

JULY 2020
GROUP GUIDE



VS



JONAH VS THE WORLD

JONAH VS THE WORLD



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Series Introduction3
Group Guidelines4
Sample Meeting Outline5

Week	Study Title	Page
1	Jonah VS God	8
2	Jonah VS The Other	10
3	Jonah VS Grace	12

Additional Resources

Additional Resources20
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CHRIST'S MISSION FOR THE CHURCH

*All authority in Heaven and on earth has been given to me.
Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations,
baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit,
teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.
And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.
Matthew 28:18 - 20*

The Old Testament of the Bible is full of prophets who declare the Word of God and prepare the path for the coming of Jesus. The role of prophet is a noble tradition, full of wisdom, powerful words, and convicting thoughts. In the lineup of powerful prophets we find men like Isaiah, Samuel, Elijah, Jeremiah, and...Jonah?

Jonah is an odd book that modern Christ-followers rarely hear much about (unless it's in a child's Sunday-school class). Why does this book fly under our radar?

Perhaps it's the seemingly fantastical story about a man getting swallowed by a large fish.

Perhaps it's that the book consists of only four short chapters.

Perhaps it's the fact that Jonah was an absolutely terrible prophet.

Whatever the case may be, the book of Jonah gets largely ignored in our world today. This is a terrible mistake because, as we'll discover in this series, the book of Jonah is all about us. In its pages, we'll discover a reluctant prophet that runs from His God, runs from His mission, and runs from the idea of forgiveness.

So take a journey with us as we watch Jonah take on the world!

SERIES INTRODUCTION

GROUP GUIDELINES

Ground Rules

Here are some guidelines for your gatherings.

- **Growing real relationships.** One of the central purposes of CCW groups is to help in the growth of real relationships. These relationships are formed through common mission, application of God's Word, authentic conversation, and time together. Don't get overly focused on one area to the detriment of the others!
- **Confidentiality.** For authenticity to thrive, what is shared during group time should be kept confidential.
- **Start on time - and end on time.** We want to respect the time of everyone involved. For that reason, our group will start on time and end on time.
- **Be a part of the discussion.** If you want to grow, get involved in the discussion. Your perspective is valuable!
- **Be real.** Authenticity and transparency are two keys to authentic life change. We ask that those participating in our group are real with who they are and their walk with God.
- **It's alright to disagree.** We're not always going to see eye-to-eye in all situations. That's alright! God created us uniquely and so we all bring different opinions, experiences and perspectives to the conversation.
- **Love, love, love.** Even if we disagree, we do so in love. Love is the binding force in all Christ-centered relationships, so we will not let our differences divide us.
- **Minimize distractions.** We recognize that emergencies may arise, but we will do our best to minimize what distractions we are able to (yeah, we're talking about cell phones here - put them away!).

Leader Guidelines

Thank you for taking the time to invest in others by leading a group. As a leader, your task is to create an environment where real relationships can thrive. Here are some things to keep in mind as you do that:

- **Multiply.** The mission of the church is to multiply disciples. Groups are one of the environments where this occurs. You are involved in the discipleship of each person in your group. We ask that each of our group leaders has someone who they are equipping to be a disciple-maker.
- **Create a safe environment.** When we say 'safe', we mean an environment where participants can freely share without feeling belittled or that what they share will get spread beyond the group.

When we say 'safe', we also mean a group where participants can encounter Jesus and His plan for their life.

- **Recognize that your group is unique.** This booklet is designed to be a general guide, but every group is unique. So when you're planning, take into account what does and doesn't work for your group and shape the session to their personalities and needs.
- **Review the ground rules.** Periodically, remind your group about the ground rules for the group.
- **Ask lots of questions.** Engaging leaders draw participants into the discussion. Ask many questions and lead your group into self-discovery.
- **Get feedback.** Improve your group by asking others for feedback.
- **Seek wise council.** There are some questions you won't be able to answer and some situations you aren't trained to handle. That's OK! Know who your wise council is (whether a coach, minister, or another disciple-maker) and turn to them in your time of need.

Before the Session

Prepare for the Session: As a group leader, it's essential to be prepared. Before the group session:

1. **Pray.** These are God's Words and it is His Spirit that provides authentic transformation. So take time to turn the group over to Him.
2. **Take time to read over the Bible passage.** While reading, write down any questions that you have about the text.
3. **Preview the session guide.** Read through the session guide. Shape the session for your group by highlighting important questions to ask and adding your own.
4. **Tap into study resources.** Broaden your understanding of the biblical text by tapping into additional study resources. Discover the answers to your questions and increase your knowledge of the Biblical content. These study resources can be found in the Resource Center at CCW, the back of this guide, and in a variety of other places.

