

JONAH: LIFE. LESSONS.

WHAT MATTERS MOST - JONAH 4:5-11



SERMON NOTES:

1. As we go through life we need to be _____ on what matters most and what matters most is _____.
2. As we go through life we must be _____ about what matters most and what matters most are _____ .

NEXT STEPS:

1. Today, I will evaluate my present circumstances to see if God is / has been trying to get my heart and attention back on Him.
2. This week, I will read the Bible daily and spend time praising and worshipping my Heavenly Father and repenting on my tendency to put _____ head of Jesus.
3. This week, I will pray daily for my community and city, asking God for spiritual eyes to truly see those around me as being created in the image God and people whom Jesus died for.
4. This week, I will look for ways to put my concern for people into action (telling them about Jesus, meeting needs, serving others, etc.)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Open your group in prayer, and remember that this is only a guide. Feel free to discuss each of the provided questions and Next Steps above, or simply dive deeper into just one. Before you close with prayer, take a few minutes to look over the three essential questions at the end before the toolbox and digging deeper section.

ICE BREAKER:

Looking back, what's one of the silliest circumstances you have gotten upset over during this season of "shelter in place"?

OBSERVE | *What Do I See?*

1. Looking back on the entire book, create summary sentences for each section with its corresponding icon...



INTERPRET | *What Does It Mean?*

2. In verses 5-11, what does God expose in Jonah's heart and attitude through the use of a plant, worm, and wind? What is the lesson God wants Jonah to grasp?
3. The book of Jonah ends abruptly and without the typical resolution of the plot. What's the purpose of this ending to the book? Specifically, what questions are left unanswered for the reader?
4. Jeremiah 5:25 says, "Your sins have deprived you of good." What good do you think Jonah would have experienced if he had focused on what matters most?

APPLY | How Does It Work?

5. Like Jonah...Do you think God may be trying to get your attention and focus back on Him through the circumstances you are going through right now? If yes, what are some areas of your heart and life that need a reset or refocus?
6. Great stories tend to leave us hanging. Jesus' story of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32) ends this way with the older brother...wondering if he went to the party. Much like in Jonah, we ask, "Will he come around?" which becomes, "Will I come around; Will I join the party?" Do you need to exchange your anger for compassion, grace, and mercy, too?
7. What keeps most people from remembering and acting on what matters most?

What are the things that matter most to God according to this passage? What do you think matters the most to God in YOUR life right now? Why?

What steps will you take this week?

Create a personal application statement that expresses how you will apply this truth in your life:

THREE ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

If you have more time, the following questions are intended to be open-ended and encourage members to consider how they felt and what they, or the group, can do as a result of hearing the message!

1. **What do you think?** How did this message challenge, change, or affirm your thinking? What point in this message was most impactful for you?
2. **What will you do?** How will you or your group put into practice what you've learned today?
3. **How can you help others in your group?** How can you encourage, affirm, pray for, and keep accountable the commitments they put into practice?

TOOLBOX:

Review the tools to help us engage with others. | See Appendix.

Spend some time discussing your group's experience in learning and practicing these tools.

DIGGING DEEPER:

Jesus and Jonah

Both were Jews and both were prophets, but Jesus is the very Son of God. Jonah preached a message of judgment, but Jesus preached a message of grace and salvation (John 3:16-17). Jonah almost died for his own sins, but Jesus willingly died for the sins of the world (1 John 2:2). Jonah's ministry was to but one city, but Jesus is "the Savior of the world" (John 4:42; 1 John 4:14). Jonah's obedience was not from the heart, but Jesus always did whatever pleased His Father (John 8:29). Jonah didn't love the people he came to save, but Jesus had compassion for sinners and proved His love by dying for them on the cross (Roman 5:6-8). On the cross, outside the city, Jesus asked God to forgive those who killed Him (Luke 23:34), but Jonah waited outside the city to see if God would kill those he would not forgive.

