

TALK FOOTBALL

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Theme: The Challenge to 'Just Do It' with Jonah.

To help us look at the challenges of just doing it and applying our skills learnt to football and life we are going to look at the very strange story of Jonah from the Bible. Jonah was given a job to do by God but he really struggled with completing the task he had been given. So in spending the next 8 weeks looking at the challenges and successes Jonah faced I hope we can learn some lessons that will help us move effectively from the training ground to the football pitch, from practice into playing a match and from theory into practical daily life.

Focus:

In order to help us to remember some of the lessons learnt we shall use the letters of the word AMBASSADOR to give us lesson titles and headings to help us 'Just do It':

1. **A** is for **ANXIETY** (Jonah 1:1-3) Just do it despite feelings of apprehension or worry
2. **M** is for **MULTIPLICATION** (Jonah 1: 4-16) Anxiety spreads and impacts others
3. **B** is for **BOTTOM** (Jonah 2:1-6) Sometimes we just need to hit rock bottom
4. **A and S** is for **ACKNOWLEDGE Your SAVIOR** (Jonah 2:7-10) Just do it to get out
5. **S and A** is for **SECOND ATTEMPT** (Jonah 3:1-5) Just do it when given a second chance
6. **D** is for **DECISIVE** (Jonah 3:6-10) Just do it by getting on with your job and the task
7. **O** is for **OBSERVE** (Jonah 4:1-5) Just do it by looking and learning from what you see
8. **R** is for **REFLECTION** (Jonah 4: 6-11) Just do it by thinking through what you observe.

The lesson resources provided on Jonah can be used either as a framework for a larger group talk or for a small group discussion time. Therefore the material provided should be adapted to the setting, age, experience and knowledge of your listeners.

Ambassadors Football's vision is to serve the local church, inspiring and equipping it to build Christ-centred relationships through football. We pray these resources help you as you share Jesus through football. If you have any comments or feedback, please contact us at gb@ambassadorsfootball.org

Week 1: Just do it despite the ANXIETY (Jonah 1: 1-3)

Jonah was given a job to do by God but he really struggled with completing the task he had been given. So in spending the next 8 weeks looking at the challenges Jonah faced I hope we can learn some lessons that will help us move effectively from the training ground and onto the football pitch, from practice into playing a match and from theory into practical life. In order to help us to remember the lessons learnt we shall use some of the letters of the word AMBASSADOR to give us lesson titles and headings to remind us 'Just do It':

Our first letter is A for **ANXIETY**. So this is when we can be so worried, nervous, or apprehensive about something it can affect the way we think and behave. Sometimes on a football pitch we can be so anxious about the opposition, the coach, expectation etc. that we don't perform at our best or we hide away because we are worried about what our team mates may say or think or the difficulty of the match seems too much. Of course we can do the same off the football pitch as well as we may be so anxious about school or what our friends think that it affects our thinking and behaviour.

This kind of anxiety, worry and apprehension affected a preacher/prophet called Jonah who lived in Israel around 2,700 years ago. Listen to these words from Jonah 1:1-3 in the Old Testament part of the Bible *"The word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai: **"Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me."** But Jonah ran away from the Lord and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the Lord."*

So it's God's idea for Jonah to do this job and Jonah is the perfect guy for the job as he is a successful renowned preacher and prophet who usually communicates what God has to say clearly to people. The problem was that this time it is to go to Nineveh which is an enemy city of Israel and the Ninevites were horrible, nasty and cruel people, who used to attack, kill and inflict pain on others. They were a very scary people and God was asking Jonah to do a very scary thing and so Jonah was anxious.

What did Jonah do in his anxiety? ... He basically ran away and he ran away in completely the opposite direction to Nineveh in the East as he headed west for Tarshish. So this wasn't just hiding but this was proper planned wilful running away as he found a ship and paid for his own escape route from both God and the job he was expected to do.

Anxiety can make us do the strangest of things as it can affect our thinking or paralyses us or make us even run away. It can be a major barrier to us doing what we need to do both on and off the football pitch.

