



Sunday School Lessons Winter 2022-2023

Member Guide
Second Baptist
Cedartown

Sunday School Lessons:

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Second Baptist Church

THE MIRACLES OF GOD • THE MIRACLE OF THE MOMENT • GALATIANS 4:4-5; PSALM 104:27; MARK 1:15 • 12/4/2022

MAIN POINT

At just the right time, God sent His Son Jesus to earth.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What is something a person might do in which timing is everything (i.e. planting a garden, asking your boss for a raise, baking a cake, etc.)?

Describe an experience where your timing was either just right to avoid disaster, or it was off and there was a negative result.

Think about the timing of Jesus' advent to earth. Why do you think God didn't send Jesus as soon as Adam and Eve ate the apple or when Israel was being held captive in Egypt?

Some of us are counting down the days until Christmas already. If we have children, we might even have an advent calendar hanging somewhere in our houses so that we can note each day in anticipation of Christmas morning. Though God's people had been waiting a very long time for the promised Messiah, no one, except possibly Mary and Joseph, was counting down the days before that very first Christmas morning. Still, at just the right time, God sent Jesus to earth. In today's study, we'll examine the miracle of that moment and what it means to us today.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

READ GALATIANS 4:4-5.

Read verse 4 from several different translations (“the time came to completion”[CSB], “fullness of time” [ESV], “the set time had fully come” [NIV]). What does this communicate to us about God’s plan?

What does it mean that Christ was born “under the law”? What’s the significance of that reality for us?

Why did God send Jesus to earth? What was His purpose?

Jesus was born at just the right time in human history, not by chance or coincidence, but by God’s plan set in motion before the creation of the world. The Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah’s coming were complete. The time for the miraculous moment for God in human flesh to be born into the world had come. As important to humanity as the incarnation of Christ was, it takes new meaning for us personally as we are adopted into God’s family and experience the transformation that a relationship with Him brings.

READ PSALM 104:27.

How does this verse describe the relationship between the Creator and the created? When have you experienced God’s provision at just the right time?

Read Romans 5:6. What state were we in when Christ died for us? How does this verse relate to Psalm 104:27?

God did not merely create and walk away. Neither did He send Jesus in one miraculous moment and then leave us on our own. He is intimately involved in all the details of our lives. He comes to us at just the right moment with just what we need in that moment. In Romans 5:6, Paul described the timing of Christ’s death as “while we were still helpless” and “at the right time.” Christ did not die for us when we were worthy of being saved, He died when we were wicked. Even now, when we are completely helpless, Christ still comes to us, at just the right moment, to provide exactly what we need.

READ MARK 1:15.

How does this verse communicate the need for urgency in responding to Jesus today?

Is there a situation in which you’ve waited to turn to God for help? Why do we do that sometimes?

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What does this verse indicate about the miracle of this moment right now?

Jesus came on the scene and immediately diagnosed the problem with the world. People were sinners and in rebellion against God. Such teaching was not popular in

Jesus' day, and it is not popular in ours. People want to assume they have it all together. To suggest that not only do they not have it together, but also that they need to actively renounce the way they're living is a hard teaching. The call to follow Jesus is the call to repent, or to do a 180 degree turn and head in the opposite direction. The time for that—to draw close to the Lord and repent—is now.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What steps can we take so that we might consider each day and moment as a miracle from God instead of as something we just have to get through?

What step of commitment to God do you need to stop putting off and make now?

How are we doing as a group at encouraging each other to live in the miracle and provision of each moment God gives us? How can we do better?

PRAYER

Thank God for sending Jesus at the exact right time in history to provide for all people. Thank Him for His continued provision in your life right now—in just the right time and just the right ways. Invite Him to help you live faithfully and fully within each moment He gives.



Second Baptist Church

THE MIRACLES OF GOD • THE MIRACLE OF THE MESSAGE • HEBREWS 1:1-3;
COLOSSIANS 1:15-22 • 12/11/2022

MAIN POINT

God sent His Son Jesus to communicate His great love for us. He desires for us to know and draw near to Him.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What would be the best text message or phone call you could receive today? If you got that text message or call, how would you likely respond?

Which of the following methods of communication would you most miss if you lost it: social media, texting, email, phone calls, or letter writing? Why?

What are some of the ways God communicates to you? Which of His methods of communication do you appreciate the most? Why?

God communicates to us in many ways, and He does so all day long, every single day. Sometimes we're too busy to listen and sometimes we don't understand what He is saying to us, but He continues to reveal His message so that we might know Him. Christmas celebrates the very best way God has communicated to us—through the gift of His Son Jesus. In Jesus, God communicates His miraculous message in a way that we can understand.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

READ HEBREWS 1:1-2.

What are some of your favorite Old Testament accounts where God communicated to His people?

Some might think it would be easier if God still showed up in a burning bush, or similar method, to speak to us. Why did God change His method of communication by sending Jesus to earth? How is the way God has spoken in “these last days” (v. 2, “by His Son”) altogether better than how He communicated previously?

God previously spoke in fragments, at “different times” and in “different ways.” This included visions, angels, events, and people. He spoke truly yet partially through the prophets. Now God has spoken to us truly and fully through His Son. The contrast affirms that Christ is superior to the Old Testament system because God speaks directly to us through His Son Jesus Christ, the complete, final Word of God.

Why is it important to know that God speaks? What would be some of the implications for our lives if God was silent?