During the Session

- **Icebreaker:** Get the discussion rolling with an icebreaker activity or question. We've provided one for you, but you know your group better than us! The goal is to get them talking.
- **Share:** Take time to review the content from last week. Two important things to ask group participants about during this time are:
 - **Prayer Requests:** If a group participant made a prayer request the previous week, make sure to take this opportunity to follow up on what God is doing in their life.
 - **Application and Challenges:** Some weeks give specific challenges for groups to attempt throughout the week. Other times, a group participant will take on a challenge as a result of application discussion (e.g. 'This week, I would like to...'). Either way, take time to ask about these.
- **Transition:** In the Transition, we give you a way to shift gears into the Bible reading and focus of the night. Usually this comes in the form of something simple that can be said (stated in italics).
- **Read It:** Read through the Scripture passage. If it's a larger section of scripture, break it into smaller sections and ask questions throughout.
- **Talk About It:** After reading, the next step is to make sure that the Bible passage is understood in its context. The main ways to do this are:
 1. As a group, *retell* the story in your own words.
 2. Ask *review questions*, which are provided in each small group session.
 3. Take some time to *ask the key questions*. These questions are the same in each session and they help to bridge the gap between understanding and application.
- **Apply It:** Ultimately, the Bible should shape who we are and how we live our lives. So once we have

read over the text and reviewed the text, it's essential that we personalize it through application. The apply it section may have both (a) application questions and (b) challenges. Challenges are real-life ways to put Biblical Truth into effect this week.

- **Pray Together:** As a group, share prayer requests and write these requests down. Afterwards, take time to turn those requests over to God. Make sure to center some of this prayer time specifically on the application/challenges discussed in the session.

After the Session

- **Follow Up:** Real relationships aren't formed in a single weekly session. They are formed as a result of ongoing presence in the lives of one another. Follow up with group members throughout the week to (a) remind them of their application/challenge commitments, (b) check in on prayer requests, and (c) to simply do life together.
- **Input Group Attendance:** As a CCW group, you should receive an e-mail asking for your group's attendance. Filling in this form is incredibly important to the continued spiritual development for those connected to CCW. The point: please take time to use this valuable resource!

NOTES

JONAH

ORDER IN OLD TESTAMENT

NUMBER OF CHAPTERS

TYPE

32 4

PROPHECY, MINOR



OVERVIEW

The book contains the story of Jonah and the great fish. God calls Jonah to preach to the people of Nineveh, who were known for their cruelty and misdeeds. Jonah attempts to flee and hide, but ultimately God's will prevails.



WRITTEN
772-754 BC



TIME PERIOD COVERED
At this time Israel was a political power, having spread and grown quite prosperous. Much of this was the result of having an evil king corrupting the people.



AUTHOR
Jonah the Prophet

1 JONAH DISOBEYS GOD AND FLEES

Jonah refuses to follow God's instructions to go to Nineveh, and flees on a ship. He finds himself in the middle of a storm and, fearing that his disobedience is putting the others at risk, he tells the others to throw him overboard. He is swallowed by a giant fish.

JONAH 1

2 JONAH IN THE BELLY OF THE FISH

Jonah cries out to the Lord for help and forgiveness as he wallows in the belly of the fish. God hears Jonah and commands the fish to spit him out on land.

JONAH 2

3 JONAH GOES TO NINEVEH

Jonah goes to Nineveh and declares repentance to the people, warning them of God's punishment. News of this reaches the king, who covers himself in sackcloth and repents. The king then tells the people to do likewise so that they may all be forgiven.

JONAH 3

4 GOD FORGIVES AND JONAH IS ANGRY

Jonah sees the forgiveness of the Ninevites, becomes angry, and questions God. God then explains to Jonah that He loves all people, even those who need to repent.

JONAH 4

SESSION ONE

JONAH VS GOD

Icebreaker

Spend some time opening conversation with this question:

- *What is your idea of the perfect 'get away' to momentarily escape the stresses of life?*

Transition

It's time to move towards reading God's Word. Transition your group into the study by saying something like:

In the Jonah Vs. The World series, we'll be looking at the prophet Jonah and how he consistently picked a fight with everyone in his path. This first week, we'll be talking about Jonah Vs. God.

Read It

Scripture reference: **Jonah 1 - 2**

The word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai: 2 "Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me."

3 But Jonah ran away from the Lord and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the Lord.

4 Then the Lord sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up. 5 All the sailors were afraid and each cried out to his own god. And they threw the cargo into the sea to lighten the ship.

But Jonah had gone below deck, where he lay down and fell into a deep sleep. 6 The captain went to him and said, "How can you sleep? Get up and call on your god! Maybe he will take notice of us so that we will not perish."

7 Then the sailors said to each other, "Come, let us cast lots to find out who is responsible for this calamity." They cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah. 8 So they asked him, "Tell us, who is responsible for making all this trouble for us? What kind of work do you do? Where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?"