Questions for Reflection – What are you anxious about? What, if anything, are you deliberately running away from?

On the football pitch? ... **Are there people and/or situations around your team that you are avoiding? What reality around your football do you need to face up to rather than run away from?**

Away from the football pitch? ... **Are there people or situations at home or school or in your neighbourhood or among your friends that you are avoiding because you are scared and anxious? What is causing your apprehension or nervousness or fear there?**

Today is not about giving you any easy answers on how to deal with any anxiety you are feeling about the situations you face but hopefully in the following weeks you will learn some things that will help. Certainly running away from what you should do is not the answer as this can be even more painful than facing up to the pressure that is your reality.

We as coaches get anxious as well. Sometimes we have anxiety over the decisions we have to make about the team, who to play, who not to play, how to play, what will happen, what will the parents say etc.? Even though we are not offering any solutions as such today, we do find that running to God is a much better option than trying to run away from God as Jonah did. It's unbelievable that a man of God like Jonah would think he could actually run away from God and yet that is what he tried to do ... crazy!! Running to God and talking and listening to Him in prayer is a great help when we are anxious so let's do that right now.

PRAYER: *"Heavenly Father, anxiety is a horrible thing as it affects our thinking, can paralyse us and can lead us to run away or make silly decisions both on and off the football pitch. I don't know what these young people are anxious about today specifically but whatever concerns them or makes them anxious please replace their anxiety with your peace and quietness. Help them to run to you not away from you as you are our answer in all times of pressure and need. Thank you, Jesus. Amen."*

Week 2: Anxiety MULTIPLIES to impact others (Jonah 1:4-16)

Jonah was given a job to do by God but he really struggled with doing it. We heard last week that the **A** from the word **AMBASSADOR** which we are using as a memory aid stood for **ANXIETY**. Jonah was so worried, nervous, scared and apprehensive about doing what he had to do in taking God's message to the enemy city of Nineveh that he ran away. We realised that we also can sometimes hide on a football pitch because we are so anxious about the opposition, the coach, expectation etc. that we don't perform at our best. Also in our life off the football pitch we can do the same as we are so anxious about school or what our friends think that it affects our thinking and we want to run away. The problem is when we act in anxiety or fear then it is not just us who are affected but others are impacted negatively as well and so there is a **MULTIPLICATION** effect so our letter **M** for today stands for **MULTIPLICATION**.

Let's see the multiplication effect anxiety had on others 2,700 years ago when Jonah tried to run away from God. Listen to these words from Jonah 1:4-16 in the Old Testament part of the Bible ***"Then the LORD sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up. All the sailors were afraid and each cried out to his own god. And they threw the cargo into the sea to lighten the ship. But Jonah had gone below deck, where he lay down and fell into a deep sleep. The captain went to him and said, "How can you sleep? Get up and call on your god! Maybe he will take notice of us so that we will not perish." Then the sailors said to each other, "Come, let us cast lots to find out who is responsible for this calamity." They cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah. So they asked him, "Tell us, who is responsible for making all this trouble for us? What kind of work do you do? Where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?" He answered, "I am a Hebrew and I worship the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land." This terrified them and they asked, "What have you done?" (They knew he was running away from the LORD, because he had already told them so.) The sea was getting rougher and rougher. So they asked him, "What should we do to you to make the sea calm down for us?" "Pick me up and throw me into the sea," he replied, "and it will become calm. I know that it is my fault that this great storm has come upon you." Instead, the men did their best to row back to land. But they could not, for the sea grew even wilder than before. Then they cried out to the LORD, "Please, LORD, do not let us die for taking this man's life. Do not hold us accountable for killing an innocent man, for you, LORD, have done as you pleased." Then they took Jonah and threw him overboard, and the raging sea grew calm. At this the men greatly feared the LORD, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows to him."***

Do you see the multiplication effect on others as a result of Jonah acting on anxiety? They all got anxious as well and rightly so because it looked like they were going to drown in the sea as a result of the storm. Anxiety spreads ... when you are anxious in football it shows in your first touch of the ball, in your decision making and in your panic actions (give examples) ... guess what ... it becomes infectious and spreads to team mates or like the sailors on Jonah's boat they have to work harder to try and save the situation.