Jonah's Anger

If in chapter 1 Jonah is like the Prodigal Son, insisting on doing his own thing and going his own way (Luke 15:11-32); then in chapter 4, he's like the Prodigal's elder brother—critical, selfish, sullen, angry, and unhappy with what was going on. It isn't enough for God's servants simply to do their Master's will; they must do "the will of God from the heart" (Eph. 6:6). The heart of every problem is the problem in the heart, and that's where Jonah's problems were to be found...

Jonah was partly concerned about his reputation, not only before the Ninevites, but also before the Jews back home. His Jewish friends would want to see all of the Assyrians destroyed, not just the people of Nineveh. When Jonah's friends found out that he had been the means of saving Nineveh from God's wrath, they could have considered him a traitor to official Jewish foreign policy.

When reputation is more important than character, and pleasing ourselves and our friends is more important than pleasing God, then we're in danger of becoming like Jonah and living to defend our prejudices instead of fulfilling our spiritual responsibilities. Jonah certainly had good theology, but it stayed in his head and never got to his heart, and he was so distraught that he wanted to die! God's tender response was to ask Jonah to examine his heart and see why he really was angry.

(Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Amazed, OT Commentary Minor Prophets* [Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook Publishers, 1996])

APPENDIX:

INTEREST CREATING STORY - HOW TO START A SPIRITUAL CONVERSATION

The parables that Jesus told created an interest in His Kingdom- the characteristics, the hopes, and the realities of the gospel. Sometimes, Jesus wouldn't even mention that He was Messiah; sometimes He did pointedly. Jesus made the gospel accessible to those who would hear and didn't apologize for who He was.

Sadly, we have become conditioned to put on a filter and not speak of Jesus - because we imagine that it is awkward, pushy, or politically incorrect. We need to take off this filter and grow in boldness and love as we share stories about who He is and what He is about. There was no doubt that He was marking himself as special, as a spiritual being, and often, much more than that!

Likewise, "marking ourselves as spiritual" can help us gauge whether others are interested in God and His message. Some people will "lean in" as you speak about such topics, asking additional questions, sharing their own beliefs, telling about their own journey. Some will not; they will "lean back" and change the topic, become silent, or shut down altogether. Allow the Holy Spirit to prompt you as you initiate and let Him do the work of speaking to a person's soul.

Practice talking with your spouse, children, or friend about two or three of the following "interest creating" topics:

Recently, God/Jesus has been teaching me that...

I am realizing more and more that God has blessed me by...

I used to struggle with (insert fear, stronghold, idolatry) but now I see God wants me to believe...

I decided to follow Jesus because...

Think of common topics that come up as you meet people - for example: career, living situation, family history, educational background. Pick one of these and tell how God changed your path in the past, or how He is guiding you in the present.

As you practice talking about these things, try to end with a learning question such as, “Have you ever considered God in this way before?” OR “Do you think God is teaching/blessing/asking you to believe anything right now?” Your questions are to gauge a response and to allow space for them to interact with your story. Now, be prayerful and alert as to who God wants you to share with this week!

Prayer Stories

Another way to create interest is prayer stories. Most people in today’s world still value prayer. Think of someone in your Live, Work, and Play network who has expressed a need, struggle, or an unmet desire. Can you do one of the following this week?

Share how God has answered a prayer in your life, something specific and real and transforming.

EVERY NEIGHBOR PRAYER At the heart of Every Neighbor, there is a desire to be observant, expectant, and involved in who God is putting into our paths where we Live, Work, and Play. He wants us to pray - that many will know Him as Father and as Savior, as He draws them to Himself and His Kingdom (John 6:44). As well, Jesus modeled prayer for those who were like “sheep without a shepherd (Mark 6:32- 34).” Jesus’s own ministry of compassion (Matthew 14:14, 15:32) to those who were on the fringes of society, those who had no status or reputation, was a beautiful example of who we are to be praying for and seeking to include in our daily lives- those who are outside our comfort zones, but fully loved and wanted by our God.

