

Some Possible Answers for Week 6 of the Jonah Study

Week 6: God expects us to accept His *call*.

Day 1- Overview - Read Jonah 3:1-10 - (All "Application" questions are personal so they are not included in this handout. Answers will vary with all these questions. The answers shown are just some of the possibilities.)

1. God's call came again to Jonah and he obeyed. Do you think Jonah's "death and resurrection" experience added power to his message?

- Answers will vary.

2. What do you learn about God from His proclamation through Jonah?

- God could have just destroyed Nineveh without giving them the opportunity to repent.
- Because of His grace and compassion, He was giving them 40 days to change their ways.
- Remember this was a proclamation for the entire area of Nineveh!
- In Biblical numeric's, the number forty represents probation, and Nineveh had just about exhausted God's patience, their probation from destruction was ending in forty days.

3. What effect did God's proclamation have on the people?

- They changed!
- We need to understand the *power* of God's words!
- See Gen. 1:3, 6, 9 11, 14, 20, 24, 26, 29. All these verses begin with "*Then God said*"
- Creation was the result of God's spoken word!!
- If we are open to the leading of the Holy Spirit and allow Him to speak through us, there is nothing to limit the results!

4. God spared Nineveh as a result of the Ninevites repenting. What do you learn about God from this change of events?

- Answers will vary.

Day 2 – God's *call* and Jonah's acceptance. Read 3:1-3a

1. Much has happened to Jonah since God first called him (Jonah 1:1). God has been silent through all Jonah's experiences because of Jonah's rebellion. Now God calls him again. What does this tell you about God?

- God gave Jonah a second chance to be His prophet to Nineveh.
- It is good of God to forgive our disobedience and to still consider us worthy of His high calling to serve.
- Before we come to accepting God's second call, we may need to pass through the depths of the sea where we experience total despair from our rebellion.
- After Peter's denial, Jesus gave him a second chance to serve Him.
- In giving Jonah a second chance, the people of Nineveh were given their chance to repent.

2. When you are expecting to hear from God and you don't, what might be the problem? How might you change that?

- For Jonah it was his rebellion. For Peter it seemed to be his arrogance. For Paul it seemed to be his pride. And the list goes on.
- Throughout the Bible God uses broken people – praise God for that!

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3. Often God says “go” without giving any more information. Did Jonah know what he was to proclaim at this time? See Gen. 12:1; Ex. 3:9-10, 4:11-12; Matt. 8:3-4, 28:19; Acts 5:17-20.

- Gen. 12:1 – *“The LORD had said to Abram, “**Leave** your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you”*
- Ex. 3:9-10 – *“And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. So now, **go**. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.”*
- Ex. 4:11-12 – *“The LORD said to him, “Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or mute? Who gives him sight or makes him blind? Is it not I, the LORD? Now **go**; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say.”*
- Matt. 8:3-4 – *“Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man.”I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!” Immediately he was cured of his leprosy. Then Jesus said to him, “See that you don't tell anyone. But **go**, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.”*
- Matt. 28:19 – *“Therefore **go** and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*
- Acts 5:17-20 – *“Then the high priest and all his associates, who were members of the party of the Sadducees, were filled with jealousy. They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail. But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out. “**Go**, stand in the temple courts,” he said, “and tell the people the full message of this new life.”*
- **Jonah didn't know** – 3:2 *“**Go** to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you.”*

4. How has Jonah changed since his first call from God? Explain.

- Jonah saw that he couldn't run from God; he saw that God wasn't going to give up on him; he experienced God's loving discipline and responded to it.
- It seems Jonah has gained some wisdom and knowledge which are very important in the scheme of life.
- Wisdom is very important throughout Scripture. Proverbs alone speaks on wisdom over 30 times.

Day 3 – God's call may be in conflict with personal feelings. Read 3:3b-5

1. Use a Bible dictionary or other reference material to describe what Nineveh was like in Jonah's day:

- Nineveh was founded in [Gen 10:11] and is at the time of this writing the Capitol of Assyria. Nineveh is of Babylonian origin and the people there were heathen, worshiping other gods including a fish god named Dagon. The fish was worshiped among the Philistines and also in Assyria as the emblem of productivity and intellect; Dagon, half man half fish; Hence the worship is forbidden [Duet 4:18]. Jonah 1:2 cry against it = Make a firm proclamation against the people of Nineveh. God was angry with Nineveh because of what they were doing there. Jonah 1:3 their wickedness = Nineveh was noted for violence and cruelty of all kinds. Jonah 1:4 come up before me = God sees what is going on there and He doesn't like it. When God doesn't like something that means He's getting ready to instill correction.
- The book of Nahum is a prophecy against Nineveh which describes in part the sins of the people.

2. Based on the information you found for question “1” and Jonah 1:3, 5, 10 - What do you think Jonah thought of the Ninevites? Do you think he was justified?

- He must have thought them to be heathens, violent, lustful, arrogant, pagans, etc.
- From reading the book of Nahum, it's not difficult to see why Jonah would feel the way he did.

