

# THE PRAYER OF JONAH (20F2)

Jonah 2:5-10

Part two of our study on prayer from the prayer of Jonah. It was a prayer of desperation with Jonah's faith that God really hears and answers.

What can prayer really do? Can prayer really help?

More than half of the respondents to a nationwide poll conducted by ABC News, USA Today, and the Stanford University Medical Center said they use prayer against pain—90 percent said it “worked well” and 51 percent said it worked “very well.” Numerous other studies have come to similar conclusions, finding that people with chronic pain frequently rely on religious activities or beliefs, including prayer, to help them cope.

But the effectiveness of prayer is not in the prayer itself, but in the one that we pray to. This is more than just good feelings, it's actual power!

*Psalm 138:3 (NKJV)<sup>3</sup> In the day when I cried out, You answered me, And made me bold with strength in my soul.*

*James 5:16 (NLT)<sup>16</sup> Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.*

*Philemon 22 (NKJV)<sup>22</sup> But, meanwhile, also prepare a guest room for me, for I trust that through your prayers I shall be granted to you.*

How does prayer help us?

- Prayer brings hope in a time of hopelessness (Jonah 2:5-6)
- Prayer brings strength in a time of weakness (Jonah 2:7)
- Prayer brings perspective in a time of ignorance (Jonah 2:8-9)
- Prayer works (Jonah 2:10)

## **I. PRAYER BRINGS HOPE IN A TIME OF HOPELESSNESS (JONAH 2:5-6)**

## 1. There are many things that lead to hopelessness including depression and world news.

- i. “Crisis in New Zealand health services as depression and anxiety soar” A landmark inquiry has found New Zealand’s mental health services are overwhelmed and geared towards crisis care rather than the wider population who are experiencing increasing rates of depression, trauma and substance abuse. It has urged the government to widen provision of mental health care from 3% of the population in critical need to “the missing middle” – the 20% of the population who struggle with “common, disabling problems” such as anxiety. The 10-month inquiry travelled the country, consulting the public, specialists and community experts as part of a deep-dive into what is commonly described as a “crisis” in New Zealand’s mental health system. According to the report 50-80% of New Zealanders experience “mental distress or addiction challenges” at some point in their lives, while each year one in five people experience “mental illness or significant mental distress”, at a cost of NZ\$12bn – or 5% of GDP a year. “We can’t medicate or treat our way out of the epidemic of mental distress.” - He Ara Oranga mental health report

2. The answer is **GOD!** He is the only one who can bring us “up from the pit”(vs.6) of hopelessness. He does this through prayer.

- i. "To get nations back on their feet, we must first get down on our knees." - Billy Graham
- ii. *Philippians 4:6–7 (NKJV)*<sup>6</sup> *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; <sup>7</sup> and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

## **II. PRAYER BRINGS STRENGTH IN A TIME OF WEAKNESS (JONAH 2:7)**

1. The prayer of faith can give us supernatural strength to do what needs to be done.

- i. *Hebrews 11:33–34 (NKJV)*<sup>33</sup> *who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, <sup>34</sup> quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.*
- ii. *Judges 16:28–30 (NKJV)*<sup>28</sup> *Then Samson called to the Lord, saying, “O Lord God, remember me, I pray! Strengthen me, I pray, just this once, O God, that I may with one blow take vengeance on the Philistines for my two eyes!” <sup>29</sup> And Samson took hold of the two*

*middle pillars which supported the temple, and he braced himself against them, one on his right and the other on his left. <sup>30</sup> Then Samson said, "Let me die with the Philistines!" And he pushed with all his might, and the temple fell on the lords and all the people who were in it. So the dead that he killed at his death were more than he had killed in his life.*

### **III. PRAYER BRINGS PERSPECTIVE IN A TIME OF IGNORANCE (JONAH 2:8-9)**

#### **1. Some of you are looking to worthless idols. These things can't save you or make you happy!**

- i. "Revenge, lust, ambition, pride, and self-will are too often exalted as the gods of man's idolatry; while holiness, peace, contentment, and humility are viewed as unworthy of a serious thought." - Charles Spurgeon
- ii. More than half of people surveyed admitted they experienced mental health issues after completing a series. Of the 2,000 people surveyed by Patient.info, those aged 18-24 were five times more likely to feel lonely, three times more likely to feel depressed and twice as likely to feel anxious, sleepless and empty. - [NYPost "Binge watching leaves you anxious, stressed and lonely"](#)

#### **2. Get back to prayer, worship "the voice of thanksgiving", and a commitment to God (vs.9).**

- i. “Nothing teaches us about the preciousness of the Creator as much as when we learn the emptiness of everything else.” — Charles Spurgeon, Morning and Evening
- ii. “I need to worship because without it I can forget that I have a Big God beside me and live in fear. I need to worship because without it I can forget his calling and begin to live in a spirit of self-preoccupation. I need to worship because without it I lose a sense of wonder and gratitude and plod through life with blinders on. I need worship because my natural tendency is toward self-reliance and stubborn independence.” — John Ortberg

#### **IV. PRAYER WORKS (JONAH 2:10)**

##### **1. This is a historical reality. Prayer impacts the real world!**

- i. *Mark 11:23–24 (NKJV)* <sup>23</sup> *For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says.* <sup>24</sup> *Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.*



## Discussion Questions – Week 3

The Prayer of Jonah pt.2

Jonah 2:5-10

**1. There is a lot of hopelessness in the world. When looking at world events, and watching the news, what should the Christian response be, and what is the right balance between fearmongering and ignorance?**

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**2. Billy Graham said, “To get nations back on their feet, we must first get down on our knees.” Why do you think prayer is often our last resort? In other words, why don’t Christians pray more for real issues facing our nation?**

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**3. Read Hebrews 11:33-34. When you think about the power of a prayer of faith, what examples motivate you the most? Are there any modern day stories of prayer power that you can share with the group?**

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**4. Prayer brings perspective in times of ignorance. What are some of the “idols” we look to in the place of God/prayer?**

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**5. Jonah talked about lifting up the voice of thanksgiving to the Lord in prayer. This is worship. How do you think worship and prayer help in our daily struggles? Do you have any examples from your life where worship has helped?**

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