

Day 1

August 10



Pray | *To hear and obey God's Word*

NOW THE WORD OF THE LORD came to Jonah...

As children, the story of Jonah and the big fish leaves quite an impression. This week we will look at the first four verses of the book of Jonah, which explains how Jonah got in the boat. The Word of the Lord came to Jonah with an astonishing message: Go to Nineveh. This is the first recorded time that God sent a prophet to the gentiles. All prophets before Jonah were sent to the people of Israel. Not only had God called Jonah to go to a city and people known for their sin, they were also known enemies of Israel. He was not sent to declare Nineveh's destruction; Jonah was sent to extend mercy. This message went against Jonah's culture and everything he knew. Can you image how he felt? Confused. Doubtful. Rebellious.



Read | *Jonah 1:1-4, John 14:26, John 16:13*



Reflect | *Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:*

The Word of the Lord came to Jonah, telling him to go to Nineveh. What do you think that looked like? The John passages say that the Holy Spirit will teach, remind and guide us. Think about a time when God spoke personally to you through the Bible, prayer, a sermon, or a song. How did you respond?

When you read the Bible, do you expect to hear from God personally? Stop now and ask the Holy Spirit to open your eyes and ears to the personal message God has for you as you read the Bible.

Sometimes what we hear from God does not seem to make sense with our experience and circumstance. Has God ever prompted you to reach out to an unexpected person? What did you do? Whether you obeyed or fled, ask God to help you be ready and willing the next time he calls you to act.



Pray | *Pray for the World*

Pray for our Ministry Partners in China: to adapt ministry methods to the political situation in China to move the Gospel forward. There is currently increased scrutiny and pressure by the government. Please pray for safe spaces for Chinese Christians to meet and study. Please also pray for parents in China who need to take on even more responsibility – their children are no longer allowed to attend even registered schools.

Day 2
August 11



Pray | *To appreciate and wonder that God is omnipresent*

JONAH GOT ON A SHIP to hide from the face of the Lord.

When the Word of the Lord came to Jonah, He turned and ran in the opposite direction of Nineveh. The Bible tells us Jonah was running away from the face of the Lord. As Jonah turned and ran, he forgot an important attribute of God. God is omnipresent.

When it comes to God, 'you can run, but you can't hide,' as the old saying goes. Omnipresent means God is here, there, and everywhere. Unlike humans, God is un-bound by limits and does not get distracted or have divided attention. He is fully present, everywhere, all the time. There is literally no way, place or time to hide from God.



Read | *Jonah 1:1-4, Heb 4:13, Jeremiah 23:24, Psalm 139:7-12*



Reflect | *Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:*

When have you hidden from God? Maybe you avoided him while making choices that conflict with the Bible, or maybe while ignoring God's prompt to repent, love a hard to love person, or to be the first to apologize. Examine your heart and ask God to reveal where you are hiding or holding back. Confess it to God and ask him to show you the next right thing to do.

Humans are limited and struggle to be present amidst the demands of life. Reflect on God's unlimited presence on earth and in your life. How does it encourage you to know that God always gives you his full attention? Respond with prayer and praise to God, who always has time for you.

If you have never experienced a relationship with God through faith in Jesus, what stops you? God is ready and available today. Reach out to a Five Oaks friend or staff member if you have questions or want to know more.

Day 3

August 12



Pray | *To trust God's goodness in all circumstances*

GOD IS GOOD. His plans are good. Yes, all of them.

In a world full of imperfect people, it can be hard to imagine, let alone believe, that God is perfectly good. His goodness cannot be compartmentalized or set aside. He is only capable of good, which means his purposes and plans are good. Even the plans we do not understand. Or like.

When God calls us to serve him in a counterculture, dangerous, or confusing way, we, like Jonah, may not be able to fathom how obeying God could possibly turn out for our good. We decide that God's plans are not best and form our own plans, relying on ourselves instead of the Holy Spirit. In this misguided pursuit, the love, blessing and joy that comes from knowing and following our good God is exchanged for temporary happiness and comfort.



Read | *Jonah 1:1-4, Jeremiah 29:11-13, Exodus 34:6*



Reflect | *Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:*

In what area of your life or circumstance do you need help believing and trusting that God is good? Consider memorizing today's verses. Pray them back to God, recounting his goodness. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you obey and trust God's goodness in this area.

Jeremiah tells us God's plans for us are good. Consider a time when your doubt of God's goodness led you down a path of self-reliance and chasing your own plans. Are you still on that path? If so, pause and be still before God. Choose today to set your plans aside and go where God leads.

Who in your life can encourage you and speak truth when you struggle to trust God's goodness? A Five Oaks small group can help you grow in community with other believers. Click here to learn more about our small groups: <https://www.fiveoaks.church/small-groups>

Day 4
August 13



Pray | *To seek God and grow in faith in the storms of life*

THE LORD SENT A GREAT WIND ON THE SEA and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up.

The Bible has many examples of consequences and storms that are the direct result of the sin of a person or a nation. The storm God sent after Jonah is one such example. However, the Bible also is clear that not all storms are direct consequences of personal sin. Pandemics, broken relationships, natural disasters and more are evidence of sin's effects in our broken world and general consequences of the fall on all of creation.

Whether the storm we face is a specific consequence of our sin or the general effect of sin on our world, God does use our struggles to help us rely on him and to grow in our faith. God's discipline and our suffering always serve an eternal purpose of drawing us nearer to him.



Read | *Jonah 1:1-4, Proverbs 3:11-12, John 9:2-3*



Reflect | *Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:*

While not all storms are the direct consequences of sin, Jonah teaches us that some are. When you face a storm, do you tend to blame others or God for your circumstance? Ask God to give you a right and humble view of your sin and circumstances so you can be quick to repent and turn back when you are running in the wrong direction.

A storm threatening to sink our boat does not feel loving. However, Proverbs tells us that God disciplines those he loves; he beckons us to return when we run away. When have you felt God's correction through your circumstances? How do you see his loving care in hindsight? Spend some time thanking God for leading you back to him.

In John 9, Jesus said the man's blindness was not as a direct result of his or his parents' sin, but rather so the works of God might be displayed in him. Do you assume difficulty in your life or in the lives of others is a consequence of sin? Ask God to remove your assumptions and to help you instead look for what God is doing in the circumstances.

Day 5

August 14



Pray | *For the courage to go wherever God leads*

LORD, SEND ME.

When we read the story of Jonah, it is hard not to cringe as he runs away from God. We know that running from God is not a good idea and may find ourselves shrugging and thinking that Jonah got what he had coming to him. However, we may not feel the same way when the storm happens to us.

Following God's call is not easy. In fact, the Bible says we may have to leave everyone and everything we know to follow Jesus. We may be called to serve seemingly unlovable and impossible people. We may be called to go to dirty, harsh places. Or, we may be called to go to our neighbors. Yes, even those difficult neighbors you struggle to connect with.



Read | *Jonah 1:1-4, Exodus 3:4,11, Isaiah 6:8*



Reflect | *Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:*

Jonah, Moses and Isaiah show three different initial responses to God's call. Jonah turned and ran. Moses asked questions and wondered why God chose him. Isaiah was ready to go. What is your initial response when God calls you to serve him? If you hesitate, you are not alone. Ask God to help you be ready and open to his call.

Jonah, Moses and Isaiah listened to God speak and did ultimately obey God's call, even if the process was different for each of them. What is the condition of your heart toward hearing God's call today? Are you available and ready? What demands, relationships or plans get in the way of your wholehearted obedience?

God can accomplish his plans without us, but he chooses to include us. As individuals and as a church family, we pray today: Here I am, Lord, send me!

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