

Jonah

Small group leader sheet

BETHESDA CHRISTIAN MINISTRIES · ONE PAGE PER SESSION

THE BIG IDEA

The greatest threat to faith is not the wickedness of the world, but the distorted worldviews we allow to take us captive, even inside the church. God calls us, like Jonah, to confront deception with truth, mercy, and obedience rather than fear and tradition.

How to use this sheet. Each session below gives you the one-sentence idea, the movements in order, the questions, and a closing prompt. Read the scripture aloud rather than summarizing it. Leave the last question open; the book of Jonah does.

SESSION ONE · JONAH 1 · COLOSSIANS 2:8

The Battle of Worldviews

IN ONE SENTENCE

A prophet held captive by his own tradition is sent into an empire held captive by its own. Paul gives the diagnosis; Jonah is sent into the disease.

The movements, in order

- People become captive long before they build idols.
- Captivity versus calling — Jonah is the case study of Colossians 2:8.
- The elemental spirits and the powers behind Nineveh.
- Empty deceit versus the God of truth.
- The true danger: religious tradition without God's heart.
- A merciful God and a misunderstood mission.

Questions

01 PASTOR HENRY'S QUESTION

How do you think you would respond if someone you didn't like brought you a message from God?

02 EPISODE ONE

Paul says a worldview can "take you captive." Where do you see a worldview shaping the church today more powerfully than Scripture is?

03 EPISODE ONE

Jonah had correct theology and the wrong heart; Nineveh had the wrong theology and the right heart. Which failure is easier to hide inside a church, and why?

04 EPISODE ONE

What is one belief about who deserves grace that you inherited rather than chose? Where did it come from?

Closing prompt

Ask each person to name, silently, the group whose forgiveness would bother them. Close by praying for that group by name, out loud, as a room.

When the Fish Became Freedom

IN ONE SENTENCE

The fish was never punishment. It was the intervention — God saving Jonah from Jonah.

The movements, in order

- The trajectory of a prophet who was done.
- The fish as divine intervention, not judgment.
- Jonah's prayer: a man being resurrected from himself.
- Theology break-in: liberation from the inside out.
- Don't ignore your humanity — five belly-moment truths.

Questions

01 EPISODE TWO

The study argues the fish was rescue, not punishment. Has there been a confinement in your life that you first read as judgment and later read as mercy?

02 EPISODE TWO

Jonah's prayer is honest before it is healed. Why do we so often wait until we feel better before we are willing to be honest with God?

03 EPISODE TWO

Religion says "get yourself together"; faith says "let God pull you together." Which of those two voices have you been listening to lately?

Closing prompt

This session touches burnout and despair honestly. Before you close, say plainly that no one in the room has to carry that alone, and name who they can talk to this week. Close by thanking God for one confinement that turned out to be mercy.

A PASTORAL WORD

This session names something the book of Jonah names first: a servant of God so exhausted that he asked to be thrown into the sea. If that describes where you are right now, please do not carry it alone. Talk to one of the pastors, or to someone you trust, this week. Bethesda is a safe place to say it out loud.

A Reluctant Prophet, a Receptive People

IN ONE SENTENCE

God's mercy is bigger than our biases, and He will use anyone — even the unwilling — to reach those He refuses to give up on.

The movements, in order

- Jonah looked like a sign from their half-fish god.
- The Ninevites responded better than God's own prophet.
- God spoke and worked, even through His displeasure.
- What this reveals about God: strategic love.
- Jonah's final expectation, and God's final question.
- What this means for modern Christians.

Questions

01 EPISODE THREE

God used the worst chapter of Jonah's life as the credential that convinced a city. What chapter of yours have you assumed disqualifies you?

02 EPISODE THREE

Jonah preached without compassion and revival broke out anyway. What does that say about the source of spiritual power — and about the danger of taking credit?

03 EPISODE THREE

God asks, "Do you do well to be angry?" Take the question seriously about one specific anger you are carrying. Is it leading you toward His heart or away from it?

04 THE WHOLE BOOK

Jonah ends without an answer. If the question is really being asked of the reader, what is your answer?

05 THIS WEEK

Name your Nineveh out loud to this group, if you can. What would it cost you if God had mercy on them?

Closing prompt

Read Jonah 4:10–11 aloud and then sit in silence for thirty seconds without commentary. Close by asking God to give the room His compassion for the people it is hardest to have compassion for.

Religion and faith

Read this table across, one row at a time. It is the spine of the whole series.

RELIGION SAYS	FAITH SAYS
I follow God by performing the right rituals and holding the right beliefs.	I follow God wherever He leads, even when it disrupts my worldview.
It is external. It manages behavior.	It is internal. It transforms the heart.
It creates insiders and outsiders.	It tears down the dividing wall.
You're suffering because God is punishing you.	You're suffering, but God is with you in it.
You're in the fish because you failed.	You're in the fish because God refuses to lose you.
Get yourself together.	Let God pull you together.

All twelve questions

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JONAH — A Bible Study Series. Taught by Pastors Henry D. Borom, Jr. and Lindsey S. Jordan, Jr. Bethesda Christian Ministries. Full study, commentary, and cross-references at jonah.studywithbethesda.org.

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