Your anxiety, paranoia, nervousness and fear can make you do the strangest of things as it affects your thinking, can paralyse you or even make you run away BUT it doesn't just stop with you it affects others negatively.

Questions for Reflection – how have you seen actions coming from anxiety, fear or paranoia affect others?

In football? ... Maybe people start blaming each other for losing and poor performances, team mates struggle to compensate for the poor decision making of the anxious player, it can destroy team spirit and ruin games and results.

Away from the football pitch? ... **Are there people or situations at home or school or in your neighbourhood or among your friends that you are avoiding because you are scared and anxious? What is causing your apprehension or nervousness or fear there?**

The painful multiplying consequences of actions based on anxiety are obvious to see and we can feel bad if we are the cause of the problem. Yet an honest confession like Jonah gave before God and others can make such a difference. Jonah's honesty inspired the sailors to try and save him. Jonah's honesty inspired the sailors to seek God. Jonah's honesty led to God rescuing the situation as the boat did not sink and the sailors did not drown. The multiplication effect was neutralised and reversed as these pagan sailors even gave themselves over to the Lord so quite an amazing transformation in both circumstances and people. Negative consequences do not have to be the end as both people and situations are retrievable when placed in God's hands.

We as coaches see the multiplication effect of anxiety on players, the team, parents and supporters watching. The answer is not to pretend that nothing is happening like Jonah sleeping in the bottom of the boat. The answer is to confront the situation, humbly and honestly confess what we have done wrong and do what Jonah did. He died to self as he said **"Pick me up and throw me into the sea"**. If we want to save a situation, save others carrying the consequences of our anxiety then follow Jonah's example and the words of Jesus Christ **"If anyone wants to save their life then they first must lay it down"**. We as coaches have taken that step of humbly and honestly confessing we have done wrong and placing our lives into the hands of a God who can turn people and situations around ... will you do the same?

PRAYER: *"Heavenly Father, forgive us when we act out of anxiety by hiding, running away or lashing out and the consequences of our actions are felt by others. Help us where we have hurt others, to humbly and honestly confess our mistakes and then we look to you to turn the situation and lives around so that we and others can thrive again both on and off the football pitch. Thank you, Jesus. Amen."*

Week 3: Hitting Rock BOTTOM (Jonah 2:1-6)

Jonah was given a job to do by God but he really struggled with doing it. We looked at **A** from the word **AMBASSADOR** which stood for **ANXIETY** which meant we can be so worried that it stops us from producing our best. Unfortunately this led to **M** for **MULTIPLICATION** effect in that others were impacted by actions of anxiety and fear. So today as we consider this downward spiral we are going to look at **B** for **BOTTOM** e.g. Rock Bottom.

Sometimes in football and life before we can start to rise up and produce our best again we need to hit rock bottom. For it is only when we are at our lowest that we will honestly assess what the problem is, what the issue is and what needs to be changed. You see it in football when players are dropped to rediscover their confidence and you see it in life when people take some time out to reflect on what needs to be done. Despite our feelings of failure sometimes hitting rock bottom can be a good thing.

For our man Jonah 2,700 years ago after being thrown into a raging sea to drown and being swallowed by a huge fish, he was definitely at rock bottom so listen to his words from Jonah 2:1-6 in the Old Testament part of the Bible ***“From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the LORD his God. He said: In my distress I called to the LORD, and he answered me. From deep in the realm of the dead I called for help, and you listened to my cry. You hurled me into the depths, into the very heart of the seas, and the currents swirled about me; all your waves and breakers swept over me. I said, ‘I have been banished from your sight; yet I will look again toward your holy temple.’ The engulfing waters threatened me, the deep surrounded me; seaweed was wrapped around my head. To the roots of the mountains I sank down; the earth beneath barred me in forever. But you, LORD my God, brought my life up from the pit.”***

What does Jonah do in his rock bottom situation? Yes he calls on God and cries out for help from outside of himself. He has reached such a low point that he realises he can't really help himself so he needs outside help. Sometimes you may need that in football e.g. extra coaching or support from another player or coach or in life off the football pitch, you may need someone to talk to and help like a teacher, pastor, parent or a good friend. Either way in your rock bottom state you realise you need help and you ask for it.

