



PREPARATION

Spend the week studying Jonah 3:1-10. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools to enhance your preparation.

DETERMINE | which discussion points and study questions will work best for your group

PRAY | for our pastors and this week's message, the upcoming group time, your group members and their openness to God's Word.

LANDING POINT | We make a real difference in life when we obey God's call.

◦ Remember the 4 Rules for Small Group Discussion

- 1. Confidentiality.** What's said in the group stays in the group.
- 2. No cross-talk.** Be considerate of others as they share. Refrain from side conversations and texting during group time.
- 3. No fixing.** We are not in the group to fix each other. Jesus does that part.
- 4. Sharing.** Be sensitive to the amount of time you share. Don't talk too much or too little. Every person brings something valuable to the group.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

This week we pick up where we left off in the story of Jonah. God rescued Jonah by sending a fish to swallow him. After spending three days in the fish, God commands the fish to spit Jonah up on dry land. God again calls Jonah to go to Nineveh and be His messenger. God gave Jonah a second chance.

How will Jonah respond this time? Will he continue to disobey God? Or will he obey and start running with God, instead of away from Him? Let's take a look at the next chapter in Jonah's story together.

What's one thing you wish you had a second chance at? Why? Be specific.

Describe the differences between someone running from God and someone running with God.



LEARN

Select 2-3 questions to discuss as a group.

◦ A second call, a different response

God isn't done with this rebellious prophet just yet. Miraculously, God gives Jonah another chance to obey. Imagine the scene. The fish vomits Jonah out of its mouth. The prophet lies on the beach covered in fish juice. Not soon after he hears God's call again: "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you." The first time, Jonah ran. This time is different. Jonah stands up and starts walking towards Nineveh with purpose.

When he arrives in Nineveh, Jonah's marches through the large city declaring this simple message: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" Jonah delivers a prophecy that turns the entire city upside down. Everyone in this Gentile, unbelieving city repents and mourns over their sin. Nineveh was headed straight for destruction until God used Jonah to save the city from certain judgment.

What stands out to you about Jonah's response to God's call? What about the Ninevites response?

Recall a time when you heard God's call to do something and responded in obedience. What happened?

◦ Jonah's obedience made a difference

Do you see how Jonah's obedience made a difference? The cries of the people must have been deafening as they fell to their knees, repented and turned to God. Even Nineveh's king was moved by Jonah's message. He declared a fast throughout the city in hopes that God's anger would be turned from them.

In grace, God responds by sparing the city. Nineveh would not suffer the fate of cities like Sodom and Gomorrah. Like Jonah, they, too, got a second chance and obeyed. Despite their past sin, God allowed Nineveh to turn back to Him.

What does the Ninevites' response teach you about true repentance?

What's one thing God may be calling you to change (or repent of) in your life?

LIVE

Select 2-3 questions from this section to answer.



↻ LIVE [CONT'D]

Select 2-3 questions from this section to answer.

◦ God uses the broken

What does Jonah's obedience teach us? First, it teaches us that God uses broken people to carry out His work. The truth is, God uses broken people, because that's the only kind there are. Time and time again God chooses to work through us, despite our flaws, past sin, insecurities, fears and doubts.

Consider the people God used in Scripture. Noah got drunk. Abraham repeatedly lied. Jacob was a deceiver. Moses was a murderer with a hot temper. David not only committed adultery, but also tried to cover up his sin with the murder of the woman's husband. Peter was a coward, who denied Jesus three times. Paul was one of the biggest persecutors of the Church before his conversion.

What "flaws, past sins, insecurities, fears and doubts" keep you from believing God can use you? Be specific.

How would you live differently if you truly believed God uses broken people like you to carry out His purposes?

◦ What's required to make a difference?

Jonah's story also teaches us that making a difference requires something from us. If you want to make a difference in your world, you need three main things: obedience, courage and faith. First, you need to obey. God wants to use you to carry out His purposes, but how can He do that when your heart doesn't want to obey? Obedience is always a matter of the heart. What are your true desires? What motivates you? As a child of God, it should be obedience to God.

