

Jonah 1

Discussion Questions

Opener: Imagine a friend said to you, "All religions are just humanities attempt to get to God. They are all just different ways up the 'mountain'." How might you respond?

Read Jonah 1:1-3

1. The people of Nineveh were known to be brutal and were enemies of Israel. Why do you think God is sending Jonah to them?
2. In Matthew 5:44, Jesus calls us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us.
 - a. Who are some of the 'enemies' of Christianity in our time?
 - b. Do you have any personal 'enemies' or are there people who mock or ridicule your faith?
 - c. Pause and pray for these enemies now, asking God to help us show His love to them.

Read Jonah 1:3-17

3. Why doesn't his attempt to flee from the Lord make sense (cf. Jonah's claim in verse 9)?
4. Jonah's flight is depicted as a 'descent' toward death (cf. vv. 1:3,5; 2:1-3). Turning away from God and disobeying him always leads us away from joy and into eventual misery.
 - a. How have you encountered this personally?
 - b. When do you find it most difficult to believe this?
5. Despite Jonah's rebellion, God won't let him get away (1:4, 17). His experience seems to be captured by Hebrews 12:6 - "The Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives."
 - a. How does this challenge your view of God's love?
 - b. Does the idea of the Lord's disciplines worry or encourage you?

Read Jonah 1:3-16 again (think particularly about the sailors this time)

1. Trace the theme of the sailors' fear:
 - a. What do they start out fearing and how do they response (v. 5)?
 - b. How do they respond when they realize *who* Jonah is fleeing (vv. 9-10)?
 - c. Who do they 'fear exceedingly' after the storm ceases (v. 16)? What evidence is there that their reverence for God is genuine (cf. vv. 14-16)?
2. Jonah attempted to run away because he didn't want to share God's word with pagans. Ironically, God uses him as a reluctant evangelist to convert these sailors!
 - a. How does this challenge and encourage us as we seek to share our faith?

Conclusion: For each of the three groups (Nineveh, Jonah and the Sailors) are they seeking God or is God pursuing them?

Prayer Ideas:

- Give thanks that God pursues us in his grace.
- Pray that he will use us as he seeks and saves lost people in our families, neighborhoods and workplaces.