

Jonah 3

Community Group Discussion Questions

Opening Question: *What was the mascot of your bitter rival either in high school or college?*

Tell them: This week we looked at Jonah 3. As usual, the goal was to see what we could learn about who God is by this passage. Let's take a look at the 4 things Pastor Andy showed us about who God is:

1. God gives second chances to people who blow it.

God doesn't leave Jonah in his sin or reject him. He chases him down. He sends a storm. He lets him nearly drown. He sends a fish. He puts him on dry land. He gives him a second chance.

Ask them: *When people turn away from you, fight your ideas, reject your will, how easily do you give second chances, especially when they haven't asked for a second chance?*

Tell them: Pastor Andy said that God uses people because of who He is not because of who we are. Because he is gracious not because we are deserving.

Ask them: *Have you ever felt like Jonah, having blown it and wondering if God will give you a second chance? Do you have some decision or action in your past that you cannot undo?*

Tell them: Pastor Andy read a quote from John Ortberg – "Redeeming is what God is into. He is the finder of directionally-challenged sheep, the searcher of missing coins, the embracer of foolish prodigal children. His favorite department is 'Lost and Found.' If there is one way that human beings consistently underestimate God's love, it is perhaps in His loving longing to forgive." **Ask them:** *What do you think about this idea?*

2. God Pursues sinners in their sin. Pastor Andy pointed out that Jonah's act of sin was being on that ship. But yet in that moment God comes after him. God make the first move. Ephesians 2:1-5 says this: *"And you were dead in the trespasses and sins² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved."*

God always takes the initiative. It's not about His response to us. You will not have a desire for Him unless *He is after you*. Your sin doesn't get in the way of him coming to get you, your sin is what qualifies you for His grace. Let's take a look at Romans 5:8; *"But God demonstrates his own love for us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*

3. God uses sinners and their sin to accomplish His purpose. Ask them: *How do you feel about the idea of being used by God? Pastor Andy said: "At the beginning of the book, Jonah is a rebellious sinner, and at the end he's a racist preacher who doesn't love them and doesn't want them to repent. But, Jonah's sin didn't stop God's*

plan to give grace to the Ninevites. God accomplished everything he wanted using whoever he wanted. You have to say that or say our sin is too big for God.”

Ask them: *What do you think about this idea?*

Tell them: For example, God used Jonah’s sin for His glory. The storm and the calming of the storm revealed God to the pagan sailors. That only happened because Jonah sinned against God. His sin leads to the storm which leads to their knowledge of God. God used Jonah’s sin to reveal himself to the sailors. Not even sin can stop God from doing what He wants to do. He uses sinners AND their sin to accomplish His purpose. God works with the stuff that everyone else writes off. That’s how great God is. It isn’t about the sinners He uses, but the greatness of God.

Ask them: *Have you ever believed God couldn’t use you because of your mistakes or weaknesses? If God can’t accomplish His will because you messed up, then you are more powerful than God.*

4. God’s grace is big enough for the worst sinners you can think of. Ask them: *How do you feel about the idea that God pursues the worst sinners in the world? (like the Assyrians, the thief on the cross, the murderer, your enemies)*

Ask them: *How does this change the way you think about your enemies?*

Ask them: *When does God forgive sinners? (When they repent)* **Ask them:** *What leads up to repentance? (See 2 Corinthians 7:10: “For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.”)*

What is Repentance?

Tell them: So, the next question is what is Repentance? Pastor Andy described it in 3 points:

1. **Believing what God says about how bad your sin is.** Sin can be defined as disagreement with God and not doing what He commands. So, repentance would be the opposite. Agreeing with God and doing what He commands, but what keeps us from repentance? Pastor Andy gave 3 things:

a. Comparing ourselves to others

Believing that at least you aren’t as bad as other people, doesn’t make you good. Other humans are not the standard of comparison. Jesus is our standard.

b. Minimizing our sin based on our circumstances. Ask them: *Have you ever felt like sin was a valid option because of the circumstances you were in? Some examples of acceptable sin might be worry, doubt, fear, gossip, white lies, etc.*

c. Justifying what we do. Using our good intentions to justify our sins isn’t repentance, it’s using the ends to justify the means. You do that when you say, “That isn’t what I meant to do, or what I meant to happen,” Instead of saying, “I messed up.” **Ask them:** *Have you ever been hurt by someone who used that excuse? How did it feel?*

Tell them: Jonah used his religion to justify himself. He ran away because he was familiar with God’s grace and knew the Ninevites would accept it. It is often easier for irreligious people to repent than religious people.

Ask them: *What do you think about that idea?*

Pastor Andy quoted CS Lewis. (you can find it here if you'd like to look at it more: <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/trevin-wax/forgive-me-or-excuse-me/>)

2. **Tell them:** The next answer to what is repentance is:

Believing how desperately we need God.

Ask them: *Have you ever been desperate for God? If so do you want to share, if not, why not?*

Ask them: *How many of you pride yourself in your independence and your ability to do it all yourself?*

3. **Tell them:** Another answer to what is repentance is: **Believing in God's grace.**

Pastor Andy said that God prefers forgiveness to anger and wrath.

Ask them: *How do you feel about that idea?*

Tell them: When we don't believe in God's grace, we become afraid to repent.

So, we just believe/pretend we are better than we are. Or we turn to ourselves to get ourselves together. *Turning to yourself is the opposite of repentance.*

The Ninevites repented even though all they knew was *maybe* God *might* relent.

They had Jonah, but we have Jesus. They got a half-hearted sermon. We got the blood and life of Christ.

Jesus cry to god from the cross was the only time God didn't relent. But because of that God will relent when you cry out. It's all because of Jesus.

Ask them: *Do you have any hesitations accepting or believing in God's grace?*

Tweetable Quotes and Things to Remember:

1. God uses sinners and their sin to accomplish His purpose.
2. God prefers forgiveness to anger and wrath.