

Study Guide - 5 April, 2020

Series: Surprising Prayers in Times of Crisis

Text: Jonah 2



This guide will help you facilitate a clear understanding of the Bible passage with a focus on applying God's truth to our lives together. You should spend at least half your time discussing questions that are application focused. Look at the Big Idea and What your CG Must Take Away sections at the beginning of the guide to keep the discussion focused.

Introduction to Jonah

Jonah is a prophet of God who was sent to warn the people of Nineveh of God's judgement. He disobeyed God's command and ran away from the Lord. Jonah hopped on a boat to Tarshish. The Lord sent a great wind to shipwreck Jonah's boat. When the sailors learnt that the storm was God's punishment for Jonah, they threw him into the sea to stop the storm, where he started to drown. He was eaten by a fish, prayed to God in chapter 2 and committed to preach to the Ninevites, was vomited up onto dry land by the fish, and preached to the Ninevites, which brought them to repentance. The repentance of the Ninevites is in contrast to any repentance by Jonah throughout the book. It ends with him angry at God for saving the Ninevites. The entirety of the book's motif is summed up in the final chapter, where Jonah complains to God about his mercy, quoting Exodus 34:6-7 as God's most extensive declaration of himself. At the same time, God appeals to Jonah about his mercy, displaying the fact that he is also concerned about the pagans, especially even much more so than Jonah is with the shading plant. God is merciful, even towards the enemies of Israel. Mercy is shown to Jonah, the disobedient and complaining prophet of God, and Jonah was angry that mercy is also shown to the pagan enemies of Israel, who turned to God immediately.

Big idea

God is merciful to the undeserving, like Jonah, and his purpose in this is to transform us to be merciful like him and reveal his mercy to the world.

What your CG must take away from this study

God's mercy to us in Christ should lead us to pray to him, and to be merciful to others.

Read Jonah 2

*¹ Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the belly of the fish, ² saying,
"I called out to the Lord, out of my distress,
and he answered me;
out of the belly of Sheol I cried,*

and you heard my voice.

*³ For you cast me into the deep,
into the heart of the seas,
and the flood surrounded me;
all your waves and your billows
passed over me.*

*⁴ Then I said, 'I am driven away
from your sight;
yet I shall again look
upon your holy temple.'*

*⁵ The waters closed in over me to take my life;
the deep surrounded me;
weeds were wrapped about my head*

*⁶ at the roots of the mountains.
I went down to the land
whose bars closed upon me forever;
yet you brought up my life from the pit,
O Lord my God.*

*⁷ When my life was fainting away,
I remembered the Lord,
and my prayer came to you,
into your holy temple.*

*⁸ Those who pay regard to vain idols
forsake their hope of steadfast love.*

*⁹ But I with the voice of thanksgiving
will sacrifice to you;
what I have vowed I will pay.
Salvation belongs to the Lord!"*

¹⁰ And the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out upon the dry land.

Q1. Recall Jonah's story from Jonah 1. How did Jonah end up in the belly of the fish?

Q2. How did Jonah feel about his predicament? (v5-6)

Q3. What motivated Jonah to pray to God for salvation even when he had been disobedient to God? (v1, 4, 7)

Q4a. How does Jonah prayer reveal what he knows of God and his word?

Q4b. What is missing in Jonah's prayer? Why is this not a model prayer?

Q5. How did God rescue Jonah? (v1, 6, 9) What does this demonstrate about God's character (v9)?

Q6. Recall what happens in the rest of the book of Jonah? For what purpose did God send and rescue Jonah?

Q7. How does God extend his mercy to us today, even when we rebel against him? How can an enemy of God receive this same mercy today?

Q8a. What are some situations that make us feel overwhelmingly hopeless?

Q8b. What are some ways we "run away" from God like Jonah? How does our sin affect our relationship with God?

Q8b. On what basis does God listen to our prayer when we run away from him and find ourselves in crisis because of our own disobedience?

Q9a. How does God's mercy encourage us to seek him and pray to him, even when we fail to live rightly for him?

Q10. How does experiencing God's mercy lead you to be merciful to others? Or, what opportunities do you have to extend God's mercy to other people?

Apply Practically

If your CG is meeting virtually over Zoom, break into pairs to whatsapp videocall each other. Ask how you can pray for that person, and pray for God's mercy to shape you to become instruments of his mercy in the world this week.