

Day 1
August 24



Pray | For perseverance in difficult times

JONAH HAD WHAT SEEMED LIKE an insurmountable task set before him. His fears were beginning to consume him.

Jonah's fears were blinding him to the task at hand, bringing God's word to the Ninevites. Jonah's action in Jonah 1:3 is very telling about his lack of enthusiasm toward the task and command God gave him.

Taking the easy way out might be very tempting in times when our faith is tested, when we are facing a difficult task, or when we are given a task that we don't like.



Read | [Jonah 1:3, 11—12](#), [Romans 12:11-12](#)



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

Romans 12:11-12 encourages us to be zealous, fervent, hopeful, and patient in times of difficulty. What is a difficult time in your life in which patience, hope, love, faith, and prayer served your situation and strengthened your relationship with God?

Jonah's situation was so difficult and dire that he asked to be thrown overboard to his sure death. In addition to attempting to escape the power of the storm, Jonah, may also have been attempting to escape the dread of God's task for him. Reflecting on Romans 12:11-12, is there someone in your life who could use a word of truth or encouragement from these verses?

Why might it be difficult to hold onto patience and hope during times of difficulty? Spend time in prayer today, cast your difficulties and fear on God, and ask him for perseverance, patience, and hope.



Pray | Pray for the World

Pray for our Ministry Partners in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA): For many to feel God's call to partner with those who are ministering to the refugees and others in desperate need of hope and peace. Please pray for the gospel to go out through our partner in Jordan near the Syrian border as they minister to traumatized children, conduct home visits to the needy, engage in sports ministry, develop small businesses, teach English and show love to special needs children.

Day 2
August 25



Pray | For encouragement to experience your faith with others

IT IS IRONIC that the first people to cry out to God in the book of Jonah were sailors who worshipped other gods. We can count on God to raise others up when we feel overwhelmed.

Jonah probably felt very overwhelmed and alone, being that he was the only person on the ship who worshipped God. The Prophet Elijah also faced a difficult time in his life where he thought he was the only person left on Earth who worshipped God.

Jonah and Elijah faced similar circumstances. They were both fearful and running for their lives. However, God created a pathway of hope for them by raising up others. For Jonah, the sailors who prayed and feared God. For Elijah, the seven thousand Israelites God had set aside as a faithful remnant. Although no immediate results of relief were provided, Jonah and Elijah would later go on to fulfill their God-given missions.



Read | [Jonah 1:13-14](#), [1 Kings 19:10-18](#)



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

It might sometimes seem overwhelming or lonely to be a follower of Jesus or to be new to a church. Five Oaks Church offers a variety of ways in which people can be lifted up in their faith by others. Ask any Five Oaks staff member about small groups, youth group, men's and women's groups, and ways to volunteer in one of its many ministries. These options can also be found on www.fiveoaks.church under "Get Connected" and "Our Ministries."

If you are involved in any ministries or groups at Five Oaks Church or elsewhere, how have they served to strengthen your relationship with God and with other followers of Christ? Find a way this week to relay your testimony to encourage someone who may be seeking to be more involved.

Day 3

August 26



Pray | Praise God for always accomplishing His mission

GOD'S GRACE CAN EXTEND to anyone. The sailors in today's scripture verses worshipped other gods. Yet they saw God's power, cried out and pled with him, and God answered them!

God will accomplish his mission by any means he sees fit. Even though God's own prophet, Jonah, seemed to lose the will to carry out God's task, God did not give up on him. God used answered the cries of the sailors, calmed the storm for them, and sent Jonah into the ocean on what would later become a very strange journey.

God never gives up on any of his people. He uses imperfect people all the time to accomplish his mission and show his grace.



Read | *Jonah 1:15-16, 2 Kings 5:1-19*



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

The Word of God can be shared with others by anyone. You do not have to be a pastor, have memorized the Bible, or be a church member to serve God. How might this embolden you in sharing God's Word with others.

Naaman from 2 Kings 5:1-19 was a non-Israelite, yet God saw fit to give his army a victory and to heal him of leprosy. In turn, Naaman praised God and offered gifts to the Prophet Elisha because of God. What are some ways in which you can refer to the story Naaman in reassuring others about God's grace?

If you have not yet called on Jesus Christ to be your personal savior, will you spend time in prayer and do so today? Remember, that you do not have to be perfect and free of sin to do so. You are made perfect to God by Jesus Christ in God's eternal kingdom.

Day 4
August 27



Pray | *Give thanks for God's provisions*

GOD'S PROVISIONS sometimes come in unexpected and even undesirable ways.

By this point in Jonah's story he had been thrown overboard from a ship in a severe storm. Just when thought his situation couldn't get any worse, God provided a large fish that would become Jonah's temporary home for three days and three nights.

This large fish will later serve to protect Jonah and renew his spirits for God's mission. There might be times in our lives when God provides what seems like a strange or undeserved circumstance to use us to deliver his Word to others.



Read | Jonah 1:17, Acts 9:4-9



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

There are parallels between Jonah and Saul in today's Scripture verses. God put Jonah inside of a fish and he put scales over Saul's eyes. These unconventional means grabbed the attention of these two men. Has God ever used strange or unconventional ways to grab your attention and how did you grow from it?

God sent Jonah on a mission he wanted no part of and could not escape no matter how hard he tried. God provided a fish to protect Jonah and give him time to think. Reflect on a time in your life where you may have been hiding or fleeing from God. What were God's provisions to you that brought you back to him?

Are you at a point in your life where you are hiding or fleeing from God now? If so, spend time in prayer and ask God to provide a way to bring you back to him and give you the wisdom to follow his lead.

Day 5
August 28



Pray | Thank God for his power and grace

GOD CAN DO ANYTHING. He used the Apostle Paul as his chosen instrument to share the good news of Jesus Christ to many people.

Before Paul was an apostle, he was fervent in his persecution and cruelty toward followers of Jesus Christ. He would have been the last person anyone living at the time would have thought would have become a Christian.

The conversion of Paul and the conversion of the Ninevites are proof of God's unrelenting power and grace.



Read | Acts 9:10-19, Jonah 3:10, 4:10-11



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

Ananias' response to God in Acts 9:13-14 was not very enthusiastic. Much like Jonah, God was sending him on a very undesirable task to help a person he probably believed was very undeserving of God's healing power. However, he greeted Paul with kindness. Why do you think it might be important to greet people we might perceive as undesirable with kindness?

Take a bold step in faith and pray for God's word to reach those in this world who might seem undesirable or undeserving of God's grace.

Ask Jesus Christ into your heart today. Maybe you have been hesitant to call on the name of Jesus because you feel undeserving of his grace and love. Confess your sins, ask for forgiveness, repent, and ask Jesus to be your savior.

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