

"MAJORING IN THE MINORS: EXPLORING THE MINOR PROPHETS" FOR THE WEEK OF JUNE 16 | PENTECOST 4

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE: "A BIG FISH STORY"

OPENING PRAYER

We exalt you, our God and King, and praise your name forever and ever. Great are you Lord! You are most worthy of praise! No one can measure your greatness. You are merciful and compassionate, slow to anger and filled with unfailing love. You are good to everyone. You shower compassion on all your creation. All of your works will thank you, Lord, and we as your faithful followers praise you! (taken from Psalm 145 NLT) In Jesus Name we pray, Amen!

CONNECTING QUESTION

Share a fish story – catching one, eating one, seeing one, owning one, playing "go fish," etc. What makes your story memorable?

SCRIPTURE READING

Read Aloud & Meditate on God's Word: Jonah 1:1-2:1, 2:10-4:3; Matthew 12:38-41

WATCH VIDEO

Video Presenter: Kurt Blum

EXPLORE THE TEXT

Invite the Holy Spirit to lead as you work through the questions in this guide. Cover what your time allows and encourage everyone to finish the guide on his or her own.

1. Read Jonah 1:1-2:1. Tell Jonah's story in your own words; include significant verbs and actions. How would you describe Jonah's attitude? How about that of the sailors?
2. Where do you "go" or what do you do that is the opposite from where the Lord is calling you? Why is it sometimes difficult to follow God's ways and directions? How do you return to the direction God is calling you to follow?
3. Jonah finally cried out to God in his distress and desperation (Jonah 2:1). What was also included in his prayer (Jonah 2:7-9)? How did God answer his prayer? (Jonah 2:10-3:1) Do you think this was the answer he was expecting? How has God answered one of your prayers in an unexpected way?
4. What was Jonah's message when he finally made it to Nineveh? (Jonah 3:3-4) There was no mention of sin, how to respond, or even of God! Why do you think the Ninevites responded the way they did? (Jonah 3:5-9) What do you learn about God from Jonah 3:10?

5. What did Jonah accuse God of? (Jonah 4:1-2) (See also Exodus 33:19, Isaiah 30:18, Psalm 116:5.) How did Jonah receive compassion that he did not deserve? What lessons was God teaching Jonah (4:3-11)? When have you limited God's mercy to others...to yourself?
6. How did Jesus relate to Jonah in Matthew 12:38-41? (Also see Hosea 6:2). Just like his Father, Jesus showed compassion. What do you learn in Matthew 9:35-36, 15:29-32? What does God call us to be and do? (Also see Ephesians 4:29-32; Colossians 3:12.)

GONE FISHIN'

"God swallows us up in his mercy when we are sinking in sin, just as he did for his reluctant prophet whom God had the fish spit out on shore, to live to see another day. For Jonah, mercy was a giant mackerel with a man-sized appetite!" (Jennifer Rothschild – "66 Ways God Loves You")

Imagine yourself in the belly of a big fish! What is swallowing you up right now? Write a prayer about your situation – admit your need to God, appeal to him, and also give him thanks, even if you don't see the answer yet.

In what ways can you relate to Jonah? – running away from God, avoiding or disobeying him, ignoring problems, at the end of your rope, reluctantly and rebelliously obeying, feeling sorry for yourself, thinking God is too loving, good, and forgiving to everyone, especially your enemies, or people you feel don't deserve compassion. What is one thing you can do to "keep in step with the Spirit" (Galatians 5:25) and follow the Lord more closely?

CLOSING PRAYER

Merciful God, we love the character who is Jonah! We are so much like him, running away from you, avoiding what you would have us do, and being reluctant to repent. Thank you for the compassion, forgiveness, and second chances you give us that we don't deserve! Oh Lord, help us to trust that when you call us to do something, big or small, you will provide what we need to accomplish it! May we extend your mercy and compassion to all, whether friend or foe. In the kind name of Jesus we pray, Amen.

Our Father ...

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