Before Jesus came to earth, God had not spoken to His people for 400 years. Until John the Baptist arrived on the scene, there had been no prophets since the time Malachi spoke the message he had received from God. However, God never ceased to be personally and actively engaged in His creation. Rather than leaving us without a word from Him, He has fully revealed Himself in the person of Jesus Christ. If we want to know God, then, we have to look to Jesus, and where we find Jesus is in the Word of God.

READ HEBREWS 1:3.

Which part of this verse is most significant to you? Why? What does it mean personally to you?

How would you summarize God’s message to us in the Person of Jesus Christ?

What do passages like Ephesians 2:18 and John 14:6-9 reveal about our ability to know and communicate with the Father because of Jesus?

God speaks through Christ. As God’s Son, Jesus revealed God finally and without equal. Through Jesus, we can understand God’s character and the gospel message. Jesus is wholly superior to all who came before Him and after Him. He is the Creator, the heir of creation, the radiance of divine glory, and the exact expression of the nature of God the Father. He is the Word of God, the priest of God, and the King who sits at the right hand of the Father. He became fully human, He

was tempted, and He suffered to make atonement for the sins of all people. Tempted yet sinless, Jesus allows us to now approach God with confidence in His mercy and grace.

READ COLOSSIANS 1:15-23.

What is the difference between simply hearing someone speak and really listening to them? Who is someone whose communication and advice you pay close attention to and act upon? Why?

From verse 22, for what purpose did God communicate to us through His Son Jesus?

Based on these verses, respond to the following statement: It isn't enough to simply hear God's message to us.

God didn't speak through Jesus just to increase our knowledge of Him. God speaks through Jesus to transform us. God the Father sacrificed His firstborn and only Son Jesus on the cross to make atonement for our sins. Christ's sacrifice transforms us because it allows us to have a whole, reconciled relationship with the Father. We now have the freedom to live a life devoted to God, a life that praises God because of our reconciliation. Without this work, no part of the abundant life that we enjoy would be possible.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

God speaks through history. In the history of your life, what has He communicated to you? When your life is "history", what do you hope He will have communicated through you?

God speaks through Christ. What are some steps, then, that you can take to know Christ better?

God speaks to transform. What is one change you know God wants to make in your life? How is God speaking to you about that in today's lesson?

PRAYER

Thank God for the miracle of His message that He communicates so clearly through history and also through the ever-present gift of relationship in Jesus Christ. Thank Him for wanting you to know Him so much that He sent Jesus to earth. Ask God to continue speaking His message to

you as you walk with Jesus and treasure His Word, so that you might be transformed into His image.



Second Baptist Church

THE MIRACLES OF GOD • THE MIRACLE OF THE MANGER • JOHN 1:1-14; LUKE 2:11;
MATTHEW 16:13-16 • 12/18/2022

MAIN POINT

Jesus' miraculous birth in the manger has implications for every person. We each must answer the question, "Is Jesus who He claims to be?"

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Do you celebrate Christmas the same way (same place, same people, same system for gift giving) or differently each year? Briefly explain.

Name one thing you'd like to change about the way you celebrate Christmas. What would be the implications if you were to make that change (i.e. certain family members would be upset, you would spend less/more money, you wouldn't have to spend 3 hours in the car but could enjoy Christmas day at home, etc.)?

We consider the implications of our holiday celebrations. If you invite that one relative, will he or she kill all peace, love, and joy? If you scrap all the gift-giving, will your adult children think it's the worst Christmas ever? If you let your preschooler eat the candy he received at the Christmas Eve service at church, will he go to sleep in time for you to put together that swingset? These are important questions! The way you celebrate Christmas has implications. More importantly, who you celebrate at Christmas has implications. Those implications don't only impact one day out of the year; they impact eternity. Who is the baby lying in the manger? If I believe Jesus is who He says He is, how should that belief impact my life? That Jesus is God's Son, the Messiah, is an astonishing claim with staggering implications that demand a personal choice for every single one of us.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

READ JOHN 1:1-14 AND LUKE 2:11.

List every fact about Jesus you find in these verses. Which stands out to you as most astonishing? Why?

What are some different ways people respond to these astonishing claims about Jesus?

Why is simply respecting Jesus as a good, noble teacher not a viable option? What options does that leave us as legitimate ways to respond to the claims about who Jesus is?

By describing Jesus as “the Word,” John presented Jesus as God’s expression of Himself to us. Through creation and then again in coming to earth, Jesus revealed what God wanted us to know about Him and about who we are in Him. Before Jesus was born in a manger, before the angel told Mary she was pregnant, before any of the Old Testament prophets spoke about a Messiah, Jesus was with God, and He is God. Jesus, the light of the world, came to bring salvation to mankind. Those who believe He is who He says He is—the Savior, Christ the Lord— receive that salvation and become children of God.

How does the fact that Jesus was both fully human and fully God impact us today (John 1:1,14)?

What does it mean to your life, personally, that Jesus is “the true light which gives light to everyone” (John 1:9)? That “the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it” (John 1:5)?

What implications might there be for someone who only sees Jesus as a baby in a manger without acknowledging He is Lord? What implications does it have on our lives that Christ is Lord (Luke 2:11)?

A major theme in John’s Gospel is the rejection Jesus encountered, including from many Jews who didn’t recognize Him as the Messiah. Even with the countless signs, fulfilled prophecies, and Jesus’ own statements about Himself, they did not accept Jesus as God’s Son. Even though they were a religious people, they did not understand who Jesus was because they expected something totally different. The miracle of the manger means we each have a choice to make. What we believe about Jesus impacts our eternal destiny and also our earthly direction.

READ MATTHEW 16:13-16.

Why did Jesus ask His disciples who they believed Him to be? Wasn't it enough that they were following Him around? Explain.

