



NG Study Guide: Jonah 2:1-10 “Grace and Realization” [8.16.20]

Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. *Leader note: Please review the brief instructions for leaders at the bottom.*

The Study

Thesis: Jesus followers are called to make disciples who love God supremely and love neighbors like they love themselves (Matt. 28:18-20, 22:37-39). These are the great commandments and commission which are the essence of our mission. Today, we discover how to please God, be content, and impact eternity by living on mission. As we consider Jonah’s realization and repentance, let’s be disciples who make disciples (live on mission).

Context: Jonah rebelled against the mission to proclaim God’s message. God used a storm and then three days and nights in the belly of a fish to compel Jonah to reflect and come to a renewed realization about God, himself, his mission, and his rebellion. This chapter records Jonah’s prayer of realization, renewal, and the beginning of his recommission to God’s mission.

A. Realization [1-6] *Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the fish’s belly. ² And he said: “I cried out to the LORD because of my affliction, and He answered me. “Out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and You heard my voice. ³ For You cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the floods surrounded me; all Your billows and Your waves passed over me. ⁴ Then I said, ‘I have been cast out of Your sight; yet I will look again toward Your holy temple.’ ⁵ The waters surrounded me, even to my soul; the deep closed around me; weeds were wrapped around my head. ⁶ I went down to the moorings of the mountains; the earth with its bars closed behind me forever; yet You have brought up my life from the pit, O LORD, my God.*

1. Problem: rebellion against God results in despair.

Jonah declares his *affliction* [2] or his pain and suffering. He states, *that he cried out to God from the belly of Sheol* [2], a metaphor for the depths of despair. The essence of the problem is that Jonah feels separated from God, *I have been cast out of Your sight* [4]. You sense his anguish when he says, *The waters surrounded me, even to my soul* [5]. Jonah’s hopelessness is revealed when he laments, *I went down to the moorings of the mountains; The earth with its bars closed behind me forever* [6].

What does rebellion against God look like? Let us revisit this important theme. There are countless ways that people can rebel against God. For some, it is a complete rejection of God’s existence or rejecting what the Bible declares about God, and what God desires and requires of mankind. For others, it may be an area of your life that you refuse to yield to God. For example, lying, sexual sin, coveting, pride, prejudice, or drug and alcohol abuse. And for many, there is a more subtle, but just as dangerous form of rebellion. For example, the Great Commandments reveal that we are to love God supremely and love our neighbors as we love ourselves. If we love someone or something more than God this is rebellion. Similarly, if we don’t know and care about neighbors, let alone love them or love them like we love ourselves, it is rebellion. The Great Commission commands us to make disciples, however, many of us don’t engage unbelievers share the gospel, or mentor those who are young in their faith.

2. Perspective: return to God and experience restoration.

Jonah trusts that God hears his prayers and can deliver [1-2]. Jonah turned to God, *I will look again toward Your holy temple* [4]. Jonah acknowledges God as the giver of hope and restoration, *You have brought up my life from the pit, O LORD, my God* [6].

B. Renewal [7-9]

“When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the LORD; and my prayer went up to You, into Your holy temple. ⁸“Those who regard worthless idols forsake their own mercy. ⁹ But I will sacrifice to You with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay what I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD.”

1. Remember the Lord [7-8]

Jonah said, *When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the LORD; And my prayer went up to You, Into Your holy temple* [7].

The idea of your *soul fainting within* is the sense of life and spiritual life slipping away. There is a sense that rebellion ultimately produces a feeling of spiritual and physical life slipping away. The first step towards renewal is to *remember the Lord* [7]. Nothing in this world can satisfy man’s greatest need – rest for the soul. There is a spiritual need to be restored with God and until we are we cannot escape despair or discouragement. Jesus declared that when you yield to His authority and learn from Him, it is not burdensome, and you’ll discover rest for our souls [Matt. 11:28-30]. Repentance is a change in attitude (thinking) about God and your sin, and actions (behavior) to submit to God. It is the theme of the first recorded messages of John the Baptist, Jesus, Paul and Peter. Shortly after Pentecost, and the birth of the Church, Peter urged the crowds to repent so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord ... [Ac. 3:19]. I’m refreshed in His presence, and my greatest sense of peace is when I’m in His will.

Remembering the Lord, prompts Jonah to pray, *I remembered the LORD; and my prayer went up to You* [7]. As we communicate with God through prayer, and contemplate his holiness and majesty there is a sense of renewal. The true and living God is unlike any other god or object of worship. Jonah observes, *Those who regard worthless idols forsake their own mercy* [8]. Those who reject God’s mercy and grace harm **and** hurt themselves by turning their back on God. No other person, or thing, can provide true rest for your soul, they are worthless objects of devotion.

2. Remember His salvation [9]

But I will sacrifice to You With the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay what I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD.

