



Jonah

The book of Jonah can feel so foreign to us. A prophet long ago sent to a faraway land was swallowed up by a whale. What could this have to do with us? Everything. Just as Jonah was, we are called to go where God calls us to, wrestle with our own sinful motives, and love difficult and even hurtful people. In this series, we will both see ourselves in Jonah's life and learn from his mistakes.

WEEK THREE

LOVING WHO GOD WANTS US TO LOVE

Message Passage: Jonah 3:1-4:11

Small Group Passage: Luke 15:25-32

TEACHING AND VIDEO NOTES

Jonah 3:1-2 *Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time: 2 "Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you."*

Jonah was getting a second chance. He was not only being forgiven of his sin but he was being reinstated for ministry.

Jonah 3:3-4 *Jonah obeyed the word of the LORD and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very large city; it took three days to go through it. 4 Jonah began by going a day's journey into the city, proclaiming, "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown."*

Jonah has learned his lesson. He was going to obey what God had commanded him to do. He was now submitting to the will of God. However, you may have noticed that the message he was delivering was a bit..... Blunt to put it kindly. He essentially said in forty days you will all die. No words about repentance, definitely nothing about the grace and mercy that he had just described and experienced.

Jonah 3:5 *The Ninevites believed God. A fast was proclaimed, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth.*

And yet revival broke out. How? Because God was moving among the people. No one could get the credit but God. Jonah was no Billy Graham, and yet a pagan people were repenting of their sin with an urgency that neither Jonah nor his people, Israel, were doing.

Jonah 3:10 *When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened.*

This was a perfect ending. Hollywood could not have written a happier ending with the credits rolling and the hero riding off into the sunset. Yet, Jonah

Jonah 4:1-2 a *But to Jonah this seemed very wrong, and he became angry. 2 He prayed to the LORD, "Isn't this what I said, LORD, when I was still at home? That is what I tried to forestall by fleeing to Tarshish."*

And just like that, the good time tune stopped playing. The Prophet of God, who was sent to lead the pagan nation to repentance, is furious that the pagan nation has repented.

Jonah 4:2 b *I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. 3 Now, LORD, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live."*

Why was Jonah mad? **He was mad that God was compassionate, slow to anger, and abounding in love.** Who would ever be mad about that? Well, no one is mad when the characteristics are to their benefit. Jonah celebrated those very characteristics of God just one chapter later.

Before we condemn Jonah completely, let's be honest with ourselves. Is it not possible for the same thing to happen in our hearts? We love it when God is patient and kind towards us. **But what if God was kind and compassionate towards somebody you despised?** Maybe God somehow blessed someone in your life that left you asking, "Why, God, would you ever choose to bless them?"

Jonah 4:4 *But the LORD replied, "Is it right for you to be angry?"*

In other words, is this feeling welling up within you good and right? Is this an anger something that is godly? Should you be acting upon this?

Jonah 4:5-11

God had one key message for Jonah... you are not God.

1. **You are not God... and I do not answer to you.**
2. **You are not God... and yet you worship yourself.**

Despite all that Jonah had witnessed God do, he could not bring himself to love who God desired him to love. Why? Because he did not understand God's abounding love for him.

Segway to Small Group: I want us to see together how understanding the depth and nature of God's love for us frees us to love who God deeply desires us to love.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What do we learn about God and His nature based on how he interacts with the Prophet Jonah throughout the book?

Leader Note: "God chooses to give Jonah a second chance at fully submitting to his will. God reasons with Jonah. He is patient with him. Why? Because that is God's nature. As Timothy Keller put it, "God does not just accept Jonah and leave him alone. He does not allow Jonah to remain undisturbed in his foolish, wrongful attitudes and behavior patterns. God sends a storm, a fish, a plant. He commissions him again and again and in the end counsels and debates with him directly. Here we see God's righteousness and love working together. He is both too holy and too loving to either destroy Jonah or to allow Jonah to remain as he is, and God is also too holy and too loving to allow us to remain as we are."¹

2. When was a time in your life when God was patient with you?

READ: Luke 15:25-32

3. What was the older son's mindset? How did he view his younger, rebellious brother?

¹ Keller, Timothy. *The Prodigal Prophet: Jonah and the Mystery of God's Mercy* (p. 132). Penguin Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

Leader Note: The older son's language says so much about how he views his brother, "But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!" Do you notice how he does not refer to him as "my brother," but as "your son"? Even though the young prodigal son had wronged his father vastly more than he had his older brother, the older brother was the one who harbored resentment and bitterness. So much so that he no longer referred to his brother as his own. The comparison to how Jonah viewed the people of Nineveh is nearly identical. When we adopt mindsets that keep us from showing mercy to others as we have been shown mercy, we are on very dangerous ground (James 2:13).

4. How did the older brother view his relationship with his father? Specifically, why did he feel he deserved better treatment than his brother?

Leader Note: The older son pointed out some very valid facts. He had, in fact, remained at home and obeyed his father. Something the younger son could not claim. But the question is, why did he do it? The answer seems obvious. He felt that he had earned more of his father's favor and love through his obedience. In his eyes, he had a contractual relationship with his father. If I do "this", you will give me "this" kind of relationship. In his case, I give you obedience, so you should give me more love and blessings. But that is not the kind of relationship that God has established with us. He has established a covenant with us (Heb 9:15-17). In this covenant relationship, he has shown us immeasurable love, kindness, and mercy freely, not in response to our obedience but in spite of it. We did not earn God's love and mercy, and we can not add to it via obedience.

5. Do you see any similarities between the older brother in this parable and Jonah?

Leader Note: There are many valid comparisons between the two men. Some have already been mentioned in the leader notes. The one that sticks out the most is the refusal to love one's neighbor (Deut 6:4-7, Matt 22:37-40, Mark 12:30-31, Luke 10:27). Why did both men fall short of this biblical command? Because they did not fully understand the Love of God. We must love God and love people. But the order of those two commands matters. It is not until we fully understand how, why, and to what degree that God the Father loves that we ever stand a chance at loving our neighbor as ourselves. God's love is a perfect, eternal, and sacrificial love. Agape Love.

6. What does it look like for us to make the same mistakes today?
7. Both the Book of Jonah and the parable we just read end on the same note. Two men angry at God are utterly alone with no clear signs of repentance.

Both men were angry at God the Father's undeserved mercy and kindness.
What must we begin to do so that we do not find ourselves in the same situation?

PRAYER TIME

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