

JONAH —1

“The Jonah In Us”

GET THEM TALKING:

If you had the chance to vacation anywhere in the world, where would you go and why?

When you are told to do something you don't want to do, are you more likely to:

- Obey out of fear of the consequences
- Ignore the command
- Make excuses for why you didn't obey
- Run and hide until the coast was clear
- Say “okay” but conveniently forget
- Outwardly comply but inwardly rebel or
- Willingly obey because you respected their authority and trusted their judgment?

CONNECT THE TEXT:

God will often ask you to do things you don't want to do. What are some things that God asks us to do, in the Bible, that seem unreasonable or difficult to obey? In his mind, Jonah had legitimate reasons for not wanting to preach to the Ninevites. Describe a time when you disobeyed God's direction and faced the consequences. Share something God asked you to do that you didn't want to do, but you did. What was the result? Who or what is currently the Nineveh in your life?

You can always find a boat sailing in the wrong direction. In your spiritual life, which direction are you running: towards God, away from God, with God, or behind God? Share a time when you thought you could ignore or run from God? Where did you end up? What does our running from God reveal about our concept of God?

God may send a storm to grab your attention. What kind of storms has God used in the past (or present) to get your attention? What did your storm reveal to you? How long did it take for you to have a change of heart? How did God use the storm to change the way you think about Him and His mercy toward others?

Your disobedience will cost others. Share some examples of how the consequences of our disobedience can affect others. Think about a time when you disobeyed God. Who was affected by your disobedience? What has God asked you to do that you haven't done? (Is there any area of disobedience in your life?) How is your disobedience harming others? Are you presently suffering because of someone else's disobedience to God? How do you need to pray for this person?

Jonah's worst nightmare was exactly what he needed. What was God's purpose in sending the storm and the great fish? In the past, how has God used your worst

circumstances to turn your life around? What nightmare are you currently going through and how could this be exactly what you need (from God's perspective)?

APPLICATION:

What is God asking you to do that you don't want to do? In what way are you running from God? What do you need to surrender and what attitudes do you need to change in order to be obedient to God? What steps will you take this weekend to be obedient? Share this with your group or someone who will pray for you and hold you accountable.

Who or what is currently your Nineveh? With whom in your life have you refused to share God's message of mercy and grace? Are you withholding God's message because of fear, bitterness, judgment, or something else? Confess your disobedience to God and receive His grace to obey. Forgive your enemies and pray for them. Ask God to give you another opportunity to share His message of love and grace.

JONAH —2

“Jonah’s Prayer”

JONAH’S DELIVERANCE BY GOD:

- God sent a storm
- Jonah thrown overboard
- God sent a fish
- God saved

GET THEM TALKING:

- What is the biggest fish you have ever caught? For real. No fish stories.
- Describe a time when you had a near death experience and the thoughts that went through your mind.

CONNECT THE TEXT:

Read Jonah’s prayer in Jonah 2:1-10. What elements do you see in his prayer? (example: thanksgiving, repentance, cry for help, etc.) Why is prayer often our last resort? Share one or two words that would best describe how you view prayer? On a scale of 1-10, rate your prayer life. What would make your prayer life more meaningful?

On a scale of 1-10, what level of distress do you have to reach before you cry out to God? God can deliver people of anything, in any way, and at any time. But He often does it in phases. Which phase of deliverance are you currently in? Describe what God is doing in this phase of your life?

Why do you think God often waits till the last minute to deliver us? What do you think Jonah learned about God through his experience?

What are some worthless idols we can cling to instead of putting our hope in God? Describe some ways we forfeit the grace of God when we trust in idols? What idols do you need to give up? How is God currently pursuing you with His lovingkindness?

“Salvation comes from the Lord!” In what ways do you think Jonah’s deliverance by God changed him? How has God brought your life “up from the pit”? How did this change you and was the change permanent? Why do we often return to our old ways once the danger is past? Would you rather God save you from an outward circumstance or from an inward struggle with sin? At salvation, how does God permanently change us on the inside?

Prayer should not be about getting God to do what we want. Instead, effective prayer is our coming into agreement with what He wants. How can we keep the focus of our prayers on God’s will? What is your biggest prayer need? Take plenty of time to pray for each other.

APPLICATION:

What will you do this week to intentionally connect more with God?

Suggestions:

- Write your prayers and God's response
- Choose a verse or passage to personalize and pray (Ephesians 1:17-19, 3:15-20; Psalm 139, 142, 145, 147; Colossians 1:9-11) and / or
- Give God thanks throughout the day.

What are you currently going through that causes you to feel helpless, hopeless or powerless? Seek the Lord in the midst of this and ask Him to bring you to a deeper surrender, trust and dependence on Him. Thank Him in advance for saving you, in His way and in His time.

What worthless idols have you depended on to save you (keep you feeling secure, satisfied, significant)? What vows (commitments) have you made to God that you haven't kept? Surrender your idols and receive God's grace to make good on your vows.

JONAH —3

“Jonah Obeys”

GET THEM TALKING:

Name a famous person or people group that you seriously doubt will ever become followers of Christ. Share your reasons for thinking this.

