



DISCUSSION NOTES

WEEK 1 THE REBEL PROPHET JONAH 1:1-3

JONAH

INTRODUCTION

The hero of the story of this great book is the living God. Jonah, on the other hand, is depicted as a rebel, running from God. We can identify with Jonah as we too often run from God and experience death, not life. However, God relentlessly and lovingly pursues Jonah and brings him to the end of himself. Similarly, God seeks to bring us to an end of ourselves and (through his grace) offers himself to us.

The book of Jonah ultimately displays the good news (gospel). While Jonah ran from God, God ran after Jonah in order to rescue him and through him (Jonah) rescue others.

OBSERVATION/INTERPRETATION

- Compare Jonah 1:2 with 4:11. How is the underlying message of God's impending judgement of Nineveh's evil (Jonah 1:2b) really motivated by His love?
- What is Jonah's reaction to God's command? (Jonah 1:3)
- Why do you think Jonah attempted to flee from the "presence of the Lord"? (Hint: read Jonah 4:1-2)

APPLICATION

- In which ways might you be like Jonah, attempting to run from the presence of God and His will/mission for your life?
- Among other things, it would seem as if Jonah's motivation for fleeing from God was his prejudice/hatred toward the Assyrians who were the oppressive enemies of the people of Israel. Are there people in your life who you, like Jonah, would be angry if God had shown favor and love towards?

PRAYER

Ask God to reshape your heart to love those whom he loves even though they may have harmed you.

Ask God to use you as his instrument to show (by works) & share (by words) his message of grace, to those who are blinded by their sin (who don't know their right hand from their left - Jonah 4:11).

COMMUNITY GROUP DISCUSSION

- **Information:** Read the passage/answer the questions.
- **Transformation:** Being honest/transparent, discuss how God through the gospel intends to change you.
- **Mission:** Pray together. Surrender to God's mission.

FAMILY DEVOTION DISCUSSION

- **Information:** Have your child read the passage.
- **Transformation:** Make it personal. Help them to see God's love through what He's already done for them.
- **Mission:** Pray/sing together, give yourselves to God.



DISCUSSION NOTES

WEEK 2 A WATCHING WORLD JONAH 1:4-17

INTRODUCTION

Jonah's sin of running from God created problems for many people, not just himself. Often times we believe that our sin is private and will not affect others. Yet, in the story of Jonah, we discover that what we do and how we act will have an impact on others for good or for evil.

OBSERVATION/INTERPRETATION

- As Jonah ran away, God intercepted him by raising a storm in the sea (1:4). Because of Jonah's sin, these other men were negatively affected. How did the sailors respond when they came to know that Jonah was running away from God? (1:10)
- In Jonah 1:4 it says, "God hurled a great wind upon the sea and there was a mighty tempest." In reality, this wasn't an act of anger from God whereby he was seeking to destroy Jonah but rather it was an intervention. Have you ever experienced God send something in your life as an intervention in order to bring you back to himself? Give examples.

APPLICATION

- Have you ever run from doing what God has called you to do? Give some examples.
- Because Jonah was running away from God, his faith was not functioning in a helpful way to the broken world around him. What are some of the ways in which you running from God has ruined opportunities to demonstrate the gospel?

PRAYER

Ask God to help your faith in him to practically be of benefit to those around you.

Ask God to help you to not run from him in fear, but rather trust in him as a loving father.

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INTRODUCTION

In his loving grace, God brought Jonah to the end of himself by calling a great fish to swallow him. He saved Jonah from death. It was from within the belly of this fish that Jonah's heart softened toward God in repentance. Frederick Buechner (a scholar) observed, "No matter how deep the fish dove, no matter how dark the inside, no depth or darkness was enough to drown the sound of Jonah's prayer." God's unique "rescue" of Jonah at sea by the fish was a strong reminder that though Jonah was a great sinner running from God, God was an even greater deliverer.

OBSERVATION/INTERPRETATION

- Read Jonah 2. How does Jonah see and describe himself and the condition he is in?
- How does Jonah see and describe God? How did Jonah's view of God appear to change during his prayer?

APPLICATION

- God often uses and even ordains circumstances to bring us to the end of ourselves. It is in these moments that we can either become bitter or we can surrender. Why do we sometimes resist God, even though we in theory know, his intentions toward us are good?
- If you or someone in the group has had a moment like Jonah's where severe circumstances brought you to a place of surrender, share that experience with the others as a means of giving testimony to God's great faithfulness.

PRAYER

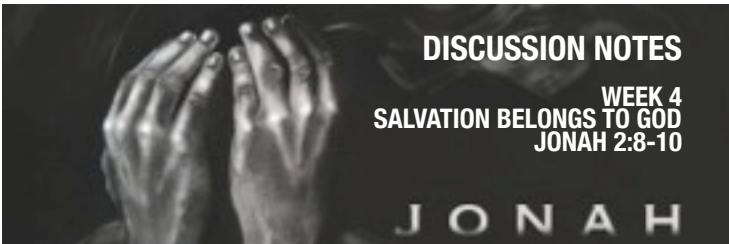
- Ask God to give you an heart that is soft and moldable in his hands.
- Thank God for his loving faithfulness toward us, even though we are seldom faithful to him.

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WEEK 4 SALVATION BELONGS TO GOD JONAH 2:8-10

INTRODUCTION

At the root of Jonah's eagerness to run from God was that something else occupied the place of highest regard in his heart. The Bible describes those things (people, ideas, places) we trust in over God, as idols. Though the story doesn't state explicitly what Jonah's idols were, it does state that Jonah knew God would joyfully forgive the Ninevites (Jonah's/Israel's enemies) as willingly as he would forgive the Jews (Jonah's countrymen). This made Jonah angry (Jonah 4:1-4). Perhaps the idol of Jonah's heart which enslaved him was his own nationalism?

Before we can effectively proclaim the gospel to others the gospel must first set us free. From inside the great fish Jonah cried out to God in a moving prayer of repentance as he was confronted with his own sin. God was beginning to crush the idols of his heart. Salvation (life) is ultimately only found in Jesus and He will stop at nothing to make that a reality in our hearts!

OBSERVATION/INTERPRETATION

- In verse 8, who do you believe Jonah is referring to about clinging to worthless idols? Specifically, was it the people of Nineveh, the sailors, himself? Why do you believe that?
- To, "pay regard to a vain idol", means to place something above loving and serving God. In light of this, how do the desires of our hearts affect how we live?

APPLICATION

- How are we sometimes like Jonah and do not remember the LORD until we are under extreme distress?
- What "idols" are you tempted to place above God?
- How does the gospel capture and realign (or in other words, "rescue/save") our desires and turn us from reluctant disobedience to joyful obedience?

PRAYER

- Ask God to reveal anything in your heart that may be an idol you are depending on and trusting in.

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