

Jonah

A Reluctant Missionary

Small Group Notes

Introduction

Jonah is a book written somewhere between the middle of the eighth century and the end of the third century. Although the author of the book is anonymous many believe its foundational source for the book was likely Jonah's own telling of the story after his return from Nineveh. This book is a historical narrative that looks at Jonah's call from God to share his message with the people of Nineveh who didn't know the Lord.

Key themes

Throughout the book of Jonah we see two main characters and the contrast between the two of them. The first is God himself. Throughout this book we see His unlimited compassion expressed, from his patience and compassion towards Jonah to his forgiveness and compassion towards the people of Nineveh. Throughout this book we see a picture painted of a sovereign God who controls the events of Earth. From storms to giant fish and plants growing. Yet he is so full of compassion that no matter how Jonah reacts to his call, how hard his heart is or how sinful Nineveh is - God consistently shows them compassion.

The second character we see is Jonah and how different he is to God. Jonah shows very little compassion, when called by God he runs away. He finally after much persuasion goes to Nineveh and shares the message, yet when the people repent Jonah doesn't celebrate the grace of God. He is furious with God for making him look so foolish.

Jonah was a reluctant missionary and if we are honest many of us could claim that title for ourselves.

Top Tips

- 1) **Make it a priority** - Our heart as a church is that the looking at and applying the word of God is a central part of our small groups time together. Please do try and make this a regular part of your time together as a small group.
- 2) **Read the passage** - Why not encourage your small group to read the chapter before they come along to small group and note down any thoughts or questions that they think of? This will help the time to be a much more fruitful and useful tool for the group.
- 3) **Listen to the sermon** - Although we aren't basing our small group study around the Sunday teaching it will still be a very useful thing to have heard it before you meet as a small group especially if you are leading through the word.
- 4) **Facilitate a discussion** - The aim of unpacking the word in small group is that it should be a time to allow everyone to share their thoughts and discuss the word of God. Your role is to bring everyone into the study and help them feel like their voice is wanted, valued and needed.

Chapter I

Questions

- 1) What jumps out to you as interesting, strange or confusing in the first three verses of Chapter I?
- 2) Verse three tells us Jonah jumped on a boat to go “away from the presence of God.” Because of God’s call to share his message, what is your reaction to God’s calling to be witnesses for him? Do you run, hide, fight or follow?
- 3) How do verses 4-6 impact your view of God? Compare the sailor’s reaction to Jonah’s reaction in these verses and discuss.
- 4) What do verses 7-16 teach us about how God can use us even in our moments of reluctance and trying to run from him? Do you have any testimonies where God has used you to bless others even when you weren’t trying to?
- 5) What calling has God given you when it comes to making disciples? For example, who has God put on your heart to share his good news with? Is it a specific person, type of people etc.?