If someone asked you, "Why do you celebrate the birth of Jesus at Christmas? Who is Jesus?" what would you say?

All the opinions the disciples reported were complimentary and demonstrate that Jesus remained quite popular. The crowds viewed Him as some kind of spokesman for God. Jesus wanted the disciples to move beyond the culture's understanding of who He was. He wanted to know what they personally believed about Him, and He wanted them to know what they must believe about Him. Because the disciples would carry His message into the world, they needed to be clear on His identity, not given to whatever the culture thought about Him. We must answer for ourselves who Jesus is and what He came to do, and consider if our actions line up with our beliefs.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

When did you first come to believe that Jesus is who He claims to be? If you have not believed that previously, how is God calling you to respond to these claims today?

In one or two sentences, what would you say is the miracle of the manger? Who is someone you need to express that to?

What would change in your life this week if you truly lived as though Jesus Christ is Lord?

PRAYER

Thank Jesus for coming to earth both as fully man and fully God so that He might take on the punishment for your sins and offer you new life. Ask Him to show you what implications His lordship needs to have in your life so that you might truly experience the miracle of the manger.



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OBEYING GOD'S CALL • JONAH 1:1-17 • 1/8/2023

MAIN POINT

God will go to extreme measures to move His people to obedience.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Growing up, did you ever want to run away from home? Why or why not? What has made or would make you want to run away from God?

The key question we want to focus on in today's lesson is: Are we running away from God, toward God, or with God? If we're not running with Him every day, then what must happen to change our direction?

The Book of Jonah is not a story about a fish. Neither is it simply a story about a rebellious prophet. The central character in the book is God. The book reflects God's love for the lost, the tragic failure of His people to share that love, and the extreme measures God may use to move His people to obedience.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

READ JONAH 1:1-2.

We know very little about the prophet Jonah. He is identified in verse 1 only as the "son of Amittai." He also is mentioned in 2 Kings 14:25. According to the 2 Kings passage, Jonah had experienced past success as a prophet. He had heard and delivered God's message to King Jeroboam II of Israel. As a result, Israel's territories had been expanded. Jonah most likely was

highly popular and respected among the people of God because of this. God gave a specific command to Jonah: Go to Nineveh and preach against it.

When you struggle to obey God, what are the most common reasons why?

Is there anything you think God is asking you to do that doesn't make sense to you?

READ JONAH 1:3.

Jonah's response to God's call may have been something like: "Lord, You know I love You, but faith has limits. I will go anywhere You send me—just not to Nineveh." For some of us our personal Nineveh might actually be a place. For others it may be a task. Our personal Nineveh may be whatever God is requiring us to do right now.

Is there something you would have a hard time doing if God asked it of you? Why?

Contrast Jonah's response to God's call with how other Old Testament prophets responded to His call, by reading 1 Kings 17:1-6; Isaiah 6:8-11; and Jeremiah 1:4-10.

Is your response to God today more like Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, or Jonah?

People today attempt to run from God in a variety of ways. Being in God's will is not primarily a matter of where we are geographically but has to do with where we are spiritually. We can run from God without ever leaving our geographic location. Jonah's disobedience was an expression of a cold heart, a heart that did not beat in sync with God's. While some believers run from specific tasks God calls them to, many more simply refuse to run with God in everyday life. We fill our lives with so many activities that time for God and ministry to people gets squeezed out.

READ JONAH 1:4-10.

In verse 4, what was the consequence of Jonah's disobedience?

What are some consequences we experience today when we run from God's will?

Any believer attempting to run from God eventually will come to face the consequences of that disobedience in the hope that he or she might turn back to God. Sometimes it may be months or even years before the consequences surface. For Jonah, it was a matter of hours or days. Though it may not happen immediately, we will always face the consequences when we do not obey God. God does not quickly give up on His people who fail to do His will. In spite of our stubbornness and self-absorption, He still desires to accomplish His purposes through us.

Lead in a discussion of some of the indicators that the church today has fallen asleep in regard to its mission. What “storms” do you think God has sent to awaken His church?

READ JONAH 1:11-17.

What do you think of Jonah’s request to be thrown into the sea (v. 12)? Was it an heroic, selfless act, or was it a reflection of his continuing stubborn refusal to accept God’s purpose for his life?

Jonah had a better theological understanding of God, but he lacked compassion for others, as chapter 4 will make clear. The sailors showed greater concern for one physical life than Jonah displayed for a multitude of spiritual lives. Jonah learned the hard way that you can run, but you can’t hide from God. Jonah also learned that God will spare no expense in pursuing those who run away from Him. God will pursue us to bring Him back to Himself. The greatest evidence of this truth is seen on the cross (Rom. 5:8).

Read Matthew 12:40-41. What is the meaning of Jonah’s entombment for Jesus? How did Jonah compare to Jesus?

Why do you think God didn’t simply raise up someone else to do the task Jonah refused?

Why do you think obeying God is always in our best interest?

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

The Bible lets us look at the interaction between God and Jonah so we can understand better our own interaction with God. God still calls people into service and sends them to faraway nations. He also sends His servants to next-door neighbors, to friends and coworkers, to enemies and opponents. So before we condemn Jonah too harshly, let his example remind us of how we have responded or are responding to God’s call. The key question each of us must ask ourselves today is this: Am I running away from God, toward God, or with God? If I’m not running with Him, then what must happen to change my direction?

How has this lesson encouraged you? How has this lesson challenged you?

To whom might God be sending you to share the gospel? How can you take advantage of opportunities to share with them this week?

PRAYER

Thank God for loving us enough to send storms and fish. Pray that we will run to Him and not from Him.



