The Prodigal Prophet

I. Slide#1 Book Intro:
   A. Slide#2 Book of Jonah - The Prodigal Prophet. Its right in-between Obadiah & Micah :) 
   B. Slide#3 The Main Character:
      1. Who do you think it is? - Not the big fish (mentioned 4 x’s); not the great city (9 x’s); not even Jonah the disobedient prophet (18 x’s); but God (mentioned 38 x’s).
         a) Patricia Sjostroms bible, red heart stamp, on every time God was mentioned in Jonah.
   C. Slide#4 Main Themes:
      1. It is about the Grace of God to Jonah, the pagan sailors, & the Ninevehites.
      2. It is about the Will of God & how we respond to it.
      3. It is about the Love of God & how to share it w/others.
      4. It is about the Word of God & how to obey it.
      5. It is about the Missionary God & His greatest revival ever.
      6. It is about the Sov. God, over plant life, animal life, the elements, & the most stubborn of all…man!
   D. Slide#5 Titles:
      2. His name means Dove, so we have, Dove turns chicken-of-the-sea.
   E. A Story:
      1. We have diff writing styles throughout Scripture: Poetical, Historical, Didactical (Paul), Gospels, Story form.
   F. It’s not just about a man & a fish...
      1. It’s a story about sin & grace.
      2. It’s a story about desperation & deliverance.
      3. It’s a story that reveals how we are all great sinners, but that God is a great Savior.
      4. It’s a story about how a great God relentlessly pursues a self-righteous fugitive.
      5. It’s a story which shows, that while our sins reach far, Gods grace reaches farther.
      6. It’s a story that shows how God’s capacity to clean things up is infinitely greater than our capacity to mess things up.¹

II. Slide#6 MISSING THE BOAT…GOD’S BOAT (1-3)

¹ Tullian Tchividjian, Jonah Intro.
Here’s a riddle: When is **making** the boat, **missing** the boat? - When you make **the wrong boat**.

B. **Slide#7 The Books Credibility (1)**

C. It’s found in **Judaism** in the Tanak, **Yonah**. It’s found in **Islam** in the Quran, **Yunus** (in Arabic).
   1. Jonah is the **only prophet** named from the Hebrew bible/Tanak in the **Qur’an, in the book As-Saaffat, chapter/Surah 37, verse 139-148**.

D. **We have here a real person & a real story.**
   1. **Slide#8 2 Kings 14:25** He (Jeroboam II, 793-753bc) restored the territory of Israel from the entrance of Hamath to the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which He had spoken through His servant **Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet** who was from **Gath Hepher**.
   2. **It was a time of prosperity for Israel... but judgment was about to fall.**
   3. **Gath (winepress) Ha (the) Hepher (digging) – winepress of digging.**
      a) Located 3 miles NE of Nazareth in Galilee.
      b) Nicodemus spoke up to the Pharisees & they responded w/Jn.7:52 Are you also from Galilee? Search and look, for **no prophet has arisen out of Galilee.** (uh huh!)
      c) Archeological evidence for the occupation of this site **during** the life time of Jonah has been found. [Also, Jonah’s tomb is there. **Jerome** even visited early 400’s]

E. **Slide#9 Jesus Substantiates: his name, his prophetic office, his story, & thus his book.**
   1. Mt.12:40,41 **An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.** For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here.
      a) So we have a real man, with a real story, at a real time in history, with a real message for us today.

F. **Slide#10 Look at the 3 Imperatives (2) Arise. Go. Cry out.**

G. **Obedience to God is the most serious obligation of man.**
   1. To **fear God** is to **stand in awe** of Him; to **be afraid of God** is to **run away from** Him.

H. Here God also shows again His concern for other nations (Nineveh)
   1. Both **Hosea & Amos, contemporaries of Jonah’s day**, also showed God’s concern for **other nations**.

I. **Show Map:**
J. Slide#11a Joppa – Today it is Jaffa/Yaffa [It is where we start our tour of Israel]
   1. Where Tabitha/Dorcas was raised. Where Simon the tanner lived.
   2. From here to Nineveh…500 miles NE. From here to Tarshish…2000m West.

K. Slide#11b Nineveh – Northern Iraq, on Tigris River [God speaks, “Go East young man.”]
   1. It was the capitol of the Assyrian Empire.
   2. Today - Impressive ruins of Nineveh lie on the E. bank of the Tigris.
   3. They were a cruel & heartless people, who showed no mercy to their enemies.
   4. They were known to bury their enemies alive, impale people on sharp poles in the hot sun, & even skin people alive.

L. Slide#11c Tarshish – SW Spain [His flesh whispers, “Go West young man.”]

M. Slide#12 Does man have a free will? (3) Yes, but an obvious “limited one”.
   1. The will of God is not an option(at least His decreed will) it is an obligation.
   2. So did Jonah have a choice in this manner?
      a) Of course, he could choose the easy way or the hard way to get there. :)
   3. I wonder why we never ask, “Does God have free Will?” - Didn’t our sovereign God have a choice to send His prophet of the day, to Nineveh???
      a) And if He is Creator & Sustainer of this world, & it was more than just His “choice” but His “decreed will”…then be guaranteed saints, it is going to come to pass, & can’t not come to pass.
   4. Also remember, the will of God is the expression of the love of God.
      a) Ps.33:11 The counsel of the LORD stands forever, The plans of His heart to all generations. What a blessing. Not a capricious (subject to whim; impulsive/uneven) kind of God.