9 He answered, "I am a Hebrew and I worship the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land."

10 This terrified them and they asked, "What have you done?" (They knew he was running away from the Lord, because he had already told them so.)

11 The sea was getting rougher and rougher. So they asked him, "What should we do to you to make the sea calm down for us?"

12 "Pick me up and throw me into the sea," he replied, "and it will become calm. I know that it is my fault that this great storm has come upon you."

13 Instead, the men did their best to row back to land. But they could not, for the sea grew even wilder than before. 14 Then they cried out to the Lord, "Please, Lord, do not let us die for taking this man's life. Do not hold us accountable for killing an innocent man, for you, Lord, have done as you pleased." 15 Then they took Jonah and threw him overboard, and the raging sea grew calm. 16 At this the men greatly feared the Lord, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows to him.

17 Now the Lord provided a huge fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

21 From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the Lord his God. 2 He said:

"In my distress I called to the Lord, and he answered me. From deep in the realm of the dead I called for help, and you listened to my cry.

3 You hurled me into the depths, into the very heart of

the seas, and the currents swirled about me; all your waves and breakers swept over me.

4 I said, 'I have been banished from your sight; yet I will look again toward your holy temple.'

5 The engulfing waters threatened me, the deep surrounded me; seaweed was wrapped around my head.

6 To the roots of the mountains I sank down; the earth beneath barred me in forever. But you, Lord my God, brought my life up from the pit.

7 "When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, Lord, and my prayer rose to you, to your holy temple.

8 "Those who cling to worthless idols turn away from God's love for them.

9 But I, with shouts of grateful praise, will sacrifice to you. What I have vowed I will make good. I will say, 'Salvation comes from the Lord.'"

10 And the Lord commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.

Review It

- What did God tell Jonah to do? (1:1-2)
- How did Jonah respond to God? (1:3)
- What happened at sea? (1:4-5)
- What was Jonah's condition as the storm raged? (1:5-6)
- What did the sailors do? (1:7)

Notes

- How did Jonah respond to the sailors' barrage of questions? (1:8-9)
- What made the men terrified? (1:10)
- How did the sailors appeal to Jonah? (1:11)
- Why did Jonah tell the sailors to throw him into the sea? (1:12)
- What miraculous provision did God make for Jonah? (1:17)
- Once inside the fish, how did Jonah respond to God's rescue? (2:1-9)
- How did God finally deliver Jonah? (2:10)

Apply It

- When has God called you to serve Him in ways that were unattractive or unpleasant to you?
- What rebellious attitudes have you ever had toward the Lord? What was the product of that disobedience or rebellion?
- How has God pursued you when you have tried to avoid Him?
- What can you do to respond with obedience to God the next time you must do something good but unpleasant?

Pray Together

Don't forget to plug in your group attendance and follow up with the people in your group this week!

JONAH VS THE OTHER

Icebreaker

Spend some time opening conversation with this question:

- Describe a time when you've felt like an outcast or a stranger. How did this make you feel?

Share

Review the week. Things to share:

- Prayer Requests
- Application and Challenges

Transition

It's time to move towards reading God's Word. Transition your group into the study by saying something like:

Jonah lost in his fight against God, but there were still more fights to be had. This session focuses on Jonah vs the Other. 'The Other' represents those who are different than us. It describes people that we are uncomfortable with, fearful of, or even resentful towards. In Jonah's case, it was the Ninevites.

Read It

Scripture reference: **Jonah 3:1 - 4:3**

Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time: 2 "Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you."

3 Jonah obeyed the word of the Lord and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very large city; it took three days to go through it. 4 Jonah began by going a day's journey into the city, proclaiming, "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown." 5 The Ninevites believed God. A fast was proclaimed, and all of them,

from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth.

6 When Jonah's warning 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. 7 This is the proclamation he issued in Nineveh:

"By the decree of the king and his nobles:

Do not let people or animals, herds or flocks, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink. 8 But let people and animals be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. 9 Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish."

10 When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened.

But to Jonah this seemed very wrong, and he became angry. 2 He prayed to the Lord, "Isn't this what I said, Lord, when I was still at home? That is what I tried to forestall by fleeing to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. 3 Now, Lord, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live."

Review It

- What did God command Jonah to do? (3:1-2)
- How did Jonah respond to God's instructions? (3:3)
- What did Jonah tell the Ninevites? (3:4)
- How did the people respond to Jonah's message? (3:5)
- What did the king do? (3:6)
- What action did God take? (3:10)

- How did Jonah respond to God's goodness to the Ninevites? (4:1)
- What was the attitude of Jonah's prayer? (4:2-3)

Apply It

- Jonah wanted Nineveh, Israel's enemy, destroyed. When have you wanted revenge rather than restoration in a relationship?
- In your view, which culture, nation, or special interest group is undeserving of God's mercy? In other words, who is your 'other'?
- How did you come to the perspective on this group that you hold?
- How does your perspective line up with God's perspective on this group?
- What is one way you can extend God's love and mercy toward your 'other', even if you feel that they don't deserve it?

