

Small Group Discussion Questions - Winter Semester // Week One

Remember, these questions are just tools for discussion. You don't need to 'get through them all'. Use the questions that are helpful, skip the questions that are not. And let the conversation flow naturally.

Optional Ice Breaker(s)

- a) Tell us about your Christmas and New Year's Eve celebrations! How were you able to celebrate this year? What were the best parts, even though it was different than normal?
- b) Do you have any New Year's resolutions this year? If so, how have you been keeping up with them so far? If not, what are a few events you are excited about this year?

Passage and Discussion

Read the Book of Jonah (this will take 7-10 minutes)

- a) To begin with the same question on Sunday morning: when you think of the Book of Jonah, what is the first thing that comes to mind? Why do you think we are often so focused on the fish in this story? Do you think that we often miss the main point of the story?
- b) If someone were to ask you what the Book of Jonah is all about, how would you answer them? In your words, what are the main points of this book?
- c) On Sunday, we read through the whole Book of Jonah. Why do you think it's important for us to understand this book as a whole?
- d) We don't often read large parts of scripture in succession. What did reading this in one sitting reveal to you, that maybe you would have missed, if you didn't read it all?
- e) At the beginning of the series, Cam helped us understand the context (time, place, etc.) of this book. Why is it important for us to understand the context of this book? How does understanding when/where this book comes from help us to read it well? Was there anything on Sunday that you learned about the book that you didn't know, or that stood out to you?
- f) If you were being honest with yourself, who are the "Assyrians" in your own life? Who are the people in our world today that you privately hope God doesn't call you to serve? How can we begin to overcome these thoughts of "otherness" in our own lives?
- g) First, we learned on Sunday that Jonah is a prophetic book, but it is also a historical account of Jonah's mission. Do you believe that it's important whether we read this story as history or allegory? How could the way we read it change the message of the book?

- h) Why do you think that people (including some Christians) try to explain this book away as parable? Why is it sometimes difficult for us to believe the supernatural parts of the Bible? However, what happens if we begin removing the supernatural parts of Scripture?
- i) As we walk into this new series, what are you hoping to learn from this book? Do you have any questions that you're hoping are answered during this season?
- j) Was there anything else in the message on Sunday that stood out to you as impactful or challenging?

Take it Home (Optional Ideas for Response this Week)

- a) This week, re-read the Book of Jonah. As you read, make a note of any verses, words, or themes that stand out to you. Spend a few minutes praying about what you've written down, and ask God to speak to you through His Word.
- b) This week, spend a few minutes reflecting on discussion question f). Who are the "Assyrians" in your own life that you hope God doesn't call you to serve? Ask God to speak to you through His Spirit, and reveal to you any prejudice you hold against other people. Ask Him to help you as you become more like Christ.

Optional Ideas for Prayer Time

- a) In this season, it is important for us to be intentionally praying for each other. This also means that we must each choose to be honest and vulnerable with our prayer requests. Take time to 'check-in' about how each person is doing, and pray for them.
- b) As a group, pray for our new sermon series! Pray that it would be an encouraging and challenging series for our church community.