

The Book of Jonah

Session 6: Jonah 4:10–11

SESSION GOALS

Every session has a point—what each participant should walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

Main Idea: God loves all the nations of the world and has commissioned us to spread the truth to each of them.

Head Change: To know that the purpose of God in history is to save people all over the world from their sins.

Heart Change: To feel love for the lost as God does.

Life Change: To do whatever God calls us to do, no matter the cost, to share the truth with people who've never heard it.

OPEN

What are a few of the goals you've set out to achieve in the past few years? Have you achieved them?

Setting goals is generally viewed as a good and helpful practice. It helps us clarify our purpose and, for many of us, provides the fuel we need to accomplish whatever we're seeking to accomplish.

Believe it or not, God has a goal for his creation. All over Scripture, we see that it's God's ambition to spread his good news to every nation on Earth. And while Jonah was commanded to help achieve God's goal, he had ambitions of his own. And his ambitions led him astray. In this final session, David will help motivate us to join God's work of spreading the gospel to the ends of the earth.

READ

rightnow MEDIA
Read Jonah 4:10–11.

DISCUSS

Before we begin, let’s take a few moments to summarize the book of Jonah as a group. **If you were going to share this story with children, how would you tell it? What would be some of the main application points you’d share with them? What one truth would you want them to walk away knowing?**

*Note: For a reading exercise covering the book of Jonah, see **Go Deeper Section 1** at the end of this study.*

What we’ll read in Jonah 4:10 comes on the heels of Jonah’s response to a question God asked him in verse 9: “Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?” Because God had taken away his source of comfort, Jonah was convinced that his anger was warranted. **Was Jonah right to be angry about the withered plant? Why, or why not? What does Jonah’s response reveal about his heart?**

God’s response to Jonah is recorded in the next verse. Read Jonah 4:10–11.

In verse 10, God pointed out that Jonah had grown attached to a plant that had sprung up overnight. It was a source of comfort for Jonah. And when it was taken away, he threw a tantrum. **Why do you think we, like Jonah, can get attached to the things that provide us comfort? For what reasons do we react sourly if they’re taken away?**

Do you have any sources of comfort that you have an inordinate attachment to? What could it look like to reign in your attachment to those things?

God doesn’t rebuke Jonah outright for his attachment to the plant, but he does draw a sharp contrast between Jonah’s care for the plant and God’s care for the city of Nineveh. While Jonah cared for an insentient plant, he begrudged God’s concern for people he made. **In what ways is Jonah’s behavior illogical? Is God being gracious by pointing out Jonah’s folly? How so?**

David highlighted a phrase God used when describing the people of Nineveh. Verse 11 says they didn’t know their right hand from their left. In other words, they didn’t have God’s law, so they weren’t able to make decisions based on it. **Do you know anyone who doesn’t “know their**

Horizontal lines for writing.

right hand from their left”? What “truth” do they depend on? To what extent have you tried to engage them with God’s Word?

David said the Ninevites were a picture of “unreached people” in the Old Testament. They were under God’s judgment and couldn’t be saved unless someone brought his Word to them. **What does it communicate about God that he sent Jonah to share his Word with the Ninevites? Do you think God shares the same concern for people and nations that are unreached today?**

*Note: To learn more about how to identify and pray for unreached people groups today, see **Go Deeper Section 2** at the end of this study.*

Who are the people around you with whom God is calling you to share his Word?

The book of Jonah ends with a question mark, which feels like the book is left unresolved. But David said the question is intentionally left unanswered because God is leading us to ask the same questions. Spend some time answering the questions David posed: **Do you know and believe that God loves all the nations of the world to the same degree he loves you? To what extent do you comprehend that to be saved, people in these nations must hear and respond to the gospel? How committed are you to going to the people around you, and even the nations around the world, to tell them about God’s love for them?**

David returned to the idea of comfort and the way it often impedes our drive to spread God’s glory in all nations. If we’re honest, it’s easier to stay in our comfort zones than to do the often-difficult work of spreading the gospel. **Would you say you’re more prone to step out of your comfort zone to spread God’s Word? Why, or why not?**

In a previous session, we briefly looked at the connection between Jonah and Jesus, and we introduced the phrase, “Jesus is the greater or better Jonah.” In this session, David expounded on that idea. He said, “Jonah reluctantly preached to sinners in need of God’s mercy. Jesus relentlessly pursues sinners in need of God’s mercy.” **What other observations can you make about the contrasts between Jonah and Jesus?**

Taking the observations about Jonah and Jesus into consideration, David said that “God is calling us to leave behind the spirit of Jonah and live according to the spirit of Jesus.” **How would you describe what it means to live according to the spirit of Jonah? In what ways is it different to live according to Jesus’s spirit? How can we follow Jesus’s example instead of Jonah’s in our day-to-day lives?**

In the book of Jonah and in Jesus’s ministry, we see God giving his people a mission. For Jonah, it meant going to Nineveh and preaching God’s Word. For us, we’ve been commanded in Matthew 28:19–20 to go to all nations and make disciples of Jesus. And within God’s grand mission, we each have a role to play.