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RUNNING FROM GOD • JONAH 1-4 • 1/15/2023

MAIN POINT

If we are not running to God and with God, then we are running from God.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

As a child or teenager, did you ever deliberately not do something that your parents asked you to do, then work hard to cover it up? How did the scenario end up playing out?

If you are a parent, have any of your children ever done that to you? How have you handled it as a parent?

There is no sense in pretending we're not all sinners. All children have lied to their parents, and all children will continue to. The relationship between parent and child is often a great reflection of our relationship with God. How often does He ask us to do things that we don't want to do, yet we go about our lives pretending that our disobedience doesn't matter? This idea is at the heart of today's study in Jonah. What we learn is that if we are not running to God and with God, then we are running from God.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

READ JONAH 1:1-10.

God gave a specific command to Jonah: Go to Nineveh and preach against it. Sometimes obeying God takes us out of our comfort zones. This certainly would have been true for Jonah.

Is there something you would have a hard time doing if God asked it of you? Why?

In verse 4, what was the consequence of Jonah's disobedience? What are some consequences we experience today when we run from God's will?

We attempt to run from God in a variety of ways. Being in God's will is not primarily a matter of where we are geographically as much as where we are spiritually. Jonah's disobedience was an expression of a heart that did not beat in sync with God's. Any believer attempting to run from God eventually will face the consequences of that disobedience in the hope that he or she might turn back to God. God does not quickly give up on His people who fail to do His will. He desires to accomplish His purposes through us. He has more ways of "catching up" to us than we do of running away from Him.

READ JONAH 1:11-17.

What do you think of Jonah's request to be thrown into the sea (v. 12)? Was it an heroic, selfless act, or was it a reflection of his continuing stubborn refusal to accept God's purpose for his life?

How have you seen God's power or patience in your life recently?

Why do you think God didn't simply raise up someone else to do the task Jonah refused? What insight does this give you into your relationship with Him?

Jonah learned the hard way that we can run, but we can't hide from God. Jonah also learned that God is serious about pursuing those who run away from Him. God will pursue us to bring Him back to Himself.

READ JONAH 2:1-9.

Does it surprise you that Jonah prayed in this moment? Why or why not? What stands out to you about Jonah's prayer?

What two things did Jonah make a commitment to do in verse 9?

What is the difference between a sacrifice and a vow? Why are both important in our relationship with God?

Jonah was expressing not only the desperation of his situation but also his gratitude to God for the Lord's provision and protection. Jonah was able to see that despite his circumstances, God

was still in control. God's grace calls for sacrificial service. In response to His mercy and grace let us confess our sins to Him and commit ourselves anew to serve Him in whatever way He directs.

READ JONAH 3:1-4.

Has God ever asked you to do something that was too big and overwhelming for you to handle? What happened?

In your own words, what was Jonah's message to Nineveh?

What was the result of Jonah's obedience to God? What can we expect when we are obedient to God's call?

The Bible lets us look at the interaction between God and Jonah so we can understand better our own interaction with God. God still calls people into service and sends them to faraway nations. He also sends His servants to next-door neighbors, to friends and coworkers, to enemies and opponents. So before we condemn Jonah too harshly, let his example remind us of how we have responded or are responding to God's call.

READ JONAH 3:10–4:11.

What emotions does verse 1 say Jonah experienced? Why do you think he felt that way?

Is it possible for us to be obedient to God and have a bad attitude at the same time? Why or why not?

What lesson did God teach Jonah through the vine? In what way do the comforts of life that we enjoy prevent us from being what God wants us to be and doing what God wants us to do?

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What do you think God wants to happen in our lives as a result of this study? What's the first step toward making that happen?

Has God been asking you to do something for Him recently? What is the next step of obedience?

What feelings or desires are most likely to steer you away from God's will? How can our group encourage one another to fight off those feelings?

PRAYER

Thank God for loving us and including us in His redemptive plan. Pray we will stop running from Him and run to Him and with Him.



Second Baptist Church

JONAH'S SURRENDER • JONAH 2:1-10 • 1/22/2023

MAIN POINT

Like Jonah, we must cry out to God with gratitude for His grace and a fresh commitment to surrender our life to Him.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Jonah 1 describes how God called Jonah to go to Nineveh. Instead of obeying, Jonah fled on a ship going the opposite direction. But God is relentless in His purposes, and He pursued Jonah. The Lord sent a storm and prepared a great fish to swallow the rebellious prophet.

Which do you think is the greatest miracle—that God could make a fish big enough to swallow Jonah, that God loved the pagan Ninevites, or that God would put up with Jonah?

How have you seen God's power or patience in your life recently?

In our own lives and in each case we mentioned from Jonah's life, we see the grace of God. Jonah spent three days and three nights inside the fish. There, he found grace. Jonah's prayer from inside the belly of the fish reveals how, in spite of our past disobedience, we can come to God, find grace, and begin to live out His purpose for our lives.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

During Jonah's period of rebellion (chap. 1), God was someone Jonah talked about but not to. Now that changed. For the first time in the book, Jonah prayed. Earlier, Jonah had slept while the pagan sailors prayed. When the captain urged him to call on his god

(1:6), Jonah appeared to have ignored the plea. After all, one cannot run from God and to God at the same time. But at

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last, Jonah turned to God. His prayer was one of gratitude and recommitment. Jonah stopped running from God and ran to God.

READ JONAH 2:1-2.

