



## **Week Two: Repentance**

### **OPENING PRAYER:**

Eternal Loving God, who never gives up on us, please help us let go of the things that prevent us from totally living for you. Please give us courage to go where we have been called. If we have gone astray in mind, heart, soul, or body, help us return to you. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray, Amen!

### **ENCOUNTERING GOD:**

**Where have you seen God at work in your life this week?  
What good have you done for others this week?**

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# WEEKLY SCRIPTURE READING:

## Jonah 1:4-12

“But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea, and such a mighty storm came upon the sea that the ship threatened to break up. Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried to his god. They threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea, to lighten it for them. Jonah, meanwhile, had gone down into the hold of the ship and had lain down, and was fast asleep. The captain came and said to him, ‘What are you doing sound asleep? Get up, call on your god! Perhaps the god will spare us a thought so that we do not perish.’ The sailors said to one another, ‘Come, let us cast lots, so that we may know on whose account this calamity has come upon us.’ So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. Then they said to him, ‘Tell us why this calamity has come upon us. What is your occupation? Where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?’ ‘I am a Hebrew,’ he replied. ‘I worship the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.’ Then the men were even more afraid, and said to him, ‘What is this that you have done!’ For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them so. Then they said to him, ‘What shall we do to you, that the sea may quieten down for us?’ For the sea was growing more and more tempestuous. He said to them, ‘Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will quieten down for you; for I know it is because of me that this great storm has come upon you.’”

## REFLECTION:

*God sent the storm in response to Jonah’s sinful action, yet the sailors are caught in the middle of Jonah’s futile struggle with the all-powerful God. It is rare that sin only affects the sinner. More often, sin produces collateral damage. However, God’s purpose for sending the storm was not harm or destruction; the purpose was to turn Jonah towards God. In our text, we see two different responses to the storm; frantic activity and complete inactivity. The sailors’ activity is motivated by desperation, but Jonah seems paralyzed by depression. The sailors pray to their gods, hurl objects from the ship, and cast lots. Jonah sleeps.*

*The storm presented the sailors with an opportunity to see the power of Jonah’s God and the powerlessness of their gods. The pagan sailors pray to their own gods, but the storm does not cease. How often do we turn to things that have no power to rescue us from a situation that only God can save us from? We sometimes think that our money, position, prestige, zip code, or family name can save us or deliver us from the storm.*

# WC ENCOUNTER GROUPS CURRICULUM

## JONAH

### WEEK TWO

*Since their prayers had no effect, they resort to taking matters into their hands by hurling their cargo into the sea to lighten the load so that ship can ride higher upon the waves (some scholars have argued that they hurled the cargo into the sea to appease a sea deity). Before the storm, the cargo had great value to the sailors. Not only did the cargo have monetary value, but it also represented financial security. However, the cargo would serve little value to them if they perished, so they let it go. Perhaps we need to lighten our loads, let go of unhealthy relationships or habits, or something else that is weighing us down. We hold on to those things even if they are unhealthy or unhelpful because we assigned some value to them. We need to let them go.*

*Lastly, the sailors cast lots to determine who was the cause of the storm. They let a game of chance determine the source of their problems. It's almost like they threw up their hands in frustration and said, "Hey, pass me the dice!" The lot fell on Jonah. Was it by chance, or by divine design? In the end, it does not matter. My friends, we don't live by chance. We live by the grace of God. Sadly, it is not until our things fail us that we turn to God.*

*During the storm, they turn to the prophet of God for guidance, but the captain finds Jonah snoring and in a death-like sleep. The captain demands that Jonah call upon Jonah's God. A prophet is not necessarily one who foretells the future, but one who speaks to the people on behalf of God. The Bible is filled with stories of prophetic acts that communicate the power and word of God to the people. We call those acts miracles. The pagan sailors were hoping for a miracle. At this point, it is fair to say that Jonah's inactivity was a horrible witness to the pagans. Unlike the pagan sailors who pray to their idol gods, Jonah, the prophet, refuses to pray to his God. Yet, God was able to use Jonah to turn the pagans to God. After some hesitation, the sailors take Jonah's advice and hurl Jonah into the sea. Then, the sailors "worshipped the Lord with a profound reverence; they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made solemn promises." (Jonah 1:16)*

*God sent a fish to swallow Jonah. He stayed in the belly of the fish for three days. Finally, Jonah prayed to God. Jonah repented and returned to the Lord.*

*During the storm, don't focus on the winds and the waves. Focus on the grace of God in the storm. God's grace, the unmerited love of God, is what made the sailors' conversion and Jonah's return possible. God's grace pursues us even before we believe, and it makes us aware that we are unable to save ourselves. The grace of God sustains us even when we find ourselves in the belly of the fish. Finally, notice not one life was injured or lost in our Scripture lesson. The grace of God does not harm; it heals and reclaims what has been lost.*

# GROUP REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

## Encounter the Head:

What is grace? What is the difference between the power of grace and will power?

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What is repentance? What is the difference between repentance and confession?

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What role does the grace of God play in repentance?

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## Encounter the Heart:

What was the most impactful thing that you learned from the podcasts, sermon series or sermon discussion guide?

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Share your story of repentance and acceptance of Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior.

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# GROUP REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

How do we break the cycles of sinfulness and error in our own lives?

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**Encounter the Hands:**

Share your prayer concerns and celebrations.

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# PRAISE AND PRAYER REQUESTS

## Encounter The Hands:

Please go around the group and have each person share a praise for this week and a prayer request/

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## CLOSING PRAYER

Have a volunteer lead closing prayer: asking for prayer concerns and lifting up the needs of the group.

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# DAILY REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

We encourage everyone to do a daily reflection. This can be done alone, as a couple, or with your family. This spiritual practice will help answer the questions you have and it will improve your ability to see where God is at work in your life, and in the lives of those around you. Please answer the following questions during your personal devotional time at the end of the day.

Where have you seen God today? For the children, we say, “what made you happy today?”

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What broke your heart or made you sad today?

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What good thing did you do for someone else today?

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What are you thankful for today?

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