

SMALL GROUP GUIDE: JONAH - PART 1

Keep this conversation no longer than 40-45 minutes. Do your best to draw out the contributions of everyone. Don't be 'rigid' in the use of this guide - reword or change or leave out questions if you want. Be aware of any people who might not yet be Christ-followers, and be inclusive of them.

A light opening question ...

1. Today we explore how Jonah tried to run from God, yet failed. Have you ever had a nightmare of being chased, but being unable to get away? If so, tell us some of the details. What blocked you from moving forward, and what was chasing you?

Understanding and applying Jonah 1

2. *Read Jonah 1 aloud as a group.* Ask people to share briefly one thing that strikes them most about Jonah? And about God?
3. *Download and play the 7 minute audio clip available on the website, called 'Jonah 1 The Perfect Storm Audio Summary.mp3.'*
4. We're more sinful than we realized. Like Jonah, we're more sinful than we realized. Sin is more than doing wrong things. Sin is 1) fleeing God's presence, 2) pursuing lesser things (like Tarshish) and 3) not caring about what God cares about (Jonah didn't care about the Ninevites, yet God did). Share, as vulnerably as you're comfortable, any ways you have seen some of these sinful tendencies in your life of late.
5. Jonah climbs on the boat heading away from God. The thing that makes it easy to run from God is that there is always a boat of people going that way. Can you relate to this in your own experience?
6. Every step Jonah moves with his back to God, is one step closer to death. 'The wages of sin is death' (Rom 6:23). Death in this life includes the consequences of our sin, though they are often delayed. Share, as vulnerably as you're comfortable, any ways you have experienced, or seen others experience, the death that results from running from God and his ways.
7. We are also more loved than we imagined! God pursues Jonah, and us, in undeserved love. One way he pursues us is by allowing a storm to come our way. Share, as vulnerably as you're comfortable, any ways you have experienced, or seen others experience, God using storms to bring you to your senses spiritually.
8. God's love begins to transform Jonah. He begins to worship God again (v10). He begins to care about people again (he is willing to die so they may live). And he is freshly motivated to share God's undeserved love with fellow-sinners (compare 1:1-2 with 3:1). In what ways have you experienced God's undeserved love transforming you?
9. Right now, how brightly does the revelation burn in your heart that you're both more sinful than you realized, and yet more loved than you imagined? What can we do to cause the flame of this revelation to burn more brightly?

Pray together

Either as a whole group or in subgroups of 3 people: Respond in prayer to the insights that come from Jonah 1 and the conversation we've just had. Be sure to ask for a deeper revelation of our own sinfulness and of God's scandalous love, and for opportunities to share this transforming, saving message with others.