**Does it surprise you that Jonah prayed in this moment? Why or why not?
Will God answer a prayer that is not prayed in complete faith? Why or why not?**

In verse 2, Jonah mentions being in “the depths of the grave” or “Sheol.” In Hebrew thought the term Sheol referred to a place of the dead. What kinds of experiences today could be described as being in “the belly of Sheol?”

How should believers respond in such experiences?

In desperation, Jonah turned to God. Can you imagine what it was like for Jonah inside the belly of the fish? Yet the story doesn't focus on that. Instead, it focuses on Jonah's relationship with God. The prophet is no longer fleeing from God's presence, he is seeking God's presence. As a result, God listened to Jonah's prayer. However desperate a person's situation, God listens to prayer and can bring deliverance. God wants us to pray in desperate situations (James 5:13). He hears our prayers from any location and out of any kind of distress. When we find ourselves in the depths of despair, the question is not, “Is God still here?” but “What will I do now that I am in this crisis?” Jonah's cry out to God resulted in his deliverance and the chance to live out God's purpose for his life.

READ JONAH 2:3-7.

What stands out to you from these verses of Jonah's prayer?

According to 2:3, who threw Jonah into the sea? According to Jonah 1:15, who threw Jonah into the sea? How do you explain the apparent discrepancy?

Jonah was expressing not only the desperation of his situation but also his gratitude to God for the Lord's preservation and protection. Jonah was able to see that despite his circumstances, God was still in control. In verse 3, Jonah testified to God's sovereignty. He recognized God's hand in his being thrown into the sea and he also saw the waves that swept over him as belonging to God, tools in His hand.

Jonah was in a seemingly hopeless situation, “but God” delivered him. Have you had a “but God” experience in your life?

How has God's past faithfulness (v. 7) impacted your life today?

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JONAH 2:8-10.

Verse 8 refers to the folly of trusting in idols instead of trusting God. Name idols that people turn to today. What is the ultimate problem with idols?

Believers are called to make spiritual sacrifices. Read the following verses and identify the sacrifices believers are to make to God: Acts 10:4; Psalm 51:17; Romans 12:1; Hebrews 13:15-16.

Reflecting on the grace of God that forgave his sinful rebellion and rescued him from the depths of the sea motivated Jonah to confess his loyalty to God and commit himself anew to serve God. God's grace calls for our sacrificial service.

**Read verse 9 again. How did Jonah end his prayer?
How have you seen God's salvation in the story of Jonah? In your own life?**

In a sense, the whole book of Jonah is about salvation. Chapter 1 described how the sailors experienced a kind of physical and perhaps spiritual deliverance. In chapter 2 Jonah was rescued. Chapter 3 will show how the Ninevites repented and turned to God. Chapter 4 shows Jonah's resentment over God's mercy toward the Ninevites. "Salvation is from the Lord" (v. 9) was not just a statement of theological belief for Jonah; it was a confession based on personal experience. We can know God and experience His saving grace only through a personal relationship with Jesus who died on the cross to save us from our sins.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Jonah is an example of what needs to happen when we have been disobedient, rebellious, and self-focused. We need to stop running from God and run back to Him. It's not too late to stop, turn around, embrace God's purpose for your life, and run with Him.

What do you think God wants to happen in our lives as a result of this study? What's the first step toward making that happen?

When have you felt you were drowning in a situation beyond your control?

How could faith that God is good, has a purpose for your life, and is always in control change your view of such situations?

PRAYER

Thank God for His grace and commitment to living out His purpose for your life.



Second Baptist Church

RETURN TO GOD • JONAH 1:1-3, 3:1-10 • 1/29/2023

MAIN POINT

God's call to return to Him demands a response.

INTRODUCTION

Open your discussion by talking about famous advertising jingles or slogans that you've never forgotten. You might have a few listed and quiz your group on them. What are some of the favorites discussed? What makes them catchy and unforgettable?

If God were to place an advertisement to get your attention in a way that you'd never forget, what would He have to do? Put another way, what is a great way to catch your attention?

In the Book of Jonah, we see a man who got off course in His relationship with God. Jonah's move away from God's instruction wasn't subtle; he flatly refused to listen to God. But God got Jonah's attention in a most unexpected way. There are some among us who have blatantly walked away from God. Others have gradually gotten off course in our walk with Him. As we'll see in this study, God acts to get our attention and draw us back to Himself.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

In this opening video session, Dr. Ronnie Floyd explains that when God wants to do something corporately, He starts with individuals. We see a perfect illustration of that in the story of Jonah. God wanted to return a city to Himself, and He started in the life of Jonah. And what God did in the heart and life of Jonah served as a catalyst for a great spiritual movement in Nineveh.

What is God doing in your life personally that could help you impact your sphere of influence?

What do you think God might want to do through your small group for a greater good?

READ JONAH 1:1-3.

What did God say that God Jonah's attention? What was Jonah's initial reaction? Why do you think Jonah reacted the way that he did?

Why is it sometimes tempting for us to flee from God?

There are many reasons why fleeing God can seem like a better idea than obeying God. In our pride, we may feel that our limited understanding of the circumstances is more trustworthy than God's eternal and perfect understanding. We may simply love something or someone else more than Him, and that ultimately drives our disobedience. Regardless of the reasons, obedience is always preferable to sin, though that is a lesson we will continually learn until we die.

READ JONAH 3:1-10.

What do God's actions toward Jonah and the Ninevites teach us about His character?

When have you benefited from a second chance? When have you been in a position to offer someone else a second chance?

What must happen in our personal lives for a nation of people to repent? What must happen in our church? What role does any one person or church play in a quest to bring a nation back to the Lord?

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What are some ways that you can make yourself more sensitive to God's voice?

