

Read: Jonah 3:1-5,10

God Is All About Forgiveness

Jonah 3:1-5,10

Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time: “Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you.”

Jonah obeyed the word of the LORD and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very large city; it took three days to go through it. Jonah began by going a day’s journey into the city, proclaiming, “Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown.” The Ninevites believed God. A fast was proclaimed, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth.

When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

When you think about the story of Jonah from the Bible, what is the first thing you think of? Probably a big fish, right? God miraculously saved Jonah from drowning by sending a fish to swallow him. Jonah was in the belly of that fish for three days and three nights. And then God saved Jonah again by making the fish spit Jonah onto dry ground.

God had a plan for Jonah. His plan was all about love. Love for Jonah. And love for an entire city. Neither Jonah nor the city of Nineveh deserved love. After all, Jonah ran away from God. Nineveh was filled with wicked people who didn’t love God.

But God is all about love and forgiveness. He loved Jonah so much that he gave him a second chance to do what God had commanded him to do: go preach to the city of Nineveh. He loved the people of Nineveh so much that he sent Jonah to them to call them to repent of their sin.

God has a plan for your life too. When you think about the story of your own life, what is the first thing you think of? Maybe you think about your friends, or your family, or sports that you play, or an instrument you are good at. Or maybe you think about how you fall short—you’re not the perfect child or student. You make mistakes as a teammate or musician. Maybe you think of how you fall short of what God commands you to do. God says this failure means you do not deserve his love and forgiveness.

But remember, God is all about love and forgiveness. He gives you his Word to remind you of how he forgives sin because of Jesus’ work of salvation. He gives you pastors to proclaim this forgiveness to you. And then he calls you to turn away from that sin and do what he commands.

One of the greatest things he commands you to do is share his love and forgiveness with others. Sometimes this means telling people first that they are sinners. As scary as that can be, you have a promise from God that he is with you. His words are powerful. Some words warn while other words forgive. Together, they change hearts and lives. You will get to see it, too. And when you do, you will get to share with people the God of second chances.

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- Give an example of a time you said you were sorry to someone. What did they then say to you? When we tell God that we are sorry for our sins, what does he say to us?
- God gave Jonah the job of preaching God's Word to the people of Nineveh. Who are the people in your life that tell you about Jesus?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- Share a time that you repented of a sin and received forgiveness. How does it make you feel when you are forgiven?
- The Bible tells us that the people of Nineveh were very wicked. Would you have wanted to be in Jonah's position to point out their sins? Why was it so important for the people of Nineveh that Jonah obeyed God's command?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Jonah attempted to run away from God when he first charged Jonah with proclaiming repentance to the people in Nineveh, but God gave him another chance. Why does God give people like us such important work of sharing his Word when he knows we might run away from it?
- Think of someone you know who does not know the saving message of God's Word. How can you be like Jonah in their life?

Closing Prayer:

Dear Lord, give me the courage to share your words with others. Fill me with joy because of your love and forgiveness. Amen.