Questions for Reflection – Do you need some outside help?

In football? ... **Is there a coach, a more mature player, a chaplain, a good friend you can turn to, talk to, practice with so that you can get your confidence back and move up from rock bottom?**

Away from the football pitch? ... **Is there someone you can turn to who can help with your rock bottom situation maybe at home, school or amongst your peers/friends? Who is there for you when you need some help?**

Jonah's rock bottom situation was so bad that no human being could really help him, only God could save, rescue and turn this situation around as Jonah was in the belly of a huge fish in the middle of the sea! Yes sometimes rock bottom can be that bad nobody but God can help and the great thing is as Jonah found out, your rock bottom cannot be so deep that God cannot hear or help. Remember what Jonah said ***“But you, LORD my God, brought my life up from the pit.”***

Yes we have a God that no matter how low we sink, He can reach down, raise us up and restore us. We as coaches know this, as God has helped us when we were at rock bottom (Illustrate if appropriate from football or outside of football). God can help you also, so please don't think your rock bottom is too low for God or others to help. Remember Jesus reached down from Heaven to the rock bottom of life on earth so as to raise people up just like you and me. Do get outside help, especially God's help to start on the road to recovery.



PRAYER: *“Heavenly Father, thank you that there is no such thing as rock bottom for you as you can reach down anywhere and raise anyone up from their lowest point. Help us if we are struggling on or off the football pitch to call out for help from you and from others so that we can start to be restored and raised up again. Thank you Jesus for reaching down to help us. Amen.”*

Week 4: ACKNOWLEDGE your SAVIOR! (Jonah 2:7-10)

Jonah was given a job to do by God but he really struggled to just do it. We are looking at headings from the word **AMBASSADOR** to help us remember some key points to enable us to just do it when it counts.

A was for **ANXIETY** which showed that worry hinders performance, **M** is for **MULTIPLICATION** as our actions of anxiety impacts others and this leads to a downward spiral when we hit our **B** for rock **BOTTOM**. It's down in that place when we feel there is no hope or no chance of getting up and out or back that we find our **A** and our **S** to give us **ACKNOWLEDGE** your **SAVIOR**.

Sometimes in football and in life, we do need a reality check and it is often when we are at rock bottom we realise we have trusted in the wrong things. In football perhaps we have over trusted in our talent or our natural speed but when you come against better players you realise that your natural ability alone has not been good enough. Or perhaps in life off the football pitch you have over relied on your natural intelligence or personality to win through but now this seems to be just not enough to get on. This is when you need to **ACKNOWLEDGE** your **SAVIOR**.

This is what our man Jonah does 2,700 years ago from inside the belly of a huge fish, he may be rock bottom but in a moment of clarity he **ACKNOWLEDGES** his **SAVIOR**. Listen to these words from Jonah 2:7-10 in the Old Testament part of the Bible *"When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, LORD, and my prayer rose to you, to your holy temple. Those who cling to worthless idols turn away from God's love for them. But I, with shouts of grateful praise, will sacrifice to you. What I have vowed I will make good. I will say, 'Salvation comes from the LORD. And the LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land."*

It was in that rock bottom place when he felt there was no hope and no chance that he remembered God and he prays. He realised the idol of counting on himself was not enough to rescue this situation so he turns to God and **ACKNOWLEDGES** his **SAVIOR**. He praises God, he offers himself to God and he recognizes that his only hope to be saved is actually found in God ... and surprise, surprise, it is at that moment that God steps in and Jonah is released from his captivity inside of the fish.