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- From a purely humanistic view, it would seem Jonah would be justified.
 - However, God has already demonstrated to Jonah His grace and compassion.
 - It seems God wants Jonah to demonstrate a similar grace and compassion.
 - How quick we are to accept God's grace and mercy for our sins, but then so hesitant to offer a similar response to other people.
3. What do you think God thought of the Ninevites? How was He getting their attention?
- It's obvious the Lord was not pleased with them (3:4) or He wouldn't have proclaimed their demise.
 - However, it's also obvious that He wanted them to repent and come to Him or He wouldn't have given them 40 days to think about it!
 - A point of importance for this chapter is the doctrine that God is not the God only of Israel, but of all people. Judgment motivates repentance and God's mercy is extended to any people who repent, regardless of nationality or race. God's salvation depends on repentance and not on national origin.
4. Though Jonah didn't want to go to Nineveh, he went (similar to Matthew 21:28-29). Who benefited? Explain. What do you learn about God from this?
- Matt. 21:28-31a – *"What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work today in the vineyard.'" 'I will not,' he answered, but later he changed his mind and went. Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, 'I will, sir,' but he did not go. Which of the two did what his father wanted?"*
 - In this case, everyone benefited!
 - Certainly the Ninevites benefited by being given a chance to repent and believe in the one Lord God creator of all things.
 - Jonah had benefits although we are not sure he thought much about them.
 - He benefited by experiencing God's protection. Jonah went into a city where they could have killed him as soon as look at him, let alone hearing the message he brought!
 - Although Jonah benefited by this and the fact that God gave him the words to use, it seems his heart was not changed towards this people as we will see in later.
 - Answers will vary.
5. Is there something God is asking you to do which conflicts with your feelings? What will you do about that?
- Answers will vary.

Day 4 – God works through Jonah's *call* to bring the Ninevites to repentance. – Read 3:6-9

1. **3:6** There is no indication that Jonah attempted to reach the royal presence in Nineveh. That makes the actions of the king even more amazing. What did the king do to demonstrate his humility? In what ways do you demonstrate your humility/reverence to the Lord?
- Jonah 3:6 – *"When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the [dust (literal translation is ashes)]. ⁷ Then he issued a proclamation in Nineveh"*
 - All of the underlined words/phrases are indications of humility, remorse, and repentance.
 - Maybe people should demonstrate such reverence in their approach to God today. Maybe we would experience a much closer relationship with Him if we did. Seem our pride is what keeps us from such reverent actions.

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- **ASHES:** The word ashes is used figuratively in the Bible. Sitting down in, or covering one's self with ashes is the symbol of mourning, as when Mordecai tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, and cried out with a loud and bitter cry [Ester 4:1]. In the Book of Job, ashes are symbolic of dejection [Job 2:8] as well as repentance [Job 42:6].
 - Answers will vary.
2. Using a Bible dictionary or other reference, write about the significance of sackcloth and ashes:
- Refer back to last week's answer sheet.
3. **3:7** "neither... beast... flock... taste anything." What does this tell you about the evil effects of man's sins? See Jonah 4:11; Romans 8:20, 22.
- Jonah 4:11 – *"But Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well. Should I not be concerned about that great city?"*
 - Romans 8:20, 22 – *"For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope... We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time"*
 - Answers will vary.
4. **3:8** "call urgently.... give up...." What does God expect us to do before we have communion with Him? See Psalm 66:18; Isaiah 58:6; Jeremiah 31:18-19.
- Psalms 66:18 – *"If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened;"*
 - Isaiah 58:6 – *"Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?"*
 - Jeremiah 31:18-19 – *"I have surely heard Ephraim's moaning: 'You disciplined me like an unruly calf, and I have been disciplined. Restore me, and I will return, because you are the LORD my God. After I strayed, I repented; after I came to understand, I beat my breast. I was ashamed and humiliated because I bore the disgrace of my youth.'*
 - To become humble, repentant, and call on Him with reverent seriousness. To be ready to listen. These are a few of the things we can see the people, king, and nobles of Nineveh doing.
5. **3:9** "Who knows..." Remember these people were multi-theistic, had many gods. What an amazing instance of faith, shallow though it may be. Evidently their faith rested on the fact that God had sent Jonah to warn them of impending doom. They reacted to his prophecy. Jesus tells us in Matthew 12:41 that Ninevites will judge the people of His day because they repented. See also Joel 2:14-17. Do you think people today would react to such a prophecy? Would you? What does this demonstrate to you about God's desire to save souls?
- Answers will vary on the first two questions.

Day 5 – God's grace saves the Ninevites as a result of Jonah accepting His call. – Read 3:10

1. What did God see the Ninevites do (see previous verses)?
- They were truly repentant, they were serious about their repentance, and they believed even though they had no assurances all this would help.... In that lies their faith! They had emotions, knowledge, belief, and followed all that by commitment/action.
 - Answers will vary.

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2. How do you explain the change God made regarding the Ninevites?

- Some have questions about God “changing His mind” and how that relates to His sovereignty, authority, immutability, etc.
- Hopefully this will help with those thoughts.
- An excerpt from “Hard Sayings of the Bible,” by Walter C. Kaiser Jr., Peter H. Davids, F. F. Bruce, and Manfred T. Brauch, IVP Publishers, ISBN 0-8308-1423-X.
- “... when the prophecy depicts judgment or promises good things to come, the prophetic word is not the first and determining element; it is secondary and dependent on the spiritual response of those to whom the words are delivered. God changed, but His character and nature as the altogether true and righteous One has never changed. As a living person, He changed only in response to a required change in the Ninevites to whom Jonah’s word was delivered. Thus He exhibits no fickleness or instability. He remains the unchanging God who will withdraw His threatened judgment as soon as the human responses justify His doing so.”

3. How were the people different from when Jonah first entered their city? What do you learn about God from His action of compassion and grace to the Ninevites?

- They were truly and reverently God fearing and they demonstrated their faith by their actions.
- Answers will vary.

4. Repentance means to “turn from your old ways” which (3:10) the Ninevites did. No one is without sin (Romans 3:23). Is there something in your life for which you need to repent? What will you do?

- Answers will vary.

5. Jonah could not be sure that the people of Nineveh would be saved. He suspected it and that presented a problem for him personally. However, by accepting God’s call, thousands of people were saved. What does this tell you about the importance of accepting God’s call?

- Answers will vary.