What is your initial reaction when you hear God tell you to do something? Is your first response that of obedience?

What will you do next time you feel hesitant to obey?

What are some things you do to yourself from wandering away from God?

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PRAYER

Ask for prayer requests and ask group members to pray for the different requests as intercessors. As the leader, conclude your discussion by thanking God for the way He demonstrates His grace through second chances. Thank Him for the second chances you've received in life and ask for the courage to respond well when you hear God's call.



Second Baptist Church

REVIVAL IN NINEVAH • JONAH 3:1-10 • 2/5/2023

MAIN POINT

Because of His grace, God is willing to give another opportunity to respond to His call.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Have you ever wished for a second chance? Why?

What was the last really BIG decision you had to make? What were the stakes involved in this decision?

Has God ever asked you to do something that was too big and overwhelming for you to handle? What happened?

In Jonah's story, we will see that he got a second chance to obey God's call. Following Christ in obedience may require hard choices. Sometimes the choice is between what's good and what's best. Following Christ means we choose sacrifice over selfishness. We choose the cross over comfort. We choose God's mission over maintaining the status quo. The stakes could not be higher.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Although God's word came to Jonah a second time, demonstrating God's forbearance and mercy, examples in Scripture show that not everyone has a second chance to do what God has commanded (cf. Gen. 3; Num. 20:12; 1 Kings 13:26). However, this text should bring thanksgiving to the heart of every believer who has been given another opportunity to do what God requires. This text, more than anything else, points to God's sovereignty and His insistence upon the accomplishment of His will.

READ JONAH 3:1-5.

What do we learn about God from Jonah 1:1-2 and Jonah 3:1?

What must Jonah have been thinking as he entered the city?

Does the likelihood that the Ninevites saw Jonah emerge from the water out of the belly of the fish impact the level of success of Jonah's mission? Why or why not? If so, how?

What was Jonah's message to Nineveh? Why did God give Nineveh 40 days?

What was the result of Jonah's obedience to God? What can we expect when we are obedient to God's call?

Jonah preached and the Ninevites believed God (v. 5). Jonah had preached for only one day. He merely was getting started, and the Ninevites believed the message he proclaimed. One would not expect the Ninevites to react to this strange prophet in this way. One would imagine widespread questioning and doubt. If such a situation were to occur today, what would be the response of modern hearers? Who was going to destroy the city? How would it be done? Why should one believe such a message? We might expect that the people of Nineveh would have responded to Jonah with an incredulous sneer. Jonah's words found eager ears and open hearts.

READ JONAH 3:6-9.

What does "repentance" mean and involve?

What is the relationship between repentance and salvation?

By what two actions did these Ninevites demonstrate their belief in God?

What is significant of the actions the king takes to demonstrate repentance? Specifically, what does his act of sitting in ashes symbolize?

In the Old Testament era, fasting and wearing sackcloth were signs of seeking God and repentance. Christians today often think of repentance as primarily an inward, personal action, and it is. The Bible, however, also stresses the need for external signs of the inward decision to repent. The king's act of sitting in ashes symbolizes humility (see Job 2:8). Humbling ourselves is always a necessary step in a relationship with God.

Why is humility an essential part of our spiritual lives?

How do you know when someone is genuinely sorry for something wrong he/she has done? In what ways do we publicly portray repentance and humility before God in our culture?

READ JONAH 3:10.

Does God change His mind?

What does it mean that “God relented” or “had compassion” on Nineveh? What does this mean for us?

God does not change His mind in a fickle manner typical of human nature. Rather, God responds to a person’s change of mind and behavior in a manner consistent with His unchanging character. Often an announcement of divine judgment includes an implied condition: God will punish sin unless people repent. If they repent, He will forgive (Joel 2:12-14).

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

The Bible lets us look at the interaction between God and Jonah, so we can understand better our own interaction with God. God still calls people into service and sends them to faraway nations. He also sends His servants to next-door neighbors, to friends and coworkers, to enemies and opponents. So before we condemn Jonah too harshly, let his example remind us of how we have responded or are responding to God’s call.

What would change in your life if you made the decision daily to choose the cross over comfort, God’s mission over maintaining the status quo, and sacrifice over selfishness? What needs to happen to make this change?

If Jonah embodied the message he brought, how did Jesus Christ embody the message He brought?

Like Nineveh, many people in our nation need to hear the message of the gospel and turn to God in belief. What are some specific things we need to pray for on behalf of the people in our community and our country?

PRAYER

Ask God for the courage to take risks and for a greater awareness of the need to be dependent on Him.



Second Baptist Church

REPENTANCE • JONAH 3:5-10 • 2/12/2023

MAIN POINT

God shows His grace when individuals and nations repent and turn to Him.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

How do you define repentance?

What is the most powerful example of repentance you have ever seen?

Today's study show what happens when a nation turns back to God. When we turn to Him in repentance, He will turn toward us.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

What is the most shocking positive thing that has ever happened to you in a positive way? What was the most shocking negative experience?

Most of us would have to admit that we would be shocked if Americans truly turned back to God. But, it would not be the first time a sinful nation repented on a large scale. First, God gave Jonah a second chance to obey. Starting in verse 5 of chapter 3, we see the incredible results of Jonah's obedience to God. The people of Nineveh believed his message and repented, and God spared the Ninevites.

READ JONAH 3:5.

What are some of the factors involved in prompting a person to turn to the Lord?