So as you reflect on your situation – Do you need to acknowledge God?

In your football? ... **Have you just used your God given sporting talent for you, has it been all about you and your ability or have you thanked God and acknowledged God and handed over your football talent to Him for Him to use?**

Away from the football pitch? ... **Have you been selfish, proud and arrogant with your abilities say at school or in being popular with lots of friends or have you thanked God and acknowledged God and want Him to be honoured instead?**

Jonah experienced release when he **ACKNOWLEDGED GOD HIS SAVIOR**; it was at this point when God got His man out of this rock bottom situation because now Jonah was useful again. It was no longer all about Jonah but it was all about God and what could be done for others. Maybe you have reached that point in your football and in your life when dependence on you alone is not working anymore and you need a Saviour. Well call out to God just like Jonah did, acknowledge Him, hand your life to Him and then see how God lifts you out of rock bottom and you start to experience being useful again. If you need any help with how to do this then please just stay behind and we as coaches will be very happy to help.

You see we as coaches have all had this release and liberation from ourselves by **ACKNOWLEDGING our SAVIOR** (*Share your story about what happened to you*). We have a great saviour who if acknowledged by you can make a huge difference in the way you feel and think about your life both on and off the football pitch ... all you have to do is call out to Him and we are going to do that right now in prayer.

PRAYER: *“Heavenly Father, thank you that you are a great Saviour, you save us and rescue us from the worthless idol of ourselves. All we have to do is acknowledge you and what you did for us Lord Jesus at the cross when you died to take our place for all our rebellion, sin and hurt. Nothing we can add except to say thank you and accept what you did for us, so release us now from the imprisonment of self, we ask this in the name of our Saviour Jesus, Amen.”*

Week 5: SECOND ATTEMPT? (Jonah 3:1-5)

Jonah was given a job to do by God but he really struggled to just do it. We are looking at headings from the word **AMBASSADOR** to help us remember some key points to enable us to just do it when it counts.

A was for **ANXIETY** which showed that worry hinders performance, **M** is for **MULTIPLICATION** as our actions of anxiety impacts others and this leads to a downward spiral when we hit our **B** for rock **BOTTOM**. It's in that place when we feel there is no hope that we find our **A** and our **S** to give us **ACKNOWLEDGE** your **SAVIOR**. As the Saviour is acknowledged then we see a rescue and our words **S** for **SECOND** and **A** for **ATTEMPT** emerge.

Both in football and in life, there is still a job to be done whether we are at rock bottom or not. There is still a game to be won and a life to be lived and a school to be attended. So somehow we need to move on from past failures and step out into the opportunity of today. What has gone has gone but there is a new match to be won and a new day to be lived with our Saviour. This is why today we are going to look at **SECOND ATTEMPT** as we are given a new opportunity to play a match and live a new day.

Jonah gets his **SECOND ATTEMPT** 2,700 years ago after being rescued from inside the belly of a huge fish and he faces the job again that he needs to do - Listen what happened from Jonah 3:1-5 in the Old Testament of the Bible ***"Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time: "Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you." Jonah obeyed the word of the LORD and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very large city; it took three days to go through it. Jonah began by going a day's journey into the city, proclaiming, "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown." The Ninevites believed God. A fast was proclaimed, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth."***

God gives Jonah a second chance and so Jonah has a **SECOND ATTEMPT** at the job given to him. Nothing had changed as there was still a job to be done. It may have been the last place in the world Jonah wanted to go but he did go and with a very simple message a city was changed.

So as you reflect on your situation – Do you need another chance for a SECOND ATTEMPT?

In your football? ... **Will you go into the next game forgetting what has happened in previous games as it is a new opportunity now? Playing another match maybe the last thing you want to do after failures in the last games but you still go, make yourself available and play. Will you keep it simple, uncomplicated but nevertheless effective?**

Away from the football pitch? ... **Will you go back to school, face family, friends or that difficult situation deciding it's a new day with God your Saviour and a new opportunity?** It maybe the last thing you want to do after previous failures but you still go, humbly and simply completing what you need to do so as to be effective?

