercy and yet you give it freely. Give me a heart of mercy that extends your mercy freely to others.
The Cure for the Jonah Complex

- **Symptom #2**: Resists God’s command to take His message to the world.

- **Cure**:
  - Embrace God’s command to share the gospel as a command and not an option.
  - Recognize that a failure to share the gospel is an act of hatred toward non-Christians whom we are called to love.

- **Prayer**:
  - *God, I accept your commission to share the gospel in word and deed. Give me a heart of love that extends your love freely to others.*
Symptom #3: *If compelled, will condemn sinners publicly, but not offer them hope.*

Cure:
- Embrace the fullness of the gospel message and share it liberally.
- Recognize that condemnation and a call for repentance are useless without the offer of salvation and new life.

Prayer:
- *God, I only turned from sin and escaped condemnation because of your grace and mercy. Give me a heart that refuses to call for change without offering Jesus Christ as the source of that change.*
### The Cure for the Jonah Complex

- **Symptom #4**: Becomes angry at God for showing mercy instead of judgment.
- **Cure**:
  - Embrace the beauty of mercy triumphing over justice.
  - Recognize that above all else, God is love and desires for everyone to be saved.
- **Prayer**:
  - God, I am a living example of your mercy triumphing over justice. Give me a heart that truly breaks when condemnation occurs and truly rejoices when people are saved.
Symptom #5: Cares more for personal comfort than the lives of people.

Cure:
- Embrace a life that is focused on abundant, eternal life for yourself and others, rather than passing pleasure.
- Recognize that nothing is more valuable to God than sinners.

Prayer:
- God, I want my priorities to line up with yours. Give me a heart that cares for people more than my own comfort and convenience.
The Cure for the Jonah Complex

- One word summarizes the cure for the Jonah Complex: **LOVE**
- When we truly fulfill the command to love God and others we will be set free of the Jonah Complex and set free to share God’s love with the lost.