

RELENTLESS LOVE: The Struggle Is Worth It

Scripture used: [Jonah 3:10](#) and [Jonah 4:1-4](#) (NIV)

OVERVIEW

Pastor Hurmon wrapped up the series “Relentless Love,” based on the Book of Jonah. The story has two dominant themes: God loves us with a relentless love; and it is natural to find ourselves locked in a struggle with God to control the outcomes of our lives. While we may be tempted to give in to despair and cynicism, or want to pretend that we aren’t struggling to keep up appearances with others, an authentic relationship with God involves vigorous back-and-forth, as struggle is indispensable to growth and development. When we are honest with our struggles, and we bring our struggles to God, we find that God creates space for our struggles, and meets us in ways that grow our faith, in ways that make the struggle “worth it.”

KEY POINTS

1. **The first step is to acknowledge that we’re struggling.** In many ways, the entire book of Jonah chronicles the honest struggles that Jonah has with God because Jonah wants a particular outcome (the judgment and destruction of the Ninevites) and God has a different agenda (to offer the Ninevites the opportunity to repent and be forgiven). In the same way, we often struggle with God because we want our lives to be different than what we are experiencing. Being honest with our struggles may be as simple as naming it: “I am in a season of struggle.” At times, we may even be yelling and screaming, but it’s still preferable to engage with God rather than running from or disengaging from Him. In his first year of college, Pastor Hurmon went through his own time of intense wrestling and jostling with this faith, when his grandaunt who had raised him passed away unexpectedly of cancer. He started to give up on school and to stop pursuing God, because he was angry that God had let his grand-aunt die.
2. **God drew Pastor Hurmon into a dialogue where Pastor Hurmon was able to voice his anger.** God reminded Pastor Hurmon of details about his grand-aunt’s life. Pastor Hurmon remembered his grandaunt’s prayer for him to be faithful in his relationship with God, and to excel in his education. To honor his grand-aunt, Pastor Hurmon somewhat begrudgingly (like Jonah) re-engaged with God.
3. **We must be honest about our human desire to control things.** Pastor Hurmon wished his grand-aunt hadn’t died, but God ultimately challenged him to reconsider what he was hoping for. Pastor Hurmon’s grandaunt had her own prayer for herself: that she would raise a child (Pastor Hurmon came into her life); and that she would live long enough to see Hurmon’s standing on his own two feet. Her prayers were answered. She hadn’t prayed to live forever; indeed, such a prayer would be foolish in this life full of disease, injustice, and pain. God was faithful in answering the prayers that mattered most to Pastor Hurmon’s grand-aunt, and God asked Pastor Hurmon, like he asked Jonah: “Do you have a right to be angry with me?” God gives us insight; perhaps initially partial and incomplete, but later present and full.
4. In the same way, **we must trust God even if we don’t understand all the good and the bad.** God is sovereign and will not be controlled. In our desire to try to control God or to control outcomes, we can lean towards disobedience (as Jonah did when he ran from God), or assuage Him with obedience (as Jonah did when he returned to preach to the Ninevites). Or, we can pout and sulk like small children. Ultimately, God is in the task of maturing our faith. This is the faith we build as we struggle with God, but learn to trust His character rather than His making circumstances turn out the way we hope; we don’t need God to constantly demonstrate that He is worthy of trust, because we know He is trustworthy. When our faith matures to this point, all the struggle is “worth it”, and we are able to live life with unshakeable confidence, living with courage, assurance, and peace.

DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - Where is the area in your life where you are currently struggling most with God? Are you honest with God about this struggle? Do other people in your life know about this struggle so they can walk with you in the journey of faith?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - Consider [Jonah 4](#). Why does this chapter end on a question? What is God trying to help Jonah to understand? What does Jonah’s anger say about him in this chapter? What is God trying to help Jonah to understand about His character as it relates to Ninevah and forgiving the Ninevites?
- 3) **DO** - God wants to meet us in our struggles. Find a way to share your current struggle with God and with a trusted friend. Ask God for strength to stay engaged with God through your current struggle.