Jonah made the most of his **SECOND ATTEMPT**. No more running away, no more acting out of fear and anxiety but he just went right into the heart of the place he did not want to be and delivered a very simple message that won the day. So yes when we are called to 'Just Do It' both on and off the football pitch, sometimes we really do just have to get stuck in, get right into the middle of what needs to be done and keep it simple. Sometimes we fail to do what we need to do because we overcomplicate things. Jonah was a messenger so he got into the heart of the city and delivered a message ... nothing more nothing less. Perhaps you need to forget what has happened before in football and life and just need to get stuck in and get on with it.

We as coaches are so grateful for the second chances God gives us for a **SECOND ATTEMPT** at a task or opportunity. Sometimes people will never want to give us a second chance when we mess up but God does. He often gives second, third, fourth, fifth chances and more thankfully because we as a people do mess up a lot but He is our Saviour and Rescuer. So He loves to give us a **SECOND ATTEMPT** especially when there is a job that needs doing both on and off the football pitch. Therefore when a **SECOND ATTEMPT** opportunity comes your way, just do it with God – *Perhaps illustrate the point with second chances and attempts you have been given.*

PRAYER: *"Heavenly Father, thank you that you are a God who gives us another chance when we mess up. Thank you in this new day we have new opportunities, there is a new match to be played and new life to be lived. Help us Lord to forget what's in the past and press on with what lies ahead to complete the task you have set before us. Thank you Jesus, Amen."*

Week 6: Decisive! (Jonah 3:6-10)

Jonah was given a job to do by God but he really struggled to just do it. We are looking at headings from the word **AMBASSADOR** to help us remember some key points to enable us to just do it when it counts.

A was for **ANXIETY** which showed that worry hinders performance, **M** was for **MULTIPLICATION** as others were affected until we hit **B** for rock **BOTTOM**. At rock **BOTTOM** we find our **A** and our **S** to **ACKNOWLEDGE** our **SAVIOR** that leads to the possibility of **S** and **A** for a **SECOND ATTEMPT** at the job that needs to be done. It is in this being given a second chance for another attempt that we are going to see that we can be **D** for **DECISIVE**.

Both in football and in life, when we do our job properly then there is a chance that it can be effective and transformational i.e. **Decisive**. Your contribution of doing a good job on the football pitch can impact the outcome of the game as you may defend your goal really well, dominate in midfield or score the goals needed as a striker. Also in life as you complete the tasks and jobs you need to do they can have a really positive effect on others and bring about real change. So in taking the second chance you have been given, it can truly be **DECISIVE!**

This was the experience of Jonah as he gets his second chance 2,700 years ago to do the job God called him to do - Listen to these words from Jonah 3:6-10 in the Old Testament of the Bible and see how **DECISIVE** Jonah's contribution was: *"When Jonah's warning reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust. This is the proclamation he issued in Nineveh: "By the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let people or animals, herds or flocks, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink. But let people and animals be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish." When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened."*

Do you see the DECISIVE impact Jonah had?

1. Prominent people noticed (the king) and this led to a change of government policy ... you never know who is watching you and the impact you could have.
2. There was a real change in behaviour as people who were being bad are now starting to behave in a good way ... you never know the positive impact your life and words can have on someone else's behaviour on and off the football pitch.
3. It led to the people being saved from their destructive ways ... you never know how your right behaviour, actions and words could just save someone from their destructive ways.

Talk about **DECISIVE** ... how exciting is that??!!

So as you think about how DECISIVE you can be;

In your football? ... as you do your job on the football pitch there could be influential people watching such as a coach who could offer you opportunities in the future because of the positive difference you are making in a game.

Away from the football pitch? ... You will have the chance to be an influence for good as you complete your tasks or jobs, it could lead to others changing their behaviour say at school or even preventing someone really getting hurt through destructive habits.

