

7 SESSIONS

MATTHEW MCBIRTH

Jonah
JOURNEYING WITH
THE MERCIFUL GOD

**NEXT
LEVEL** 
ONLINE

— OZARK CHRISTIAN COLLEGE —

Jonah: Journeying with the Merciful God

Matthew McBirth

SESSION 1: A Disordered Setting

Opening Considerations:

- ❖ Most people are introduced to Jonah in two ways: _____ and _____.
- ❖ There are many approaches to the main idea of Jonah:
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
- ❖ Jonah is a masterful story that displays humanity's struggle to understand God as simultaneously _____ and _____.

GENRE - There are three uncomfortable ways of communication in Jonah:

1. _____
 - ❖ Jonah 1: 1-4
 - ❖ Prophet delivers a message from God
 - ❖ To God's people
 - ❖ And tells the Ninevites how to respond to the message
2. _____
 - ❖ Jonah 3:8-9
 - ❖ Not a parable
 - ❖ Satire only works if the reality is true
3. _____
 - ❖ Jonah 4:2
 - ❖ Jonah
 - ❖ Ninevites

Discussion Questions for Reflection:

1. What had been your interaction with the book of Jonah before watching this session?
2. Which of the modes of communication in Jonah are you least comfortable with?
3. How do you define justice? How do you define mercy?
4. Why do you think it might be difficult to understand God as being both just and merciful?

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SESSION 2: The God of Order

Opening Considerations:

- ❖ If the genre of Jonah helps us wrestle with God and this disoriented experience, the story helps reorient us to understand who God truly is.
- ❖ At God's core, he will not do anything unjust.

THEME

1. God and Creation

- ❖ Almost every chapter of Jonah has _____ verses. There are a total of _____ verses that directly pertain to God interacting with creation.
- ❖ Theology - God ordered the heavens, the sea, and the dry land (1:9)
 - Sky/Heavens: _____
 - Sea: _____
 - Dry Land: _____
- ❖ Particulars (*Big Fish*)
 - There are three reasons it does not seem to be just a big fish:
 - i. When early Jewish people read Jonah and they came across the phrase "great fish" instead of translating it into the common word for fish (*ichthus*), they translated it _____, which means sea creature.
 - ii. When *ketos* is used in other places of the Greek Old Testament, it is used as a translation for words like: violence, _____, serpent, _____, and _____.
 - iii. The creature lives in chaos. Jonah says while he is in the belly of this creature that he was in the belly of the _____ and taken down to the _____.
- ❖ God brings _____ to his creation.

2. God and Covenant

- ❖ All throughout Jonah, there is an interchange between two terms used to talk about God: _____ and _____.
- ❖ _____ is the covenant name of God the Israelites know him by. _____ simply means divine being or deity.
- ❖ Why the interchanges? The reason why is because the story demonstrates that God is not the Lord of just _____ nation, but he is the Lord of _____ nations.
- ❖ In the same way, God is above all creation and can tame the great sea creature from the depths of the ocean, God desires to make all things right in humanity.
- ❖ _____ and _____ are not opposites. God is the God of justice and all things. He seeks to bring goodness to all things.

Discussion Questions for Reflection:

1. What connections do you see between God being over creation and his desire for the nations?
2. What are ways that Christians can remind ourselves that God is over creation?
3. How can the church demonstrate that it worships a God of all nations?
4. If God shows mercy to sinful people, can we say that God is just? Why?

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SESSION 3: The Fleeing Follower (Chapter 1)

Opening Considerations:

- ❖ When we see God's will and are resistant, God shows us mercy and persistence.
- ❖ God is merciful in that he does not push us away as we disobey, but he is just in that he does not let us determine his will.

READ THE STORY

- ❖ Jonah flees in the _____ direction.
 - Verse 3 - Tarshish is the furthest _____ one could go. Assyria was _____.
 - Verse 4 - The ship is personified.
 - Verse 7 - The _____ questions Jonah.
 - Verse 9 - The sailors come across _____.
 - Verse 13 - The men _____ hard. (This has the imagery of digging, thus, the sailors are digging into the sea to push out.)
 - Verse 17 - Even the _____ obeys God. Why doesn't Jonah?

HEAR THE STORY

- ❖ There are two _____ that display God's justice and mercy:
 - Jonah and justice - Jonah is doing the very thing Nineveh is doing.
 - The _____ show Jonah mercy.

RECEIVE THE STORY

- ❖ What does this mean for us? What do we do when we find ourselves disagreeing with God's will?
 - Don't _____ like Jonah. Trust God's will even when it doesn't make sense.
 - When you do respond like Jonah, notice how God showers you with _____ even in your disobedience.

Discussion Questions for Reflection:

1. What stands out to you as you read chapter 1?
2. What connections do you see with Jonah 1 with the overall theme of the book of Jonah?
3. Have you ever found yourself in Jonah's shoes, doing the very thing you are upset at others for doing?
4. How have you seen God's mercy to you even when you were being disobedient?

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SESSION 4: The Chasing God (Chapter 2)

Opening Considerations:

- ❖ God's justice is about reminding us who he is, who creation is, and who gets a say in deciding.
- ❖ Sin often stems from misidentifying or mischaracterizing God; this is, in essence, what an idol is.
- ❖ Jonah 2 is about reminding Jonah that God is the leader and Jonah is the follower.

READ THE STORY

- ❖ Jonah 2:2 – “ _____ ” – This is ironic.
- ❖ 3 - “All your waves and your billows” – God is _____ over the sea.
- ❖ 6 - Jonah calls God YHWH _____ .
- ❖ 7 - The _____ - Which one is Jonah talking about?
- ❖ 9 - Is this prayer _____ ?

