

Epic Tales

"Jonah"

Week 1 – July 3, 2022

Scripture: Jonah chapters 1-4

Grab your Bible and a few people to connect with. Look up the verses and share your thoughts. It's that easy!

Share: The story of Jonah is quite well known. If you've heard it before, do you find yourself viewing it as an historical account or a myth/story that we can learn lessons from? (Biblical teachers and scholars land in both camps- it's OK to be honest or to disagree).

Read the scripture noted above together: Take turns reading if you prefer. Enjoy the different Bible translations we each read.

Discuss the following context: The story of Jonah is much more than a story about a man and a great fish. It is a profound illustration of God's mercy and grace. No one deserved God's favor less than the people of Nineveh. Jonah knew this and he wanted vengeance, not mercy.

Share your thoughts about the following questions:

1. Jonah was given an assignment, but he chose to run away instead. We all have experiences where we notice a need or feel a nudge to love or serve, but we don't act on it. Share about a time when you missed an opportunity (big or small).
2. Jonah didn't simply avoid his assignment, he ran (sailed) in the opposite direction. Then God went to extremes to get Jonah's attention. Why do you think God didn't just call on someone else to help the Ninevites?
3. It would be understandable for Jonah to have fear about facing people who God describes as wicked. But fear of the people doesn't seem to be the reason he flees. Why do you think Jonah fled and tried to avoid the assignment?
4. Consider a person or group of people who might elicit similar feelings in you that Jonah felt about Ninevites. Think about a person or people group that you have difficulty imagining God extending His perfect forgiveness, love, and grace to. Maybe you would prefer that they experience his wrath instead? Can you share?
5. Which of these three lessons from the story encourages you most? Challenges you most?
 - a. God does not cancel us, he pursues us, in spite of our stubborn disobedience.
 - b. God's compassion is for everyone; no one is outside the bounds of His love, no matter how wicked their ways.
 - c. God wants to root out our biases, prejudices, hatred and judgement and invites us to instead share His love with others.

Pray together: Ask each other to share what is on your heart today. Pray for God to open your hearts to His perfect love and compassion for others. Ask God to help you see when you are desiring judgement and vengeance rather than love and grace. Ask for God to give you courage to be his agent of love in this world, even when people are difficult to love.