It was when God saw the change of ways and not just heard the words of the people of Nineveh, He relented from destroying them. So often it is our actions that get noticed and can make a difference and not just our words and talking a good game. It is in doing, we can be **DECISIVE** both on and off the football pitch.

We as coaches find it so encouraging that in order to bring about change in a whole city of thousands of people all it required was a man who had been vomited by a fish ... so there is hope for all of us when it comes to being **DECISIVE** and making a difference for good both on and off the football pitch. If we are willing to do anything and be anything for Christ then an amazing influence and impact can be seen in others. *(Perhaps illustrate the point with the difference you have made.)*

PRAYER: *“Heavenly Father, thank you that you are a decisive God; you can really make a huge difference in our lives and in the lives of others. Help us Father to also be decisive and surrender our lives into your hands so that others can be influenced and even saved from things that can really hurt and destroy them. Thank you Jesus, Amen.”*

Week 7: OBSERVE! (Jonah 4:1-5)

Jonah was given a job to do by God but he really struggled to just do it. We are looking at headings from the word **AMBASSADOR** to help us remember some key points to enable us to just do it when it counts.

A was for **ANXIETY** which showed that worry hinders performance, **M** was for **MULTIPLICATION** as others were affected until we hit **B** for rock **BOTTOM**. At rock **BOTTOM** we find our **A** and our **S** to **ACKNOWLEDGE** our **SAVIOR** that leads to the possibility of **S** and **A** for a **SECOND ATTEMPT** at the job that needs to be done. Our second attempt can **prove** to be **D** for **DECISIVE** as we see success. As part of our success though it is important to continue to learn and so our **O** is for **OBSERVE**.

If we are to continue to grow as players on the football pitch and as people off it and to be more consistent in our 'Just Do IT' by transitioning from practice to games and from theory to practice well, it is good to **OBSERVE**. To observe means to really see, look carefully, perceive something and register in our minds something of significance from the events occurring around us. To be able to see with this kind of clarity will help us to understand and when we understand properly we will have the foundation to grow, learn and get better.

Unfortunately our man Jonah 2,700 years ago after his success of helping rescue a city from disaster (albeit an enemy city) decides to do some observing but not for the best of reasons. Even with poor motives Jonah still gets some insights as he decides to **OBSERVE**. Listen to these words from Jonah 4:1-5 in the Old Testament of the Bible: ***"But to Jonah it (the city being saved) seemed very wrong, and he became angry. He prayed to the LORD, "Isn't this what I said, LORD, when I was still at home? That is what I tried to forestall by fleeing to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. Now, LORD, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live." But the LORD replied, "Is it right for you to be angry?" Jonah had gone out and sat down at a place east of the city. There he made himself a shelter, sat in its shade and waited to see what would happen to the city."***

Jonah in his experience of God had observed that the Lord was a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. As a result of observation Jonah knew that God was kind and merciful so he was not surprised that this enemy evil pagan city was saved. Jonah by observing events around him understood something important about the nature of God.

So what can you learn and understand as you OBSERVE;

Your football? ... **why do you think you are playing well or badly at the moment, what is the team doing that seems to be working well or failing, as you watch other football games, what can you learn so as to improve your performance?**

Away from the football pitch? ... **What's going well in your life at the moment and why, what's going not so well and why, as you look at others what can you learn from them so as to help you do better?**

What have you observed of God as you look at your experiences in life? Jonah observed that God is a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. **Has this been your experience and understanding of God? If so how have you responded to Him?**

We as coaches in our experience agree with Jonah as we have observed God to be a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. Therefore we have asked God to be gracious to us, to not be angry with us but to show compassion and love to us and save us from the calamity of God's wrath and judgement, to save us from the calamity of us being in charge of our own lives. Praise God that



He responds to such pleas and rescues us in Jesus. If you want to do this then please do come and talk to us coaches and we'll help you receive Christ into your life.