Jonah declares his renewed commitment to worship God via sacrifice, giving, and obedience to God’s commands. Furthermore, the actions will be accompanied by an attitude of gratitude or *thanksgiving*. Don’t miss the irony, that in the last chapter the Gentile sailors made the same declaration when God stilled the storm [1:16]. Again, God’s ambassador is slower to come-around and get aligned with God’s will than those previously who had no relationship with God.

Jonah’s declaration, *Salvation is of the Lord* is presumably related to the deliverance of Jonah by God when he was cast into the sea, and he survived thanks to God’s intervention. Jonah is also aware that eternal salvation is of the Lord. What he may not fully appreciate is the grace of God in His salvation. Jonah was in complete rebellion against God when God graciously delivered him. Jonah did not deserve it. Similarly, Jonah doesn’t deserve God’s eternal salvation, it is a gracious gift of God through faith [Eph. 2:8-9]. Accordingly, Jonah has not been fully aligned with the extent of grace that God would offer salvation to the wicked and cruel Assyrians if they repent and submit to God. Nevertheless, Jonah is recommitted to God’s service in response to God’s salvation. Love for God and others, and gratitude for His salvation is the proper motivation for obedience, worship, sacrifice and service. This is simply a reasonable response to what God has done through Christ and His gospel [Rom. 12:1-2]. Jonah had repented. Repentance: to humble yourself before God, change your thinking about Him and your sin, and choose to yield to God. Jonah was renewed and would now be reengaged in God’s mission.

C. Reengage the mission of God [10]

So the LORD spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.

Notice that even the fish in this account is yielded to God. The Gentile sailors in chapter one yielded to God. Next week, we’ll see the Ninevites yield to God [Ch. 3]. The person who should be most submitted to God is Jonah, God’s ambassador. Although he is prepared to take the right actions, we will discover in the fourth chapter that Jonah’s attitude still is not aligned with God.

So, how can you have the right attitude and actions in regard to the mission of God?

1. Remember the Lord and His salvation. Nineveh is 300-plus miles from the Mediterranean coast. Jonah will spend weeks traveling, and along the way appears to have lost his appreciation for God's gracious salvation. The gospel message of salvation through faith in Christ is truly the good news that we are commissioned to share. Remembering the Lord presumes experience knowing God. Bible learning, prayer and time with God are all helpful to remember the Lord and His salvation, and prepare you to engage or reengage in the mission of God.

2. Engage and befriend those who don't know God. Develop relationships with neighbors where you live, work, study, and play. People will generally be willing to allow you to pray for them or with them, and this creates a spiritual bridge. Be sensitive to the leading of God's Spirit. When opportunities arise, talk about your experience with God (testimony) and the gospel. This is a great way to grow in genuine love for neighbors.

3. Make disciples by sharing what you are learning about God. Develop relationship with neighbors where you worship who can help mentor you as you grow in your faith. Look to develop relationships with others who aren't as mature in their faith whom you can mentor. Neighborhood Groups are one of the easiest ways to cultivate mentoring relationships with others that help to make disciples. Neighborhood Groups also are a great way to develop greater love for God and neighbors inside and outside of your group.

Study Guide Qs

Q1. What have you discovered from learning the first two chapters of Jonah that you may not have known before?

Q2. How would you describe rebellion against God? What comes to mind?

Q3. Review the section "Renewal" [v. 7-9]. What did you find interesting or discover about God and/or yourself.

Q4. Review the section "Reengage the mission of God" [v. 10]. How would you like to apply these ideas in your life during this season?

"Digging Deeper" (optional or alternative study)

1. Read the whole Book of Jonah. What did you learn about God, His commission, and yourself?

2. Reflection: Consider an area of your life where you are rebelling. Pray and ask God to help you yield to Him by the power of His Spirit. Consider sharing your discovery with someone you trust.

Love your neighbor *outside* the group better:

1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors where they live, work, study, or play this past week?

2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor outside the group?

3. Here is a neighbor idea(s) for us to consider for the week(s) ahead:

Invite a neighbor where you live, work, study, or play to watch or attend a weekend worship service and talk about their impressions.

Love your neighbor *inside* the group better:

1. Are there some needs in our group that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor within the group?

2. What might we do about that need to help?

Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don't force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

Leader Notes:

- 1. Seek to involve as many group participants as possible.** A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.
- 2. Feel free to pre-select the discussion questions that you want to focus on** in case there isn't enough time to answer them all.
- 3. The "Digging Deeper" section provides some optional or alternative study and discussion activities.** As a group leader, you can choose to focus on the "Digging Deeper" section, include part of that section in your group meeting, or not use it at all. Try to give the group sufficient notice so they can be prepared for the meeting.
- 4. Every time you meet consider asking:**
 - a. What about this passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing?** If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don't hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.