

Jonah 1

Community Group Discussion

Opening Question: What's your best memory of being near or on the water?

Tell them: Pastor Andy taught on the book of Jonah this week. He reminded us that the main themes of Jonah are things that might be familiar to us all: sin, rebellion, disobedience, foolishness, being slow to learn. But he also reminds us of the attribute of God's grace to those of us who are just like Jonah.

Ask them: *Jonah is one of the minor prophets. Do you remember what that means? (it is a shorter book than the major prophets; Jonah is only four chapters long.)*

Tell them: Pastor Andy noted that most of the prophets are made up of prophecies from the writers, but Jonah only has one verse of prophecy in it. Instead, it tells us the story the Jonah with God as the main character. He said the whole reason Jonah ran was because of his thoughts on God. AW Tozer once said, "The single most important thing about you is your thoughts on God."

Ask them: *Why do you think that is true?*

Ask them: *In the first three verses, how do Jonah's thoughts on God affect his actions? (He thinks he can run away from God. God is not omnipresent. But Jonah is basing his actions on a wrong view of God. God is not limited to a place, he is omnipresent. He's not just the God of Israel, but of the whole world.)*

Tell them: Psalm 139 describes God's presence well, if you want more on that.

Ask them: *What happens when you base a major decision in your life on a wrong view of God?*

Ask them: *When you think of God what thoughts come into your mind?*

Tell them: Most of us know enough about God to say that He can be trusted. That He is omnipotent and omnipresent and that He is love, but what if we could reverse engineer our ideas on God by looking at our emotional life? How might your thoughts and feelings point to your subconscious thoughts on God? In other words, does your emotional life match your view of God? Does he perform the way you consciously think He should? Are you sure you trust Him? If you struggle with surrender, worry, fear, anxiety and the like then it might have to do with your subconscious views of God. It is hard to surrender to a false view of God.

Ask them: *For example, what does our worry say about our thoughts on God?*

Tell them: Pastor Andy talked about 2 huge truths about God that can be seen in chapter 1:

1. God is way more powerful than you could ever imagine. There are six ways we see his power in the Book of Jonah:

- a. **God has power over His people** – God tells Jonah what to do and He uses the disobedience of the sailors to achieve His will (See vs. 15 – 16). He decides the fate of Nineveh. God even uses Jonah’s disobedience to reach the sailors. **Ask them:** *What does this tell us about the sovereignty of God in our choices?*
- b. **God has power over the nations** – **Tell them:** Pastor Andy reminded us that Nineveh is the capital of Assyria, it is not part of Israel. They have their own God they serve, but God proves to be their God as well. He is the God of every nation on earth.
Ask them: *How should this affect our thoughts on our country, our world, our time?* **Tell them:** Pastor Andy said, “If you are too high or too low about what’s going on in our country, you might not know who God is.” **Ask them:** *What do you think about this idea? In what way could God be exposing our hearts in this time of chaos?* **Ask them:** *What might your reaction to our current political climate tell you about your thoughts on God, your weakness of faith, your humility or your pride?*
- c. **God has power over nature.** **Tell them:** We really see God’s power over nature in Jonah. The weather, fish, trees, etc.
Ask them: *What comfort can be found in this fact?*
- d. **God has power over seemingly random events.**
Ask them: *What did you think about the idea that God has power over luck? (Pr. 16:33 says the lot is cast into the lap but its every decision is from the Lord.)*
- e. **God has power over people’s actions.** **Tell them:** In **Vs 15** the sailors took Jonah and threw him overboard, but in chapter 2 Jonah says God hurled him into the sea. Both are true. Humans are responsible for what we do, and God is sovereign over those choices. His sovereignty doesn’t negate our responsibility.
Ask them: *How do you feel about this idea?*
- f. **God has power over bad motives.** **Ask them:** *What were Jonah’s motives in this first chapter? (to not go to Nineveh).* Even when he finally agrees he doesn’t want to save the people. Pastor Andy (and many theologians) call Jonah a racist. Think about that. Yet, we see in chapter 4 that the power of God does not depend on Jonah’s motive. Even though Jonah’s heart was awful, God still accomplished His will. God’s plans do not depend on our motives. God wasn’t dependent on Jonah to get his heart right. God can use anyone at any time, no matter what their heart or motive is like. The power of God’s Word does not come from our motives or our hearts, but from God.
Ask them: *How does knowing this bring comfort to our unsettling world?*

Tell them: Pastor Andy was not saying that our motives don’t matter, they do. They matter for us and our fellowship with God, not for God’s plans. Jonah ended up in a lot of trouble because of *his* motives. They matter for our sake,

not God's will. God will do whatever He wants, but our lives will be a lot less stormy if our motives are right. **Ask them:** *What benefit is there in knowing that our motives can't ruin God's plans? (It should give hope that our salvation isn't in our hands and humility that we can't take credit for the good we do.)*

2. **Tell them:** The second thing we learn about God in chapter 1 is **God is way more gracious than you could ever dream.** Jonah deserved to drown, but God rescued him. God gives us chance after chance to repent. Even after Nineveh repents Jonah is still angry, the book ends that way. **Ask them:** *Is there any results in the favor or blessings others receive unfairly or who don't deserve it that make you angry?*

Tell them: Pastor Andy points out that if God were powerful but not gracious His power would be horrific. But His grace makes His power good for us. If God were gracious but not powerful, His grace wouldn't be worth much because He wouldn't have the power to do what He wanted to do. He wants to be good to you, *and* He is able to be good to you.

Tell them: What does this mean for us?

1. It's time to stop **running.** God has things he wants to do in your life, but you are running the other way. He is gracious and powerful, stop running. **Ask them:** *What are some ways that we might find ourselves running from God?*
2. It's time to stop **worrying.** God is powerful and gracious. He has good in store for you in the midst of chaos. **Ask them:** *What are some things you find yourself worrying about?*
3. It's time to **trust God's grace.** He has not written you off. He is a God of second, third and fiftieth chances.

Conclusion: **Tell them:** Jesus is a better Jonah. God sent Jonah to save the Ninevites from their sins, He sent Jesus to save the world from our sins. Jesus chose to leave heaven to go to the cross because He loves you.

Jonah suffered the storm of the sea because he disobeyed God. Jesus suffered the wrath of God because we disobeyed.

Jonah nearly died because of His sin, but Jesus did die for your sin.

Jonah spent 3 days in the belly because of his sin, Jesus spent 3 days in the grave because of our sin.

Ask them: *Have you accepted the grace of God and the application of that grace to cover your poor motives, your fear, your worry, your doubt? If not remember what it says in James 5:16, "confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working."*

Tweetable Quotes to Remember

- If you are too high or too low about what's going on in our country, you might not know who God is.
- God has power over seemingly random events.
- God has power over bad motives.