PRAYER: *"Heavenly Father, thank you that you are a gracious and compassionate God, who is slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. Thank you that in Christ we can be saved both from ourselves and a life without you. Help us to observe what you are doing and respond rightly to you both on and off the football pitch. Amen."*

Week 8: REFLECT (Jonah 4:6-11)

Jonah was given a job to do by God but he really struggled to just do it. We are looking at headings from the word **AMBASSADOR** to help us remember some key points to enable us to just do it when it counts.

A was for **ANXIETY** which showed that worry hinders performance, **M** was for **MULTIPLICATION** as others were affected until we hit **B** for rock **BOTTOM**. At rock **BOTTOM** we find our **A** and our **S** to **ACKNOWLEDGE** our **SAVIOR** that leads to the possibility of **S** and **A** for a **SECOND ATTEMPT** at the job that needs to be done. Our second attempt can prove to be **D** for **DECISIVE** as we see success but as part of our success we continue to learn, so our **O** was for **OBSERVE**. Finally to complete our series **R** is for **REFLECT**.

To **REFLECT** is when we think on and learn from what is happening around us. In our last session, we said it was really important to observe and see what was going on both in our football and life off the football pitch so as to continue to grow as players on the football pitch and as people off it. However if all we do is just look and don't learn from what we see by doing some reflection then we will fail to build on our struggles and success to be more consistent in our 'Just Do IT' transition from practice to games and from theory to practice.

2,700 years ago after the success of helping rescue a city from disaster (albeit an enemy city) Jonah was challenged by God to do some reflection about what was going on in his life. Listen to these words at the end of the Biblical book of Jonah 4:6-11: *"Then the LORD God provided a leafy plant and made it grow up over Jonah to give shade for his head to ease his discomfort, and Jonah was very happy about the plant. But at dawn the next day God provided a worm, which chewed the plant so that it withered. When the sun rose, God provided a scorching east wind, and the sun blazed on Jonah's head so that he grew faint. He wanted to die, and said, "It would be better for me to die than to live." But God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?" "It is," he said. "And I'm so angry I wish I were dead." But the LORD said, "You have been concerned about this plant, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. And should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left—and also many animals?"*

In these Bible verses we see Jonah has some success with the plant giving him shade during the heat of the day but he also had some struggles with the plant dying and Jonah being left without any shade from the sun. So whilst Jonah saw and experienced both success and struggle with God he failed to reflect on why and what was really important until God challenged him right at the end.

So what have you found out to be helpful as you REFLECT on:

Your football? ... Physically from the practices you did, some of the drills you tried, some of the games you learnt. Mentally and Spiritually as we thought about Anxiety, Multiplication, hitting rock Bottom, Acknowledging a Saviour (Outside Help), Second Attempt (chance), Decisive (Recognized Breakthrough success), **Observe and Reflect?**

Away from the football pitch? ... Similarly as we thought about the impact of Anxiety, Multiplication, hitting rock Bottom, Acknowledging a Saviour (Outside Help), Second Attempt (chance), Decisive (Recognized Breakthrough success), **Observe and Reflect?**

Also as you think about your struggles and successes both on and off the football pitch, you have seen, experienced and felt both the pain of the struggle and the elation of the success but **what have you learnt from these experiences?** Stop and **REFLECT** to learn the lessons so that you can be more consistently effective in transitioning from training to game and from theory to practice in the game of life.

Right at the end of the book of Jonah, God pointed out to Jonah that Jonah should reflect on that he was more upset about a plant dying than the possibility of tens of thousands of poorly led men, women and children dying. In other words Jonah seemed to feel that things and stuff were more important than people. Let's keep this reflection perspective in mind as we think about our football, yes we love football and want to develop in football but it should never take the place of people. Football is just a thing and not a person, so let's maintain a healthy perspective that life is about God and people, not just football so let's **REFLECT** on this priority in the ups and downs of playing football.

PRAYER: *"Heavenly Father, thank you that people are your priority and that is why you reached out through Jesus to rescue people from themselves and destruction. People were such a priority for you that Jesus was prepared to go to a cross and be sacrificed in order to save us. Help us to reflect on and keep a correct perspective when it comes to our football and life. Amen."*