The second thing you need is courage. Our obedience often puts us in circumstances that don't appear good or promising. Not everyone will react to you the way the Ninevites reacted to Jonah. You need courage when your boss wants you to fudge the numbers to make the company look better. You need courage to lovingly stand up to your professor when he openly mocks your faith. Thankfully, you don't face these circumstances alone. God prepares the way for you. His Spirit is in you and gives you wisdom to speak God's truth. Courage in these circumstances calls for trust that God gives our message power and effectiveness.

The third thing you need is faith. God can do far more through you than you realize. All God asks you to do is obey Him. He will take care of the rest. Look at Jonah's obedience. All he did was preach an eight-word sermon. God did the rest of the work. We need faith that believes our God does big and impossible things when we obey Him.

Which of the three things [obedience, courage and faith] do you feel is most lacking in your life? Why?

What's one thing you can do this week to be have more obedience, courage or faith in your life?



LEAD

Select 1 question from this section to ask your group.

◦ **God sees potential**

God sees more potential in you than you see in yourself. It's true. You have never messed up enough to disqualify yourself from ministry. God's grace is always available to you, because God doesn't give up on you. God makes a difference in the world, one life at a time. And He does that through people like you everyday.

Respond to the statement, "God sees more potential in you than you see in yourself." What does this statement say about God?

◦ **God's call in our time**

God still calls His people today. That call looks different for each of us. However, there is a posture we must all take in obeying whatever God's call is for us. Jesus is our greatest example of someone who was obedient to God. He did four things we can emulate in our lives. First, we need to leave what's comfortable to reach those that don't know God. Second, we need to live out God's truth (namely, in the Gospel) with our actions and words. Third, we need to listen to the stories and needs of others. Finally, we need to love others unconditionally without expecting anything in return.

Which relationship[s] in your life might God be calling you to enter with the posture of Jesus [i.e., the four things mentioned above]? How might you do that?

PRAY

Thank God that He uses broken people. Thank Him that He doesn't give up on you and that you've been given a second chance at obedience. Pray for clarity and wisdom to know where in your life you need to repent and/or be obedient. Finally, pray for larger faith to believe God does far more than you can hope or imagine.



FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following:

- Read Psalm 51 and meditate on David's repentance and what he asks of God in his prayer.
- Ask the group to share any stories or lessons learned where they see God at work in their life.

COMMENTARY

◦ Jonah's message.

Notice that Jonah went into a Gentile city as one who had, in a sense, been raised from the dead. The Ninevites were far from God, but that didn't deter Jonah. Likewise, our desire should be to reach those that are also far from God. And the message we preach is Jesus and His resurrection from the dead.

◦ Corporate repentance.

"The structure [of the Ninevites' response to Jonah's message] follows the pattern of corporate repentance found elsewhere in the Old Testament (cf. 1 Sam. 7:3-14; Joel 1-2): (1) message of divine judgment (Jonah 3:3a-5); (2) account of human repenting (vv.6-9); and (3) record of divine relenting (v.10)."¹ Many people (including Christians) try to downplay God's judgment today. However, his character as Judge shows that He takes sin seriously. That being said, God's people need to recognize their own sin and failure to worship and obey God as they should (cf. Dan. 9; Matt. 7:1-5).

◦ Plausibility of Jonah's story.

For many, Jonah's story seems impossible. How could a man actually survive three days in the belly of a fish? In response to this question, we should point others to the power and sovereignty of God. The truth is, we can never argue anyone into the Kingdom of God. We can only attest to what the Bible said about God. And Jonah shows God miraculously saving the prophet through a fish. Repentance and faith—not scientific explanations—are what lead people to God's truth.²

1. Crossway Bibles, *The ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 1689.

2. Don Landis, "Jonah and the Great Fish," *Answers in Genesis*, accessed November 1, 2016, <https://answersingenesis.org/bible-characters/jonah-and-the-great-fish/>.