

How to Use Sermon Resources

- **READ AHEAD TOGETHER** - MCG's should use the Devotional at the end of this resource as a reading plan for the week leading up to your meeting.
- **SIT UNDER THE WORD** - This resource is filled with scripture references. Read them aloud, together before you answer any questions.
- **APPLY TRUTH** - The goal is deep discussion and application, not necessarily to complete this resource. Don't squash a good discussion. If you get into something important along the way that's fine.

Small Group Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer [2 mins]

Use the Overview [5 mins]

- Cover any key points for people who missed parts or all of the sermon

Scripture Deep Dive [30-40 mins]

- Opening Question
- Read the scripture for each question then ask the question. Some have multiple scriptures.

Close in Prayer

- In this extended prayer time, ask others to pray as they feel led, pray in a circle, pray over one another, pray to your left, or pray for someone specific. Whatever seems best.

Split Time (if applicable)

- Men with men, women with women
- Share in a circle. "What's one thing you want to celebrate? What do you need prayer and accountability for?"
- After everyone shares, pray in a circle for the person to your left/right.

SERMON OVERVIEW

The Mercy of God - Jonah

Sermon Summary:

This sermon explores the book of Jonah as a powerful demonstration of God's undeserved, surprising, impartial, and limitless mercy toward sinners. The pastor emphasizes that Jonah is fundamentally about God's mercy demonstrated through His love, kindness, and compassion, rather than being primarily about the prophet or the fish. The message challenges believers to examine whether their declarations of faith match their deeds, and whether they are running toward or away from God's mission. The sermon culminates by pointing to Jesus as the greater Jonah who embraced God's mission, willingly sacrificed Himself, and brought a message of grace that accomplishes salvation rather than just judgment.

Key Points:

- God's mercy is undeserved - we cannot compare ourselves to others to determine worthiness; Jesus is the standard
- God's mercy is surprising - it often comes in forms we don't expect, like the fish that saved Jonah's life
- God's mercy is impartial - extended even to the wicked Ninevites who repented
- God's mercy is limitless - demonstrated through multiple chances given to Jonah
- Inconveniences in life may be God's way of reordering our steps for His purposes
- The journey back to God after sin is painful but less painful than continuing away from Him
- Jonah points us to Jesus, the greater Jonah, who willingly embraced God's mission and sacrificed Himself

Scripture Reference:

- The Book of Jonah (all four chapters)

Stories:

- The Name That Tune television show illustration about recognizing songs with minimal notes, used to introduce the concept of expressing the gospel concisely
- Personal story about receiving a speeding ticket in a construction zone and trying to compare himself to worse offenders rather than the actual standard
- Childhood memory of a tornado hitting the Kleehammer's house across the street, used to illustrate how God's mercy catches us up and sends us out on mission
- The historical context of Ninevite cruelty - beheading, burning children, impaling people on stakes - to demonstrate why Jonah considered them unworthy of mercy
- The account of Jonah being swallowed by the fish for three days as God's surprising vehicle of mercy
- Jonah sitting outside Nineveh hoping God would still destroy the city despite their repentance

Scripture Deep Dive

Opening question

Think of a time when you received mercy (not getting what you deserved) from a parent, teacher, boss, or friend. In what concrete way did that act of mercy change your attitude or behavior toward them afterward?

Point 1 – God’s mercy is undeserved

Read Jonah 1:1–3 and 1:9 together. In these verses, Jonah both disobeys God and yet claims, “I worship the LORD” (v. 9). Using Romans 3:23 and 1 Timothy 1:15, explain why Jonah is no more deserving of mercy than the Ninevites, despite his status as a prophet. What specific truths in these verses expose the error of thinking, “I am more worthy of God’s mercy than those people”?

Read Jonah 1:1–3 and Luke 18:9–14 (the Pharisee and the tax collector). In both passages, someone sees themselves as “better” than others. Identify at least two parallels between Jonah’s attitude and the Pharisee’s prayer, and then state one specific way this comparison warns you against using other people, rather than God, as your standard of righteousness.

Point 2 – God’s mercy is surprising

Read Jonah 1:17 and 2:1–4, then read Hebrews 12:5–11. According to these passages, how can something that feels like judgment (being swallowed by a fish, painful discipline) actually be an expression of God’s mercy? Give one specific criterion from Hebrews 12 that helps you discern whether a hard circumstance in your life might be corrective *fatherly discipline* rather than meaningless suffering.

Read Jonah 2:7–10, then read Romans 8:28 and Psalm 119:67, 71. Jonah recognizes God’s hand in his distress and deliverance. Using these verses, explain how God can use an “inconvenience” (like Jonah’s fish or the psalmist’s affliction) to *reorder* someone’s life toward obedience. Describe one specific way these texts challenge the assumption that God’s mercy will always feel comfortable or convenient.

Point 3 – God’s mercy is impartial and limitless

Read Jonah 3:4–10 and 4:1–3, 10–11, then read Romans 2:1–4 and 2 Peter 3:9. God shows mercy both to the wicked Ninevites and repeatedly to Jonah. From these passages, identify at least two ways God’s attitude toward Jonah and Nineveh proves that His mercy is both impartial and limitless. Then, based on Romans 2:4, state one concrete way God intends His ongoing mercy toward *you* to practically change your response to people you might be tempted to see as “undeserving.”