



THE  
WORD

## SESSION SNAPSHOT

SECOND CHANCE MINISTRY

### NARRATIVE PASSAGE:

Jonah 1-4

### GOSPEL FOCUS:

Matthew 12:28-31

### TAKEAWAYS:

- Simple obedience is better than great intentions
- Make the most of second chances

### LAST WEEK'S READING:

- Jonah 1-2
- Jonah 3-4
- Hosea 1-3
- Amos 1:1; 9
- Joel 1-3

## KNOW THE WORD

### PASSAGE OVERVIEW

Jonah is a short book, but a packed one. It concerns a prophet of the Lord who was given a Word to deliver to a particularly evil people, so that they might have the opportunity to repent of their sins and be saved from oncoming destruction. Jonah eventually gets to them, after taking a dramatic detour, and sees the Lord's message accepted...and this fills him with anger. Today we will see how Jonah represents each of us who seek something other than God's heart so that we may redirect our focus to Him.

### COMMENTARY AND STUDY MATERIALS

- 1:7 Casting lots is, for lack of a better term, rolling dice. It was a coin flip. The sailors on the ship wanted to leave to chance--or, more appropriately in their eyes, the will of "the gods"--which person needed to leave the ship to calm the storm. It is superstition at best, but God does something interesting in the midst of their superstition: He uses it to see that His will is carried out. God truly works in mysterious ways.
- 1:14 Jonah was God's prophet. Jonah knew Him. And yet, in this verse, the sailors who were casting lots to discern the will of the gods, turned their whole attention to God and demonstrated their willingness to bow before Him. These men were more devoted to the Lord in this moment than Jonah was.
- 2:3, 6 The language that Jonah uses to describe his time swallowed by the fish suggest that, while he was there, he died. Whether this is poetic language or a poetic description of something that actually happened, it is certainly not the first time that the power of God raised someone from death in order to accomplish His purposes.
- More convincingly, this indicates "the sign of Jonah," which Matthew 12:38-41 tells us is the sign Jesus was going to show an unbelieving generation. Only God's power brought Jonah back from the fish He sent to swallow him, giving Jonah a second chance to accomplish the task God had given him.
- 3:10 Some translations have rendered the verb in this "changed His mind," which is not a theologically accurate way to understand what God does here. We know from Malachi 3:6, James 1:17, Numbers 22:19, etc. that God does not change His mind. More accurately, God relents from what He was going to do if they didn't repent.

## STUDY THE WORD

***When is a time that putting something off came back to bite you?***

One thing that almost all of us can relate to is what happens when we put something off for too long. We forget to get gas in the morning. We wait too long to get dinner reservations. We put off studying for an important test.

Today, we are going to look through the book of Jonah to see what happens when this happens with God's commands, and what we can gain by simply obeying.

### **OUT LOUD, READ JONAH 1:1-3 AND 3:10-4:3**

We're going to jump around a little bit through this whole book. It is okay to go back and pick up context clues where you need to as we do!

***What is Jonah's motivation for running from the Lord?***

***Do you sympathize with his reasoning? Why or why not?***

Many grew up believing that Jonah was apprehensive about going to Nineveh because he was unsure about his reception, fearful for his life, scared of looking like a fool, etc. What Jonah was struggling with, however, is spelled out for us in 4:2: he knew God tended toward compassion. He knew that Nineveh wouldn't get it totally right the first time around, but he also understood that God is slow to anger and rich in love. For any number of reasons, Jonah thought that God should've just destroyed the city and was primarily fearful that God wouldn't.

***Jonah had his own ideas about justice, and didn't think the people of Nineveh deserved it. Have you ever seen this mentality before?***

***Why is it encouraging to you that, even though Nineveh had a bad reputation, God was still intentional about seeking them out?***

### **OUT LOUD, READ JONAH 2:5-9**

While in the belly of the fish, Jonah had a true change of heart. This is the end of his prayer from his time inside of the fish, and it seems to be a prayer of true repentance.

***What about this prayer makes Jonah's repentance feel real?***

***What does true repentance look like?***

***When is a time you have experienced--or seen--true repentance?***

True repentance is more than just wanting to be better; it involves acknowledging where you went wrong, why you did, and then turning around and actively doing things differently next time.

If we are followers of Jesus, each of us has come to a point where we've done this exact thing: we have acknowledged that we have sinned, asked God for forgiveness, and turned on our heels away from the direction we were walking and started following Jesus instead.

## **OUT LOUD, READ JONAH 3**

This "new Jonah" followed through with what God told him to do--and Ninevah certainly responded. Pay attention especially to the decree the king sent throughout the city.

***Do you think that Ninevah's repentance was real? Why or why not?***

***Salvation comes through putting as much faith as you have in as much of Jesus as you know. Why is it encouraging to know that God's salvation isn't based on how much we know of Him, but only in His power?***

Ninevah didn't know the first thing about God before Jonah came to them, and they knew only marginally more when he left. But they knew enough--they repented. They made changes. And God spared them.

## **OUT LOUD, READ JONAH 4:1-3 AGAIN**

This is the most interesting portion of the book. A petty and selfish Jonah sulks when he should be rejoicing that God spared an entire city from destruction.

Jonah had been on the receiving end of God's grace and forgiveness in a pretty significant way, but he was angry when God showed that same grace and forgiveness to people that Jonah felt were undeserving of it. This happens when we are so focused on ourselves and on our own ideas of justice and righteousness that we miss what God is doing in the bigger picture.

Fortunately for us, we are never the people who "deserve" God's grace—it was given to us when we were still sinners and completely undeserving of it. The God who spared the Ninevites is the same God who spares us today.

***The Gospel came to us because it was headed to someone else. How does Jonah's story affect the way you see your neighbors?***

***How can we as believers be more effective Gospel-bearers to the people around us?***

## APPLY THE WORD

Jonah's message from God was intended for someone who wasn't him; it was just his task to deliver it. Likewise, we've been given a similar charge by Jesus: to make disciples of all nations. We've been entrusted with a Gospel that was intended to be passed from us to someone else.

Before you close your time in prayer, encourage those in your group to take a few minutes when you are done to answer the following and share updates next week:

***Take stock of your attitudes. Are they you-centered or God-centered?***

***Consider your thoughts about the people around you. Are you harboring grudges or prejudices? Do you see people as enemies or as people in need of the Gospel?***

## PREPARE FOR NEXT WEEK

***Next Week's Reading:***

- ***Isaiah 6; 9***
- ***Isaiah 44-45***
- ***Isaiah 52-53***
- ***Isaiah 65-66***