

Making Progress

Read [Matthew 6:9-13](#)

Making Progress (from [Jonah 1:1-17](#))

I can never forget the following story that I read from a newspaper on the airplane last November traveling from Romania back to the United States. A woman was driving through the Cascade Mountains in Oregon when she ran into a snowstorm. She became frightened, and was happy to see a snow plow up ahead. She pulled in behind it and began to follow it.

The snowplow turned this way and that, clearing the snow ahead. The woman just relaxed and followed. At times the heavy snowfall threatened to cut off her vision, but she stayed right on the tail of the snowplow.

Finally, the snowplow stopped. The driver came back to her and asked, “Lady, where are you going?”

“I’m on my way to central Oregon,” she said.

“You won’t get there following me. I’m plowing this parking lot,” he said.

Have you ever felt like that lady? You’ve been journeying down the road of life, turning this way and that, but not really making much progress? We have probably all felt that way at one time or another.

Sometimes in life it only *seems* like we’re not making progress, while in reality God is busy working behind the scenes, moving his plan for our life forward. We just have to be patient. At other times we really are *not* making progress. Like the lady in the snowstorm, we have gotten off course somewhere. God’s plan for our life is not moving forward.

This usually happens when we have failed to follow God’s leading at some point. We may have failed to do one of the basic things all Christians are called to do, like **forgiving others, attending church, being thankful**. Or we may have missed God’s leading in regard to his unique plan for our life. We may be trying to be a pastor when he’s called us to be a stockbroker—or vice versa. Either way, we have failed to follow God’s leading in some area of our life, and have stopped making progress.

This happened to the prophet Jonah. God gave him some specific instructions:

Jonah 1:2 (NASB)

²“Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and cry against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me.”

But Jonah did the exact opposite:

Jonah 1:3 (NASB)

³ But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. So he went down to Joppa, found a ship which was going to Tarshish, paid the fare and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.

Jonah failed to follow God's leading for his life. God told him to go to Nineveh, but Jonah took a boat to Tarshish instead. He didn't want to preach to the city of Nineveh, because it was the capital of Assyria, his nation Israel's enemy.

Because Jonah failed to follow God's leading, his life went into a tailspin. A great storm came on the ship he was in, threatening to sink it. Jonah knew the storm had come because of him. He admitted it to the sailors, who threw him overboard—and the storm stopped.

Jonah 1:17 (NASB)

¹⁷ And the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the stomach of the fish three days and three nights.

Inside the fish Jonah cried for mercy, and God heard him:

Jonah 2:10 (NASB)

¹⁰ Then the LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah up onto the dry land.

So Jonah was given a second chance:

Jonah 3:1-2 (NASB)

¹ Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying,

² "Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and proclaim to it the proclamation which I am going to tell you."

Notice that God's word to Jonah has not changed. Before he fled in the ship, God's word to him had been: "**Go to Nineveh with my message.**" Now that he has a second chance, God's word to him is still: "**Go to Nineveh with my message.**"

This time Jonah obeys. He goes to Nineveh and proclaims that in forty days it will be "*overthrown*" because of its sin (**Jonah 3:4**). They believe and repent, even the king. God spares the city, and Jonah tells God that's why he didn't want to come to Nineveh in the first place: he knew God was merciful and would forgive them if they responded to his message. Jonah would have preferred to have his nation's enemies judged (**Jonah 4:1-2**).

What I want you to notice is that Jonah's life got back on track when he obeyed the word God had given him—the same word God had given him before. A great revival took place through him, even if he didn't have a good attitude about it.

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Pastor Eddie Idefonso

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It works the same way for us. When we miss God's leading—by failing to do some basic thing all Christians should do, or by failing to follow his unique plan for our life—we get off track. At best, we stagnate. At worst, storms are unleashed to threaten us and those around us.

The only way to start making progress again is to do what we've already been told.

Have you missed God's leading in some basic Christian thing you should be doing? What do you need to do to get back on track?

Have you missed God's leading in his unique plan for your life? What do you need to do to get back on track?