Each week, we gather to pray for these people. Who did God impress upon you when you drew out your Live, Work, and Play network? Who are the people who might be seeking His Kingdom, who are asking hard questions, who are far from Christ and need a better Hope? Using your Live, Work, and Play network, who do you need to purposively add to the Every Neighbor Prayer board? On this board, collect the names of those you are hoping to bless with the gospel through service, acts of love, conversation, and/or Bible study. Pray boldly for God to reveal Himself to them and open their eyes to His power and freedom.

You may meet someone new this week or renew an old relationship from the past. Is this someone God is asking you to put on the Every Neighbor Prayer board, to actively pray big for their salvation? Add them to the board. Each week, take time to update your group, and let’s see what God will do! Another tool that’s useful is www.blesseveryhome.com.

LIVE, WORK, PLAY MAP The word “oikos” is a Greek word that means family. In Jesus’s time, a family would include workers, extended family, and people residing in their home. Basically, this was their greatest circle of influence. For us, this can also include not only our family, but our friends, coworkers, and acquaintances. It can include the guy at the gas station that you see at each fill up, or the barista that serves you that mocha latte each morning. It is anyone that we commonly encounter on a regular basis, giving you the ability to have influence in their lives.

So what does this have to do with us, and how does it help us spread the gospel? “Oikos” is used around 120 times in the New Testament. Often when Jesus or His disciples found people that were open to the gospel, He would eventually share the message with the entire network, their oikos and their communities. Jesus met the woman at the well (John 4), and after revealing His message and who He was as Messiah, she was amazed and told her oikos, her whole town, AND many believed! We want to see the same happen. Every Day and Every Neighbor means that we are participants in a Greater Story of God’s plan of salvation and we can be ambassadors for Christ (2 Cor. 5) wherever and with whomever we find ourselves.



Draw your own network: Think about the people in your spheres of influence. With whom do you live, work, and play? Be as exhaustive as possible and brainstorm away! Also, think about people who are just beyond your normal spheres. People who are that next step out - perhaps an acquaintance whom you don’t know well, a neighbor who is different from you ethnically or social-economically, a community member whom the Holy Spirit has put in your path but is more a stranger than friend? Be creative and think outside the box on this one!

KIDS' DISCUSSION:

God is compassionate. Ask your child if he or she knows what compassionate means. Explain that being compassionate means caring about the needs of others, feeling concern for them, and doing something to help them out. God showed compassion to people.

1. The story of Jonah in chapter one and in chapter four tells of "God providing." Can you name two ways God provided protection for Jonah? (the big fish and the vine)
2. Chapter 4 tells of God providing other things. What else did he provide? (a worm and a scorching east wind)
3. A worm and scorching east wind do not sound like good things. What do you think God wanted Jonah to understand? (God wanted to show Jonah that he was concerned about the wrong things. Jonah was concerned only about himself and his own comfort. He didn't see beyond his own situation. God wanted him to see a bigger picture, that thousands of people didn't know the one true God. He wanted Jonah to stop thinking about only himself and to care for others.)

Isn't this what we do too? As long as everything is going great for us, we may forget that millions of people need God. There are people who are lonely and hurting, going to bed hungry, and even homeless. God wants us to see beyond ourselves and show compassion to other people.

Pastor David told us in his sermon, "As we go through life, we need to be **focused** on what matters most, and what matters is GOD. We must be **concerned** about what matters most, and what matters most are PEOPLE.

Discuss as a family how you could show compassion in these situations and close in prayer:

- Your classmate does not have a jacket to wear when it is cold outside.
- Someone in your class lost her favorite bracelet that her grandmother gave her.
- A new student moved into your class during the middle of the school year and has not made any friends yet.
- Someone is making fun of a kid in your class because he has holes in his shoes.
- Your neighbor broke her right hand which is the hand she writes with.