HEAR THE STORY

- ❖ There are three elements that connect with the overall goal of the book:
 - Jonah's _____
 - God's _____
 - God's _____

RECEIVE THE STORY

- ❖ This story invites us to go from an _____ approach to a _____ approach.
- ❖ We are the ones who do the _____, and God is the one who _____ .

Discussion Questions for Reflection:

1. How would you answer these questions: Who is God; What is creation?
2. Can you recall a time in your life when God had to remind you that he was the lead?
3. Why do we often go towards an anthropocentric approach to life?
4. How does being theocentric help us understand our identity and role in God's plan?

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SESSION 5: The Merciful God (Chapter 3)

Opening Considerations:

- ❖ Instead of allowing God to tell us who he is and therefore how we should look like him, we instead make God into a portrait of ourselves.
- ❖ The justice of God flows from the mercy of God.

READ THE STORY

- ❖ Verse 1 - "The word of the Lord came..." A _____ of chapter 1.
- ❖ Verse 3 - A _____ days' walk. Jonah is expected to be in Nineveh as long as he was in the belly of the sea monster.
- ❖ Verse 4 - Jonah's prophecy is only _____ words in Hebrew.
- ❖ Verse 9 - "so that we do not perish:" This is the same word used by the _____ in Ch. 1.
- ❖ Verse 10 - God is referred to as Elohim _____ times in this chapter alone.

HEAR THE STORY

- ❖ Zoom ____: _____
 - God will not let _____ slide.
 - "Their wickedness has come up before me" (1:2)
 - Nineveh has found itself on the same side as Sodom and _____ and the same side as _____.
- ❖ Zoom ____: _____
 - The Ninevites' repentance is:
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
 - *Nehpakheth*: Jonah's prophecy allowed for two responses
 - _____
 - Or _____

RECEIVE THE STORY

- ❖ God's mercy is both _____
- ❖ We must recognize that God _____ to show mercy, period.
- ❖ We must recognize that God _____ to show mercy, period. It can come in the form of retribution if we do not turn.
- ❖ We must recognize that God _____ to show mercy, period.

Discussion Questions for Reflection:

1. Why do people tend to view God in a way that reflects us instead of us trying to reflect God?
2. What are some contrasts you see between Jonah's prayer in chapter 2 to the Ninevites' in chapter 3?
3. When you think of God as the God of mercy, what do you envision?
4. How can the church talk better about the hardness and softness of God's mercy today?

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SESSION 6: The Angry Servant (Chapter 4)

Opening Considerations:

- ❖ God wants us to go to him even when we are angry *with* him.
- ❖ It is in passionate conversation with God we grow in understanding his ways.

READ THE STORY

- ❖ Verse 2 - Jonah fled because he knew God would relent from _____ Nineveh.
- ❖ Verse 4 - God invites Jonah in the midst of his anger to _____.
- ❖ Verses 5 & 6 - Notice Jonah's response as being _____ happy. This word is the same word used throughout the book as "_____" used to describe Nineveh, the mighty storm, the sea monster, and now Jonah's delight in a bush.
- ❖ Verse 11 - God finishes with a _____ question.

HEAR THE STORY

- ❖ Put on the _____ of Nineveh.
 - God helps Jonah see how he is like the _____.
 - Jonah 4:6: the pattern
 - The sailors see oncoming destruction, they call to God, and God shows compassion.
 - Nineveh sees oncoming destruction, they call out to God, and God shows compassion.
 - Jonah sees oncoming destruction (the heat), tries to make shelter, and God shows compassion.
- ❖ Put on the _____ of God.

RECEIVE THE STORY

- ❖ Address _____: Explain why you are angry.
- ❖ Address who _____: Allow _____ to tell us who God is.
- ❖ Address how _____ look: Compare your heart to God's heart and notice.
- ❖ Address _____: Allow the Spirit to convict and grow your heart from being calloused to being _____.

Discussion Questions for Reflection:

1. Why is it difficult to go to God with our anger?
2. What are some psalms or prayers of lament that you can go to when you are distressed?
3. What is something that you are currently struggling with in your understanding of God that you should dialogue with God about?
4. How do you see prayers of lament leading to a stronger relationship with God?

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SESSION 7: Jonah and Jesus

Opening Considerations:

- ❖ “The _____ is here!”
- ❖ Matthew 12:38-41
- ❖ _____ is greater than _____ .

READ THE STORY

- ❖ Jonah and Jesus are from the _____ .
- ❖ They were both on a large body of water during a _____ .
- ❖ They both _____ during the storm.
- ❖ Jonah and Jesus are awakened by _____ .
- ❖ Jonah’s time in the belly of the sea monster is connected to Jesus’ death on the cross as time in _____ .
- ❖ They both come out of Sheol and _____ .

HEAR THE STORY

- ❖ Jonah to Jesus:
 - Ministry
 - Purpose
- ❖ Jesus to Jonah: Jesus is greater than Jonah in three ways
 - Greater in demonstrating _____ .
 - Greater in understanding _____ .
 - Greater _____ .

RECEIVE THE STORY

- ❖ When we struggle with God’s mercy or justice, we remember the _____ to remind us who God is.
- ❖ We _____ Jesus to reflect God’s mercy and justice in our doings.

Discussion Questions for Reflection:

1. What connections between Jesus and Jonah stand out to you and why?
2. What do you think Jonah would think when he saw Jesus’ ministry?
3. What are moments in Jesus’ ministry where he displays justice and mercy?
4. How can the church be a strange people who are simultaneously compassionate and convicted?

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