Pray Together

Notes

Don't forget to plug in your group attendance and follow up with the people in your group this week!

SESSION THREE

JONAH VS GRACE

Icebreaker

Spend some time opening conversation with this question:

- *When things don't go your way, how do you tend to respond?*

Share

Review the week. Things to share:

- Prayer Requests
- Application and Challenges

Transition

It's time to move towards reading God's Word. Transition your group into the study by saying something like:

Jonah had lost the fight to the other - the Ninevites had chosen repentance. But there was still one fight left in Jonah. In this session, we'll see Jonah going up against the idea of grace.

Read It

Scripture reference: **Jonah 4:1 - 11**

But to Jonah this seemed very wrong, and he became angry. 2 He prayed to the Lord, "Isn't this what I said, Lord, when I was still at home? That is what I tried to forestall by fleeing to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. 3 Now, Lord, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live."

4 But the Lord replied, "Is it right for you to be angry?"

5 Jonah had gone out and sat down at a place east

of the city. There he made himself a shelter, sat in its shade and waited to see what would happen to the city. 6 Then the Lord God provided a leafy plant and made it grow up over Jonah to give shade for his head to ease his discomfort, and Jonah was very happy about the plant. 7 But at dawn the next day God provided a worm, which chewed the plant so that it withered. 8 When the sun rose, God provided a scorching east wind, and the sun blazed on Jonah's head so that he grew faint. He wanted to die, and said, "It would be better for me to die than to live."

9 But God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?"

"It is," he said. "And I'm so angry I wish I were dead."

10 But the Lord said, "You have been concerned about this plant, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. 11 And should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left—and also many animals?"

Review It

- Why was Jonah so upset?
- What did God say to Jonah? (4:4)
- What did the distraught prophet do? (4:5)
- What illustration did God use to teach Jonah about the value of the Ninevites?
- What happened to the plant after it had provided shade for Jonah?
- What was Jonah's response to the death of the plant?
- What did God want Jonah to understand? (4:9-11)
- The book of Jonah ends abruptly. What do you

think happened to Jonah after this?

Apply It

- God was very gracious to Jonah, a pouting, reactive type. How does God deal with your prickly side?
- Read these Bible passages on grace:
 - Psalm 103:8
 - Ephesians 2:8 - 9
 - Lamentations 3:22 - 23
 - Romans 5:6 - 8
 - Titus 3:5
- What do these verses have to say about the grace, mercy and love of God?
- When have you experienced a surprising, undeserved measure of God's mercy in your life?
- How might knowing God's incredible grace and mercy change how we think and act towards God? Towards others?
- How can you keep God's grace in the forefront of your mind this week?

Pray Together

Notes

Don't forget to plug in your group attendance and follow up with the people in your group this week!

JONAH VS. WORLD

RESOURCES

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- **RightNow Media:**

Get a free RightNow Media account to get access to thousands of study resources. Some potential resources include:

- ***The Book of Jonah (Mason)***: Over the course of 8 verse-by-verse sessions, pastor and author Eric Mason expands our vision to see that Jonah's story is our own. Far more than a thrilling Sunday school adventure, it offers a profound glimpse into the conflict that occurs when God calls resistant believers to His mission. More importantly, it underscores the depths of His compassion not only in redeeming the lost, but redeeming those He has called to participate in His reconciling work.
- ***A Fish Out of Water (Zacharias)***: Jonah really ought to have missed the boat. A strong prejudice kept this man from capitalizing on one of the choicest opportunities ever given to an evangelist. He is the only minor prophet referred to by Jesus. There are some extraordinary lessons in Jonah particularly for the one who is called to serve but seeks to run. (one session)
- ***Jonah (Ayris)***: A three-part illustrated story of the book of Jonah (great for families).
- ***How to Read Jonah (Mackie)***: A ten-minute overview of what the book of Jonah is all about.

If you're not yet connected to RNM, please contact the CCW Offices or go to ccw.church/rightnow-media/ to sign up.

- **YouVersion Reading Plans:**

We have a few recommended reading plans using the Youversion Bible App. Choose one and read it along with the series:

- Jonah: God's Relentless Grace (8 Days)
- Jonah Explained | Running From God (5 Days)

- **The Bible Project (www.thebibleproject.com)**

The Bible Project offers a variety of amazing resources. These videos expand on many of the ideas that we have touched on in this series.