N. Slide#13 How does this verse illustrate the deceptive danger of seeking guidance from convenient or coincidental circumstances?
   1. What false security might have Jonah seen as maybe being in the will of God because all was working in his favor?
      a) If I’m Jonah, I’m thinking: Oh my gosh, I found a ship waiting at the shipyard. I have the exact fare that was needed. I was able to sleep soundly (5). MUST be the Lord!
   2. “When a person decides to run from the Lord, Satan is always happy to provided transportation, or accommodations.”
   3. Oh, the grace of God to allow him a good sleep before going down for a lesson.
   4. Ever notice that backsliding is always followed by a spiraling downward.
      a) 3a down to Joppa. 3b down into the ship. 15 down into the sea. 17 down into the fish.
5. See Jonah needed Nineveh as much as Nineveh needed Jonah.

O. Slide#14 Running from God’s will
1. Are you running from the will of God?
2. Have you ever ran away from something you knew God wanted you to do?
   a) Maybe a situation you’re running from. Making a phone call you really don’t want to make. Setting up a meeting. Sharing your faith w/________. Going on a certain Mission Trip. Turning off that TV show you know is stumbling you.
3. We run from God’s will daily...don’t we?
4. Answer today, what are you running from?

P. Slide#15 Running from God’s presence
Q. Jonah ran from the presence of the Lord (see vs.3a,3b,& 10)
1. He had to know he really couldn’t run away from God’s presence.
   a) Surely he knew…Ps.139:7-10 Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, Even there Your hand shall lead me, And Your right hand shall hold me. If I say, “Surely the darkness shall fall on me,” Even the night shall be light about me; Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, But the night shines as the day; The darkness and the light are both alike to You.
2. So, what he was really running from was: his office, his working for God, his calling. He moved out of the sweet spot of Gods will.
   a) He stopped preaching, he became a backslidden prophet, the prodigal Prophet.
3. Jeremiah thought it, but couldn’t do it. Moses, Elijah & others have struggled with it.

R. This time period was only 30 years from Assyria invading Israel. Maybe Jonah knew this (from Amos or Hosea), so all the more didn’t want to help a future conquerer.

S. Slide#16 Where would be the last place on earth you would want to be sent by God? And why?
1. Maybe to the Pashtun Tribesman of Afghanistan (aka Taliban).
2. Maybe to the terrorist organization Al Queda. Or to the Abu Sayyaf in So. Philip.
3. Maybe you wouldn’t want to be sent to Iraq. Or to the Somalia Pirates.
4. Maybe it’s to specifically a humid place, or a cold place you wouldn’t want to go?
5. Maybe a war torn place? Or a place that is cut off from the outside world/no communication?
6. Maybe its as scary as going to your neighbor across the street?
T. Sometimes God asks us to do some things we don’t want to do because they are difficult, uncomfortable, or even painful.

1. But, our disobedience can be more costly than our obedience.
2. Ever moved when you weren’t supposed to? Ever changed jobs when it wasn’t God’s will?

U. Slide#17 You Can't Outrun God.  [You can run, but you cannot hide]

V. Two ways that people run from God:

1. Some by breaking all the rules.
2. Some by keeping all the rules.
   a) Immoral people are trying to save/free themselves by breaking all the rules.
   b) Moral people are trying to save themselves by keeping all the rules.

3. As J.I. Packer used to say, there is always 2 ways to fall off a tight rope.
   a) There are always 2 ways to run from God.

4. Neither rule breaking nor rule keeping is strong enough to save us.
   a) Being good can’t save us anymore than being bad can.
   b) Only The Gospel can truly save you (what God has done for you, not what you can do for Him).
   c) The Gospel isn’t the ABC’s of Christianity, but the A-Z.²
      (1) It doesn’t just ignite the Christian life; it’s the fuel that keeps Christians going every day.  Tullian Tchividjian

5. Jonah proves both in this story.
   a) 1st 2 chapters, Jonah’s disobedience, ruler breaking.
   b) Last 2 chapters, Jonah’s obedience, ruler keeping (but with a wrong heart).
      (1) Running from God in either direction is...running from God.
      (2) Note: we all do this every day.

W. Slide#18 Many years later God would send another messenger.

1. Only when He came it was willingly & joyfully.
   a) Because He knew the heart of God, in fact He was the heart of God.

2. He would be God’s Message (aka The Word) to a running away world.
   a) He was everything God wanted to say in a person.
   b) And like Jonah he would spend 3 days in utter darkness.
   c) But unlike Jonah….this Prophet, this Redeemer, this Rescuer would emerge from darkness w/determination to pursue His enemies...with life giving love.

² Timothy Keller
X. **Communion:**

1. **Bread:**
2. **Cup:**