Some of us are called to cross oceans, while some may only be called to cross the street. Some are called to give financially, while others are called primarily to give of their time. All of us are called to pray. **What are the primary roles that you play in making disciples? In what specific ways do you carry out those roles?**

If we’re unsure what to do to spread the gospel to the nations, we can always pray. In fact, prayer is one of the primary means—if not *the* primary means—through which God accomplishes his purposes. **How has God used your prayers in the past to help accomplish his will? What does your prayer life look like right now?**

Do you believe that God can accomplish great things through the prayers of his people? What do you think could happen around the world if God’s people committed themselves even more to prayer?

In addition to prayer, David challenged us to use our financial resources to share the gospel with other nations. It can be difficult to talk about money, but the way we spend money is a clear indicator of what we treasure. **What could you do to adjust your budget so you can give more toward the spread of the gospel? What are some ways you can give financially—through your church, to parachurch ministries/organizations, or by supporting missionaries?**

In Jonah’s day, travel was primarily accomplished by walking. And communication technologies were severely limited—writing letters was just about their only option. But today, we can travel by plane and communicate in real

GO DEEPER

The Go Deeper section has two potential functions. It can supplement your small group discussion by providing extra discussion material. We've highlighted a place where each of the following segments could fit in the Discuss section of the study guide.

But you can also use these sections as short devotionals to carry you through the week until your next group meeting. Consider reading one section a day to deepen your study of the book of Jonah.

1. Swallow the book of Jonah whole.

This week, using whichever translation you prefer, read Jonah 1–4 aloud to someone else. Take time to discuss the story afterward, using these questions:

Before reading, ask them what they already know about the book of Jonah. **Have they read the book before? How familiar are they with the story of Jonah? Take some time to give them a general idea of the book.**

Once you've read the book, spend a few minutes discussing the book with your reading partner. Discuss the book together. **What stood out to you most about Jonah? What questions emerged as you were listening to the story? What surprised you? What things didn't make sense or need further clarification?**

Now, spend some time reflecting on your interaction. **How did your conversation with your reading partner help you to further understand the book of Jonah? What observations did they make that surprised and helped you? How did answering their questions improve your grasp of the story?**

Reading in community is one of the most helpful ways that we can approach the Scriptures. Doing so gives us a conversation partner, elicits more insight into the text, and helps us to further comprehend and retain God's Word. **What did you learn from your experience reading the Scriptures with a partner? What did you gain from this experience that you hadn't gained by reading the text by yourself? How can you make reading in community a regular habit if it isn't one already?**

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2. Reaching Unreached People Groups

The concept of an unreached people group may be new to many of us. While we've established that an unreached people group is a group "that lacks enough followers of Christ and resources to evangelize their own people," we might wonder in what parts of the world these people live and, moreover, how we can pray for and reach them. There are several ideas and organizations that can help us.

- Joshua Project "is a research initiative seeking to highlight the ethnic people groups of the world with the fewest followers of Christ." On its website, Joshua Project includes a near-exhaustive amount of information to apprise Christians of everything from the number of unreached groups in the world, what and where they are, and important information about each group.

The website also includes a prayer calendar, prayer cards, prayer guides, prayer videos, and prayer ideas. It is a remarkable resource aiding Christians to grow more deeply involved in reaching unreached people groups all around the world.

Website: joshuaproject.net

- In this session, David mentioned that some unreached people groups may be in nations where Christians are considered enemies. While Joshua Project can help us understand these groups, another important resource that can help us Open Doors International (ODI). ODI is an organization that specifically identifies countries where Christians face extreme persecution.

One of ODI's most crucial resources is its World Watch List. Each year, they produce a list of the fifty countries where Christians face the most extreme persecution, rank them, and create profiles for each country providing in-depth information about their situation, believers' stories, and specific prayer requests. The World Watch List is a resource that gives Christians a tangible, focused prayer guide for Christians who live in these countries.

the gospel around the world?

Translate

One of the major barriers impeding the spread of the gospel for millennia is the language barrier. By most estimates, there are more than seven thousand languages spoken around the world. How can we possibly communicate with people who speak such different languages? With tools like Google Translate and translation software on our phones and computers, the language barrier is becoming much less challenging to overcome.

Have you ever used translation tools? What are some of the ways you could envision them being used to spread the gospel?

We sometimes have mixed feelings about whether many technologies are good. Some present serious ethical challenges in the ways they're used. But many technologies can be leveraged in powerful ways for the advance of the gospel. As Christians, we can be eager to use technology to spread God's Word around the world to those who've yet to be reached with the gospel.