

JONAH

*The Scandal
of Grace*

FOX VALLEY

Seventh-day Adventist
Community Church





Introduction

The book of Jonah is one of the most structured and sophisticated books of the bible. It is divided into two halves, with each half having 3 different scenes:

	First Half Jonah 1:1 - 2:11	Second Half Jonah 3:1 - 4:11
Scene 1	1:1-3 - God with Jonah	3:1-3 - God with Jonah
Scene 2	1:4-16 - Jonah with Gentiles	3:4-10 - Jonah with Gentiles
Scene 3	2: 1-11 God with Jonah	4:1-11 - God with Jonah

This is why we are going to spend 6 weeks in this series. Jonah has intrigued believers for many centuries. Many have missed the lessons and blessings of the book because they focus on difficulties (how can a fish swallow a man?) rather than the deep, rich timeless teachings. My prayer is that you will see the inherent spiritual truths of Jonah, sense its deep message for humankind, and recognise its important portrayal of the character of God and his purpose. There are important lessons in this small book.

This study guide is a follow up to the series Jonah - the scandal of grace. Use it throughout the week for your own growth and reflection on the God almighty.



Day One - Hearing from God

Right from the beginning, the task to go to Nineveh seemed impossible. Jonah was asked to take a very long trip which he may never return from not only because of the distance but also because he was going into enemy territory (2 Kings 14).

Right from the start of Jonah, it is clear that Jonah has a relationship with God. For all the mistakes Jonah made in the rest of the book it needs to be noted that he recognised the voice of God when he heard it.

What about us? Do you recognise the voice of God? Before iPhone's and caller ID's, there were landlines. I remember as a kid answering the home phone and immediately recognising the voice on the other end if it was someone that I knew. There was a familiarity and a calmness when the voice was recognised. It is the same with hearing God's voice. We recognise it when we have a relationship with him.

Read John 10:27-28

Questions

Where do you go when you want to hear from God?

Have you ever been frustrated with what you hear from God?

Or when you don't hear from him?

How can you actively build your relationship with God?



Day Two - Mistrusting God

As soon as Jonah realised what God was calling him to do he had a problem with it. In his mind, he could see no good reason to go to Nineveh. He doubted God's goodness and wisdom. This is somewhere we have all been. Why is my marriage breaking down? You've sat in the doctor's surgery and received heartbreaking news. We wonder why we can't find the right partner or why we struggle to find a job.

The bible seems to be filled with promises that don't make much sense to the modern human. We doubt that God is for us and therefore we see no good reason for what God says and does. Jonah saw no good coming from his call from God.

God gave Adam and Eve no good reason to not eat from the tree of good and evil. Adam and Eve decided like Jonah that if they couldn't think of a good reason not to then there probably isn't one.

Read the story of humanities fall into sin in Genesis 3.

Questions

What do God's initial call and Jonah's response tell us about Jonah, and how do they shape the rest of the story?

What is your first reaction when you feel called to something?

Reflect on what it means to have a God that searches for you even though you know you have done the wrong thing by him?



Day Three - Running from God

Jonah hears God's call and runs. As we learnt yesterday it made no sense to obey God's command to Jonah.

In Romans 1-3 Paul outlines two different ways in which we turn away from God. First he speaks of those who purposefully turn their backs on God.

Romans 1:29-31 - Their lives became full of every kind of wickedness, sin, greed, hate, envy, murder, quarrelling, deception, malicious behaviour, and gossip. They are backstabbers, haters of God, insolent, proud, and boastful. They invent new ways of sinning, and they disobey their parents. They refuse to understand, break their promises, are heartless, and have no mercy.

In Romans 2 however, he speaks of those who seek to follow scripture yet still turn away from God.

Romans 2:17-20 - You who call yourselves Jews are relying on God's law, and you boast about your special relationship with him. You know what he wants; you know what is right because you have been taught his law. You are convinced that you are a guide for the blind and a light for people who are lost in darkness. You think you can instruct the ignorant and teach children the ways of God. For you are certain that God's law gives you complete knowledge and truth.

After looking that those who blatantly turn from God and the bible-believing Jews who Pauls says have also turned from God, in chapter three he declares that ALL have turned away from God (Romans 3:10-12). Both of these ways of escaping God assume the lie that we can not trust God to commit to our good.

For us, as modern Christians, we can fall into the trap to seeking to comply with God's rules to try and force God's hand in blessing us. If it then appears that God is not blessing us the way we think we deserve to be treated, the act of acting with righteousness will collapse overnight. We get angry and just walk away.

Jonah had a problem with God's call to go to Nineveh because he thought he knew better. Even in Chapter 4, he is angry with God for sparing the great city. Jonah failed to see his own sin and because of that, he failed to understand how God could be merciful to evil people and still be a fair and faithful God.

Read Romans 3.

Questions

How do you get away from guilt?

What does it mean to have faith in Christ?

Have you ever had a situation where you feel like you did the opposite of what God was calling you to?



Day Four - Come back

Jonah runs from God and even though he uses multiple ways to run from God, the Lord was always a step ahead.

In Luke 15 Jesus is accused of eating with sinners, people who the Pharisees and scribes saw as turning their backs on God. Yet Jesus still sought their company.

Read Luke 15.

Questions

Luke 15:1-7. Why do you think the shepherd wasn't content with just having 99 of his sheep safe? Was it really worth leaving the majority to go search for the one? What does this say about God's desire for the lost?

God is committed to chasing the Jonah's of the world who run away from him. How do we as Christians gain that same determination for the lost?