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Many factors could be involved, and certain ones, such as the convicting work of the Holy Spirit, are always involved. Sometimes people are most motivated by Christ's offer

of forgiveness. Others are moved by the abundant life provided to those who follow Christ. Still others long for fellowship with the One who made them or the freedom from sin's bondage that only Christ can give. Jonah reminds us that our responsibility is to witness. The results are up to God. We can neither predict who will respond nor determine how they will respond. But if we proclaim God's Word we may be surprised at what God will do through us.

By what two actions did the Ninevites demonstrate their repentance?

In the Old Testament era, fasting and wearing sackcloth were signs of seeking God and repentance. For example, Daniel sought the Lord "with fasting, sackcloth and ashes" (Dan. 9:3). Joel called people to lament and cry out to God while fasting and wearing sackcloth (Joel 1:13-14). See the commentary for more information on fasting and putting on sackcloth. Christians today often think of repentance as primarily an inward, personal action, and it is. The Bible, however, also stresses the need for external signs of the inward decision to repent. For example, when John the Baptist preached a message of repentance to his fellow Jews, they asked him what they should do to demonstrate their repentance (Luke 3:7-14).

What are some specific ways people demonstrate repentance?

READ JONAH 3:6-9.

The "word reached the king." This could imply that this movement of sorrow over sin started with the common people. The king heard about it after it had already spread. "Reached" translates the Hebrew word that usually means "touched," but it has a secondary meaning of "extend to" or "arrive." The phrase also indicates that the people's response was to Jonah's message and not just to the king's command.

The king's act of sitting in ashes symbolizes humility (see Job 2:8). Humbling ourselves is always a necessary step in a relationship with God.

Why is humility an essential part of our spiritual lives?

The king issued a proclamation that affected every living thing in the land. The fact that even the animals were included in the fast and covered with sackcloth emphasizes the severity of the crisis and the determination of the king to avert national tragedy.

How serious do you think the situation is our nation, and what is it going to take for us to avoid God's judgment?

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The king explained his purpose in calling for the nation to these drastic actions. The question "Who knows?" in verse 9 indicates the king of Nineveh was not presuming on God's grace; he was merely hoping for it. Jonah had not explicitly stated that judgment

against the city could be averted by repentance. The same sentiment was expressed by David (2 Sam. 12:22) and the prophet Joel (Joel 2:14). While we cannot manipulate or control God, we can rest in His mercy and find hope in the truth in His Word.

READ JONAH 3:10.

God saw that the Ninevites had turned from their evil way. When a person is caught doing something wrong, he may regret that he was caught or that he faces punishment. That's not true repentance. True repentance involves more than a temporary feeling of remorse or regret. It involves a change of mind about sin and about God. That change of mind produces a change of direction from self and sin to God and righteousness.

Because Nineveh repented, God relented. In the King James Version, the word relent is translated "repent." We usually think of repentance as a change of mind and behavior.

Does God change His mind? What does "God relented" mean?

Word Study: Relent. The Hebrew word translated relent also can be rendered "repent." For modern readers the word repent, however, can convey the mistaken impression that God has erred, something that God, who is free from all sin, never does. The root of this Hebrew verb reflects the idea of breathing or sighing deeply. The word expresses strong emotion, whether sorrow or compassion. The Bible presents God as grieving because of human sin (see Gen. 6:6). The verb translated "grieved" (or "regretted," or "was sorry") in Genesis 6:6 is the same word rendered relent in Jonah 3:9. God does not change His mind in a fickle manner typical of human nature. Rather, God responds to a person's change of mind and behavior in a manner consistent with His unchanging character. Often an announcement of divine judgment includes an implied condition: God will punish sin unless people repent. If they repent, He will forgive (Joel 2:12-14).

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Jonah was one flawed individual whose obedience God used to change a nation. What do you think God wants to accomplish through your life? What is the next step?

What are some specific things we need to pray for on behalf of our country?

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PRAYER

Lead your group in prayer for our nation. Pray that repentance would begin in God's church. Ask God to pour out His mercy on our nation and to use our obedience to make a difference for Him.



Second Baptist Church

COMPASSION FOR THE LOST • JONAH 4:1-11 • 2/19/2023

MAIN POINT

When we share God's heart, we share His compassion for the lost.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What percentage of what you did last week do you think will matter for eternity? Why?

Most of us devote our time and resources to what we consider important. But how much of ourselves and our resources do we invest in matters of eternal significance and what does this say about the condition of our hearts?

How do you typically react when you don't get your way?

Jonah agreed to obey God, but his attitudes lagged behind. He had done the right thing by going to Nineveh and preaching God's message. But his heart wasn't in the right place, as evidenced by his reaction to the results.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

READ JONAH 4:1-3.

What emotions does verse 1 say Jonah experienced? Why do you think he felt that way? (See commentary.)

In what ways do sinful attitudes keep us from joining God in His mission?

**Is it possible for us to be obedient to God and have a bad attitude at the same time?
Why or why not?**

One of the themes in the Bible is that God's people are to be imitators of Him, to demonstrate the qualities mentioned in verse 2. Unlike Jonah, we need to imitate God's character.

Which of the aspects of God's character in verse 2 is reflected most in your life?

Nineveh's being spared had created such frustration and stress in Jonah that death looked better than life (v. 3). Jonah could not deal with a world that no longer made sense to him. Nineveh had received God's grace, while Israel was destined to suffer at the Assyrians' hands because of the Israelites' rebellion. Jonah is proof that a person can dot every theological "i" and cross every theological "t" but still not know God's heart. Jonah wanted God only for himself and his people. Yet God is too big and has too much love to confine Himself to one type of people! Are we allowing God to be that big?

read Jonah 4:4-9.