What is the best “second chance” story you’ve ever heard, outside of the Bible?

Jonah’s obedience influenced the Ninevites to:

- Believe God
- Call on God
- Repent of their evil ways
- Receive God’s mercy

CONNECT THE TEXT:

Describe a time when God gave you a second chance. Why do you think God gave Jonah a second chance to go to Nineveh? How do you think Jonah felt about it the second time? Why did God give Nineveh a chance to repent? What can we learn about God through the story of Jonah?

Why do you think the Ninevites were so quick to repent and believe God? What has God shown you that you need to do, but you have not yet done?

We can all identify with the ongoing battle with indwelling sin that Paul speaks of in Romans 7:15-17. Repentance means to turn from sin; to change one’s mind and actions so that they agree with God. How does true repentance transform a person, inside and out? For what do you think our country needs to publicly repent? Doing what God says not to do is called a sin of commission. Not doing what God said to do is called a sin of omission. What is your greatest sin of commission or omission?

In what situations would you consider fasting and / or giving up physical comfort, like the Ninevites, in order to seek God? Have you ever fasted and prayed for the salvation of another person or people group? How long did you fast and pray? Did you see any results? Did the Ninevites change God’s mind or did God give them the opportunity to change their minds?

Someone once said, “God does nothing on earth except in response to believing prayer.” Do you agree or disagree? Give your reasons. Why didn’t God just speak directly to the Ninevites instead of sending Jonah? Why does God choose to use us to accomplish His will on earth? How willing are you to be God’s messenger and take the good news to undeserving people? With whom is God asking you to share the good news?

APPLICATION:

What will you do to obey God's call this week to take His message to the lost? Who will you begin praying for? Ask God to reveal to you the message you are to share (be sure it includes His grace and mercy). Deal with any personal doubts or unbelief that would prevent you from doing your part or trusting God to do His part.

For what sins of commission or omission do you need to repent? Ask God to reveal His grace and truth regarding these sins. (John 8:31-34) We sin because, in some area of our thinking, we are not believing God's Word and relying on Christ. Sin is defeated when we agree with God concerning sin and its remedy— Christ! So, acknowledge the sin(s), thank God for His forgiveness, and trust Christ to empower you and live through you. Bring every thought captive regarding this sin and make them obedient to Christ.

What has God shown you that you need to do, but you haven't yet done? What will you do to obey God immediately? Share this with your group so they can pray for you and hold you accountable.

JONAH —4

“Jonah’s Anger”

GET THEM TALKING:

When you were a kid, how did you usually express your anger or react when you didn’t get your way?

When it is really hot out, what is your favorite way to beat the heat?

CONNECT THE TEXT:

How has God been challenging you through the study of Jonah? Which week’s message has made the biggest impact and why? Which do you think was Jonah’s biggest problem: anger, pride, selfishness, depression, prejudice, or something else? Which of these issues do you struggle with personally? About what situations do you sometimes find yourself angry at God? What does this story reveal about God? His ways?

Share a time when you, like Jonah, became angry at God and depressed over what seemed like an unjust situation? How did you get over these feelings and how long did it take? How do you resolve your angry with God? Is there anything currently going on in your life that you are angry or depressed about? (Pray for those in your group who are struggling with anger.)

What percentage of your anger comes from not getting what you want? How do you generally express your anger? (pout, yell, punish, withdraw, stuff it, take it out on others, become irritable, silent, etc.) How comfortable are you telling God when you are angry? Why is this important? What can happen when we deny or stuff our anger? What is God’s cure for our anger?

Life is not about us. Only God has the right to judge others (or a nation) and the power to control outcomes. How was Jonah’s anger related to his trying to be God, concerning Nineveh? How was he judging and trying to control the outcome? Why do you think Jonah was angry and depressed about the Ninevites repenting and turning to God? How would you have felt in Jonah’s situation?

Like Jonah, we all want to receive God’s forgiveness, but we are not always willing to give forgiveness. To whom are you unwilling to extend God’s grace and forgiveness? What can result when we hold on to anger, even when it seems justified? Why do we struggle with giving forgiveness more than receiving forgiveness? What are some reasons (or excuses) we use for not forgiving? How do we benefit from forgiving?

APPLICATION:

Unresolved anger leads to a host of problems, like bitterness and depression. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you any unresolved anger. Make a list of each situation, who you are blaming and what expectations were blocked. Honestly acknowledge your anger to God and choose to forgive all parties involved (cancel the debt they owe you). Ask the Lord to give you His perspective of the situations about which you are angry. Surrender your right to stay angry and be willing to extend His mercy and grace to those whom you have forgiven.

Now that we belong to Christ, we are to be about our Father's business (Matthew 6:33). To whom is God wanting you to show his love and mercy? In what ways is your life centered on what you want instead of what God wants? What will you do this week to focus more on God's will? What expectations or rights do you need to surrender in order to put God first? Each morning, before you start your day, surrender your life, your expectations and your rights to God. (Romans 12:1).

To which country or people group is God calling you; to pray for them or possibly, to personally deliver the good news to? What steps will you take to become more involved in reaching others with the message of Christ?