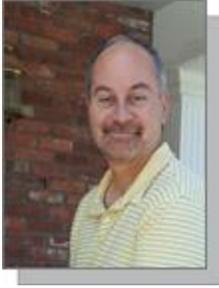


# The Jonah Complex: The Doors We Run From



“God is the God of open doors. He opens doors all around. Who could not want that?”

*I could not want that.” Dr. John Ortberg*

Don't each one of us truly long for God's doors to open to us? Certainly we want the doors of blessing, but what about the scary doors of uncertainty requiring faith? Yet like Ortberg's description, we could not want that. We can resist going through them. We can at times shrink back, not seeing them, or if we do, choose to not walk through them. We sense that the cost could be great, for God's doors do not lead to the threshold of Disneyland. Some doors will take us fleeing our destiny, even hiding out in the belly of a ship trying to sleep it all off (Jonah 1:3) through the slumber of fear and fog of worldly comforts.

Ortberg cites psychologist Abraham Maslow when he called this strange tendency we have to run away from our destiny, “the Jonah complex.” It is an evasion of growth, a defense against calling. Maslow says, “If you deliberately plan to be less than you are capable of being, then I warn you that you'll be deeply unhappy for the rest of your life. You will be evading your own capabilities, your own possibilities.” If we run then we merely exist, we don't really live at all.

Each person has an internal tug-of-war when God opens our doors. C.S. Lewis powerfully speaks to our resistance from God: “We regard God as an airman regards a parachute; it's there for emergencies, but he hopes he never has to use it.” Sadly, we too can exhibit the Jonah complex by running away when we attempt to close God's doors for us: We resist dealing with the nagging troubles in our marriage; we run away from the conflicts in our work relationships; we avoid getting intimately involved with our kids' troubled worlds because of the pain and faith to persevere. We can run from these challenges because the cost of going through that particular door would be terrifying, requiring God to show up in our storm and trust his strong hand to rescue us.

I have seen my life, and perhaps you can identify some in your life, similar struggles of Jonah-God's providential doorways. While we think we are resisting pain, in reality we are preventing the final outcome of joy. We are called to something significant, something possible, and a life of rich destiny. God is faithfully moving us away from our flight to guide us back on course to a life of full potential and possibilities (Mk. 9:23).

What changes us is finally submitting to God's faithful patience to enter the hard doors we avoid! When we finally step through those God destined doors, only then can we know deep happiness, rich joy, and eternal calling. Let's not evade our own growth and God given possibilities. God insistently calls us back to the doors, for he is committed to our eternal good and his glory. And we can only know our destiny by courageously walking through them!

Warmly in Christ,

**Dave**

Executive Director