The Lord responded to Jonah's angry outburst with a question in verse 4. The question is another example of God's compassion and grace. Instead of rebuking Jonah or breaking off the conversation, God reached out to him and encouraged him to think. God tried to help Jonah see that he should have compassion for all people, even people he may not like. Jonah pitied himself. God pities sinners. Seeing Nineveh destroyed would have made Jonah happy. Seeing Nineveh spared made God happy. The contrast between Jonah's heart and God's heart could not be clearer.

God wanted to teach Jonah a lesson. Jonah's comfort from the vine was short-lived, for at dawn the next day God provided a worm, which chewed the vine so that it withered (v. 7). The vine was present one day and gone the next.

What lesson did God teach Jonah through the vine?

In what way do the comforts of life that we enjoy prevent us from being what God wants us to be and doing what God wants us to do?

Unfortunately, many believers become more concerned with their own comfort than they do with lost persons. These believers devote their time and their resources to what they consider to be important to them. They give little thought and devote little—if any—of their time, energy, and resources to things that will matter for eternity.

The plant was not the issue. The issue was Nineveh. In verse 11 God addressed the heart of the matter. Jonah was concerned about a plant. God was concerned about people. Jonah neither had created nor nurtured the plant. Yet God had created and nurtured the Ninevites. Should He not care for them?

How would you answer God's question in verse 11?

The obvious answer to the question is that God's concern for Nineveh was consistent with His character. Since God cared for the Ninevites, so should Jonah.

Would you prefer that the Book of Jonah have a different ending? Why or why not?

The Book of Jonah ends abruptly. Jonah was confronted with a question that we also face: Will I have a heart for lost people as God does, or will I have a heart for lost people as Jonah did? That Jonah even relayed or recorded the events of this book, which were humiliating and embarrassing to him, suggests that he was brought to conviction and repentance by God's word. Jonah's silence at the end of the book implies his quiet acceptance.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Did you ever try to make a deal with God in exchange for your obedience? What's the problem with that? What do you need to remember in order to avoid that temptation?

**How do your concerns and priorities reflect the heart of God?
What steps do you need to take to come around to God's way of loving?**

What is something our group can do together to reflect God's heart of compassion for the lost?

PRAYER

Lead your group in prayer that God would cleanse our hearts of whatever it is that keeps us from letting Him use us to show His compassion to the world around us.



Second Baptist Church

LOOKING FOR SIGNS • LUKE 11:29-36 • 2/26/2023

MAIN POINT

We must look directly to God, not external signs, to know Him and His will for our lives.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Are you the type of person who does a lot of second guessing, or do you typically go with your gut? Explain.

What about with people? In your experience, do you feel like you can usually know what to expect from people or do you feel like this is often uncertain? Share an example.

Think of a person who has proven themselves trustworthy. How do you know you can trust this person?

It is unhealthy to continually demand a person prove him or herself, even after her or she has already done so. But for many, our relationship with God works exactly this way. In looking at our present circumstances, we discount the past and wonder, "What has He done for me lately?" This distrustful view of God carries over into our decision making, too. We look for signs to show us what to do. In today's passage, Jesus addressed this human tendency, and called us to a better way.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

READ LUKE 11:29-34.

What do Jesus' words in verse 29 indicate about the reason the crowds were increasing?

Glance back through the chapters in your Bible that immediately precede this passage. What are some miracles Jesus had performed?

Why do you think miracles like feeding thousands, healing people, casting out demons, and calming a storm weren't enough proof for people?

Some of the people were critical of Jesus' miracles (v. 15-16), and Jesus had called them out on it (v. 17-23). He had drawn a line in the sand saying, "Anyone who is not with me is against me, and anyone who does not gather with me scatters" (v.23). Their request for a sign showed they were not genuinely seeking truth; rather they were looking to disprove and discredit Jesus.

What did Jesus call those who were looking for a sign? In what way were they evil? What sign had Jonah given them?

How were the evil Ninevites better off than the crowds of people who continued looking for more signs from Jesus?

Jesus had already proven Himself as the Messiah; their hard hearts prompted them to continue to test Him. The evil in their hearts helps us answer the question, "If not by external signs, how can we know the will of God?" Without the transformative power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, we can't. With the power of the Holy Spirit, we are made new and join Him in a process of renewal every day that leads us into truth and the way we should go.

Read Matthew 12:33-34. How do these verses speak to someone who does not truly know and follow the Lord, but is only looking for external benefits from Him?

Read Romans 12:1-2. How did Paul say we can discern the will of God?

We are transformed by the renewing of our minds. The aim of the renewed mind, then, is to know God's will (Rom. 12:2). What are some practical ways God wants to renew our minds?

How and why is seeking God through prayer and His Word different than looking for a sign in various circumstances?

Renewal requires transformation. Signs do not require transformation. God's aim is the renewal of our minds through the transformative truths of His Word. In other words, when we seek God Himself, we come in sync with His heart and mind. Then we are able to discern and apply the Scriptures to new situations in life by our renewed minds.

Why do you think believers today still sometimes long for signs from God rather than engaging in a Romans 12:1-2 type relationship with Him? What dangers are there with this approach?

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Name a time you were able to discern God's will not by a sign but simply by walking with God along the way?

Name a circumstance where you currently need to know God's will. How does this lesson encourage or challenge you in that?

How can this group help each other in the process of renewing our minds and discerning God's will for our lives, both as individuals and as a group?

PRAYER

Thank God that He does not leave us helpless to know Him and His ways. Thank Him for the Holy Spirit, the privilege of prayer, His Word, and other believers who help us know Him more. Pray specifically for members as they make important decisions to look to God and His Word and to trust Him as He leads.